THE INCREASED APPLICATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC RELATIONS INDUSTRY

By

Leány Erasmus

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Prof A.F. Grobler

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Declaration

I declare that the Master's dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree MCom Communication Management at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

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Abstract

Over the past few years, social media have become both a part of everyday life and a topic of research interest. The impact of the increased use of social media and their integration into society is important from the human science, business and organisational perspectives. This study set out to establish the factors influencing the increased application of social media in the South African public relations (PR) industry. Research conducted in other countries indicates that the impact of social media on PR practice is profound, and there exists a research gap for similar insights in South African PR practice. Specifically, all research on the topic has so far been conducted on developed economies and in first world countries. There is therefore a need to conduct research in a third world country with an emerging economy such as South Africa.

The main purpose of the study was to investigate how social media are impacting on organisations, and therefore PR practice, in the South African context by replicating a study carried out internationally. The secondary purpose was to compare the results of the South African study with those of the original study, which was conducted mainly in first world countries with developed economies. The study aimed to contribute to the theoretical body of knowledge as follows:

- First, from a practical perspective, the findings will be of future assistance to South African PR practitioners in identifying the possible impact and effects that social media could have, and might already have had, on communication strategies and objectives.

- Secondly, the study determined the extent to which social media are impacting on the PR industry in South Africa. It compares the results with the research findings by Wright and Hinson (2009) in other first world countries.

- Finally, the study adds an academic theoretical dimension to the research, having been conducted in the context of a meta-theoretical framework. IT therefore offers offered an academic explanation of the

study and its results, as an additional contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

The 11 research objectives for the study were empirically tested by using a cross-sectional quantitative survey design. The survey was a replica of the one used in the original study. Data collected from the Likert-type scale questions were analysed using the Chi square method to determine probability results.

The theoretical and literature review confirmed that the impact of social media on communication and PR practice is significant. The review also indicated that it is important to investigate this impact in a third world country, as internet penetration into these countries is very different from that of first world countries. The empirical section of the research showed that most of the respondents in the South African study agreed that the emergence of social media has changed the ways in which organisations communicate and handle both internal and external communication. In this South African study, most respondents agreed that social media and mainstream media complement each other; social media enhance the practice of PR, but respondents rated them very low in terms of accuracy, credibility, truth and ethics. However, respondents gave social media high marks for offering organisations suggestions for low-cost ways in which to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics, serving as a watchdog for traditional mainstream media, and impacting on corporate and organisational transparency. Subjects in the study felt strongly that research and measurement were important for organisations in determining what is being said about them in social media channels. However, very few of the subjects in all three studies have claimed to be actually conducting such research. The present study also inquired about the percentage of workdays respondents spend on activities with blogs and other social media. The study found that three times more South African practitioners are spending 50% or more of their time on blogs and with other social media, compared with respondents in the international survey.

Results indicated that, overall, social media are having a positive effect on PR practice in South Africa. However, the overall perception by PR

practitioners is that, in comparison with traditional media, social media have a long way to go in terms of accuracy, truth and ethical standards. If these platforms do perform as badly on the ethical level as PR practitioners perceive, there must surely be a significant need for organisational reputation management. There is also a significant need for organisations to design and implement research structures to monitor social media communication on their organisations, brands and messaging. Findings suggest that PR managers could use traditional media communication together with social media, as the two seem complementary to each other, and will become even more so in the future. PR communications strategies should allow for organisations to respond more rapidly to criticism than in the past. They should also incorporate transparency and ethical practice into organisational communication, as the nature of social media demands that organisations hold to higher ethical principles.

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CHAPTER 1
Orientation and background

1.1 INTRODUCTION

"Social media is forcing changes that should have happened a long time ago in everything related to business, from public relations and sales to customer service, to product development, and also to corporate management" (Solis & Breakenridge, 2009:156).

The Internet has made public relations (hereafter referred to as PR) *public* again after years of almost exclusive focus on the news media. Blogs, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, online news releases, and other forms of web content (for example: text, images, sounds, videos and animations) allow organisations to communicate directly with buyers (Meerman Scott, 2007:11). Until the significant growth in and use of the Internet in recent years, the public relations industry's main focus and function were to manage the communication between organisations and the news media. With the introduction of new ways of communicating via the Internet and social media, the focus and function have changed, and the public relations industry is being forced to consider and engage with new and sometimes unexpected audiences.

It is therefore clear that the development of new communication technologies and their increasing implementation, as well as the ways in which organisations are communicating with all their stakeholders, have changed. Further, new technologies have introduced novel stakeholders like customers, e-activists, lobby groups and industry regulators, who are now incorporated into the audiences that require direct and immediate communication by PR practitioners.

Solis and Breakenridge (2009:165) further state that "as part of the new media regime, strategically participating in social media is not only critical in the evolution of public relations (PR), but it is also necessary to effectively

communicate with the people that can help you extend the conversations that impact your business".

Rodney (2009:[1]) maintains that the impact of social media on corporate communications is changing the role of the PR practitioner. In short, the world has changed, and the dynamics of PR have changed with it.

1.1.1 Social media change public relations globally

But first, social media and traditional media require a brief explanation. Mangold and Faulds (2009:357-365) define social media as "a wide range of online word-of-mouth forums including blogs, company-sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer e-mails, consumer product or service ratings websites, Internet discussion boards and forums, moblogs (sites containing digital audio, images, movies, or photographs), and social websites (such as Facebook and Twitter), to name a few". The present study focuses on the impact of social media on PR practice in South Africa, including blogs and social networking sites (hereafter referred to as SNSs), such as Facebook and Twitter.

Traditional media, on the other hand, include all the forms of "old" media used to communicate a message to an audience without using Internet technologies. Examples of old media include: television, radio, newspapers, magazines and outdoor media like billboards. Traditional media and new media are described in greater detail in Chapter 3.

It is evident that the rise of social media has presented the world of PR with a new paradigm. The need to investigate, on an academic level, the impact of the increased application of social media on the PR industry arises from this.

1.1.2 Replication study in South Africa

This study replicates Wright and Hinson's (2009) annual international survey amongst PR practitioners, in the context of South Africa as a developing country with an emerging economy.

Dr Donald K. Wright is Harold Burson Professor and Chair in Public Relations at Boston University's College of Communication. He is an internationally recognised public relations scholar and corporate communications consultant. His co-researcher, Michelle Hinson, is Director of Development for the Institute of Public Relations (IPR).

The study under replication (Wright & Hinson, 2009) is an annual report on an international, longitudinal trend study examining the impact of social media and other aspects of the new technologies on current PR practice. The study has been conducted annually since 2008, and results strongly suggest that new communication media are having a dramatic impact on PR practice globally. According to Wright and Hinson (2009:6), although the original intention of these annual trend surveys was to use the same questionnaire each consecutive year, the reality is that social media have changed dramatically since the research project was initiated. Consequently, it has become necessary for regular updates on the measuring instrument each year. In light of that, some of the findings reported in the 2009 paper presented benchmarks reflecting variations on responses from the previous year, while other results are for items investigated for the first time in 2009.

Permission was obtained from Wright and Hinson (2009) to replicate the original study in 2009, but the study was subsequently repeated in 2010 and, 2011, and currently in 2012. However, since the authors granted permission for the replication of the 2009 study in the year this study commenced, this paper focuses on the objectives of that particular research paper and not the subsequent annual surveys.

The main findings of the study (Wright & Hinson, 2009:5-18) included results indicating that:
- Blogs and social media have improved the practice of PR;
- Social media and traditional media complement each other;
- The increasing use of blogs and social media has changed the ways in which organisations communicate, with specific focus on external stakeholders and audiences;

- Social media complement traditional news media;

- Blogs and social media influence coverage in traditional news media; and

- Blogs and social media have made communication with external stakeholders immediate by forcing organisations to respond timeously to communication (and audience criticism).

Wright and Hinson (2009:5) conducted their research by surveying public relations practitioners (PRPs) in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa and South America. A search of leading electronic journal databases, including EBSCOHost, Emerald, Google Scholar, Proquest and ScienceDirect, suggested that no specific academic research has examined the impact of social media on public relations practice in South Africa. Through these research engines it was also found that, so far, only a few research studies have investigated the impact of social media on the public relations practice from the global perspective. The research by Wright and Hinson (2008) and Gillin (2008:2) addressed aspects of the global impact of social media on public relations practice.

Table 1.1 summarises the countries in which the above-mentioned studies were conducted.

Table 1.1: Global research on increased social media use PR

Title	Countries and % of respondents		Reference
Examining the increasing impact of social media on public relations practice.	North America Europe Asia and Australia Africa South America Other (not specified)	67% 11% 10% 10% 2% 2%	Wright and Hinson (2009:5)
New media, new influencers and implications for the public relations profession.	USA Europe Canada South America Australia Africa Asia	70% 18% 4% 4% 2% 1% 1%	Gillin (2008:2)

Table 1.1 indicates that the studies have focused mainly on established developed countries such as North America and the European countries. Neither of these studies examined the impact of the increased use of social media on the PR practice specifically in a developing country with an emerging economy. The developing countries included in the studies by Wright and Hinson (2009:5) and Gillin (2008:2), that is, Africa and South America, did not form a large section of the research sample, and could therefore not be used as a reliable indicator of the impact of social media use on the PR practice in developing countries with emerging markets.

South Africa is a developing country with an emerging economy, and other emerging economies worldwide are shown to be home to many more bloggers than countries such as the USA. Patricios (2009:[1]) indicates that blogging in the emerging economy countries grew by 58% between September 2006 and March 2008. Third World countries with emerging economies are embracing social media even more enthusiastically than are mature markets, which has exciting implications for business in these emerging economies (Smith, 2008:[1]). The next step is therefore to measure how the increased use of social media is impacting on the PR practice of a developing country with an emerging economy, such as South Africa, and to compare such a study with similar studies conducted in developed countries.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem statement addressed in this study concerns the lacuna in research into new media technologies, specifically social media (such as the SNSs Facebook and Twitter, blogs, news delivery sites and content-sharing sites) and how this affects PR practice in South Africa, a developing country with an emerging economy. This study also provides a theoretical basis for the replication of Wright and Hinson's (2009) study by introducing and implementing a conceptualisation and a meta-theoretical framework for the research. Another dimension is thereby added to the existing international body of PR and communication management knowledge for academia, and a

theoretical perspective on the impact of social media on the South African PR practice is included.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The specific research question that guided the study was: *What is the impact of social media, in the form of SNSs like Facebook and Twitter, blogs, news delivery sites and content-sharing sites, on PR practice in South Africa, a developing country with an emerging economy*?

The research replicated the objectives of Wright and Hinson's (2009) study in the South African PR context, the difference being that South Africa is a developing country with an emerging economy. With the increased use of social media in South Africa, the comparison of current PR practice with that in developed countries yielded interesting results.

This research study achieved the following:
- It replicated the objectives of Wright and Hinson's (2009) study, but in South Africa, a developing country with an emerging economy;
- It allowed for comparison of current South African PR practice following the advent of new social media in the country with practice in developed countries such as North America and Europe, which were included in the original study;
- It offered the added advantage of including a meta-theoretical perspective of the impact of social media on the PR industry globally and in South Africa.

The results were compared with those of Wright and Hinson's (2009:5) research among practitioners in North America, Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa and South America. This in turn added the final dimension to this study, a comparison of how the increased application of social media is impacting the PR practice, between a developed country (such as North America) and a developing country with an emerging economy (South Africa).

1.4   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The eleven objectives of this study were divided into two separate sets: one replication set and one comparison set. The first seven objectives were replications of objectives tested in the original study but in the context of South African PR practice.

The seven replication objectives include:

•   To determine whether social media (such as SNSs like Facebook and Twitter, blogs, news delivery sites and content-sharing sites) influence traditional, mainstream news media, or whether the reverse is true;

•   To determine whether the immediacy of social media has forced organisations to respond more rapidly to criticism;

•   To determine whether the emergence of social media has changed the ways in which organisations communicate;

•   To determine whether blogs and social media complement or conflict with mainstream traditional news media;

•   To determine whether it is considered ethical for employees to write and post negative statements about their organisations on blogs;

•   To determine whether it is considered ethical on the part of organisations to monitor information written by their employees on weblogs; and

•   To determine whether it is ethical for an organisation to conduct research or measurement studies focusing on information written by their employees on weblogs.

The second set of objectives was used to compare the findings of the study by Wright and Hinson (2009) with the findings of this study (in order to determine how South Africa, a developing country with an emerging economy, measures up to PR practice in developing countries).

The four comparative objectives include:

- To determine whether the influence of blogs and social media on mainstream media in South Africa is in line with global trends;

- To determine whether the way in which South African companies react to social media is on par with that by their global counterparts;

- To determine whether the ethical views on employee blogging and company monitoring of employee blogging are the same as those of global companies; and

- To determine whether PR practitioners are responding to social media in an emerging economy using the same communication management strategies as those followed by global practitioners.

1.5 CONCEPTUALISATION AND THE META-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The following elements are represented in the framework: a meta-theoretical approach, grand theory, world view, academic disciplines, subfields within academic disciplines and recognised theories within these domains. Each of these is briefly described:

1.5.1 Meta-theoretical approach

According to Jansen and Steynberg (1991:6-7), a meta-theoretical approach offers a view that applies to an entire phenomenon, based on specific assumptions or presuppositions. It generates a number of individual theories, each representing a particular version of the same view.

1.5.2 Grand Theory

According to Cherry (2011:[1]), grand theories are the comprehensive ideas often proposed by major thinkers in human studies. These theories seek to explain much of human behaviour, but are often considered outdated and incomplete in the face of modern research. Psychologists and researchers

often use grand theories as a basis for exploration, but consider smaller theories and recent research as well.

1.5.3 World View

A world view, according to Glazier and Grover (2002:317), is defined as the attitudes, beliefs, views, social reality, and mindset of a particular individual or group of people. It can be called an "extra-scientific" world view and represents the subjective component of theory.

1.5.4 Academic disciplines and subfields within academic disciplines

According to Krishnan (2009:10), the term "academic discipline" incorporates many elements in the meaning of "discipline". It is a technical term for the organisation of learning as well as the systematic production of new knowledge. The following criteria and characteristics indicate whether a subject is indeed a distinct discipline (Krishnan, 2009:10):

- Disciplines have a particular object of research, although this research may be shared with another discipline;
- Disciplines have a body of accumulated specialist knowledge referring to their object of research, which is specific to them and not generally shared with another discipline;
- Disciplines use specific terminologies or a specific technical language adjusted to their research objects;
- Disciplines have developed specific research methods according to their particular research requirements;
- Disciplines must have some institutional manifestation in the form of subjects taught at universities or colleges, the respective academic departments and professional associations connected with them. Disciplines hold with theories, concepts and subfields used for organising the accumulated specialist knowledge effectively.

1.5.5 Theories

Kerlinger and Lee (2000:11) maintain that a theory is a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions and propositions that represent a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena.

A theory can also be defined as a statement or a collection of statements specifying the relationships between variables with a view to explaining phenomena such as human behaviour (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:21). Stinchcombe (1973:3) defines a theoretical domain as a set of possible uses to which a concept might be put. It consists of a set of other concepts, which may enter into theories together with the concept to be measured.

The current study is based in a meta-theoretical framework with the research objective of determining the impact of social media on the practice of public relations in South Africa as a developing country. Figure 1.1 illustrates the framework followed by a discussion of the relevant elements identified in the framework. (As discussed in section 1.2, this theory-based content serves as a contribution to the existing academic body of knowledge.)

Figure 1.1: Conceptualisation and meta-theoretical framework

CONCEPTUALISATION

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE	To determine the impact of social media on the practice of PR in South Africa as a developing country with an emerging economy.

META-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

GRAND THEORY	Excellence theory		
WORLD VIEW	Two-way symmetrical communication		
ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES	Information Technology (IT)	Public Relations (PR) Communication management	Media studies
SUBFIELDS WITHIN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES	Social media	Crisis communication Relationship management	New mass media and traditional mass media
THEORIES	Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Stakeholder theory	Maslow's hierarchy of needs Uses and gratifications theory

1.5.5.1   Excellence theory as the grand theory

Since 1985 a team of six researchers, funded by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation and led by James Grunig (1992:15-16) of the University of Maryland in the USA, have been conducting research into the characteristics of excellent PR departments and on how such departments make their organisations more effective.

According to Yun (2009:287-312), Excellence Theory has established a generally accepted conceptual framework for excellence in communication management in PR, by means of a sequence of empirical studies. The theory was put through an intensive investigation period during its inception between 1990 and 1991. The investigation encompassed surveys by over 5,000 respondents from 327 organisations in Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Research was conducted to determine whether organisations identified as excellent overall would also have excellent PR programmes. The review isolated 12 characteristics of excellent organisations, some suggesting characteristics of excellent PR departments and others suggesting how communication contributes to excellence in overall management (Grunig, 1992:15-16).

The characteristics include: human resource, organic structure, entrepreneurship, symmetrical communication systems, leadership, strong, participative cultures, strategic planning, social responsibility, support for women and minorities, quality as a priority, effective operational systems and a collaborative societal culture (Grunig, 1992:15-16).

Excellence Theory argues that, in order for an organisation to be classified as excellent, it needs to exist and function in the context of a two-way symmetrical approach.

Table 1.2 contains a summary of each of the 12 characteristics, as well as a definition of each characteristic (Grunig, 1992:16-17).

Table 2.2:   Definitions of characteristics of the Execellence theory

CHARACTERISTIC	DEFINTION
Human resources	Excellent organisations empower people by giving employees autonomy and allowing them to make strategic decisions. Such organisations also pay attention to the personal growth and quality of work-life of employees. They emphasise the interdependence of employees rather than their independence. They also emphasise integration rather than segmentation and strike a balance between teamwork and individual effort.
Organic structure	People cannot be empowered by fiat. Organisations give people power by eliminating bureaucratic, hierarchical organisational structures. They develop what organisational theorists call an organic structure. They decentralise decisions, managing without managers as much as possible. They also avoid stratification of employees, humiliating some by having such symbols as executive dining rooms, corner offices or reserved parking spaces. At the same time they use leadership, collaboration and culture rather than structure to integrate the organisation.
Intrapreneurship	Excellent organisations have an innovative, entrepreneurial spirit – frequently called intrapreneurship. Intrapreneurship is related to other characteristics of excellent organisations: A spirit of intrepreneurship occurs in organisations that develop organic

CHARACTERISTIC	DEFINTION
	structures and cultivate human resources.
Symmetrical communication systems	Although studies of organisational excellence do not use the term symmetrical communication, they all describe it, with both internal and external publics. Excellent organisations "stay close" to their customers, employees, and other strategic consistencies.
Leadership	Excellent organisations have leaders that rely on networking and "management-by-walking-around" rather than authoritarian systems. Excellent leaders give people power but minimise power politics. At the same time, excellent leaders provide a vision and direction for the organisation, creating order out of the chaos that the empowerment of people can create.
Strong, participative cultures	Employees of excellent organisations share a sense of mission. They are integrated by a strong culture that values human resources, organic structures, innovation and symmetrical communication.
Strategic planning	Excellent organisations strive to maximise the bottom line by identifying the most important opportunities and constraints in their environment.
Social responsibility	Excellent organisations manage with an eye to the effects of their decisions on society as well as on the organisation.
Support for women and minorities	Excellent organisations recognise the value of diversity by employing female and minority workers and taking steps to foster their careers.
Quality is a priority	Total quality is a priority not only in words or the company's philosophy statement but a priority when actions are taken, decisions are made, or resources are allocated.
Effective operational systems	Excellent organisations build systems for the day-to-day management of the organisation that implement the previous characteristics.
A collaborative societal culture	Organisations will more often be excellent in societies whose cultures emphasise collaboration, participation, trust, and mutual responsibility.

Source: Grunig (1992:16-17).

Grunig (1992:19) concludes that excellent PR does not exist in isolation, but is rather a characteristic of an excellent organisation. The characteristics of excellence in the organisation as an entity provide the conditions that make excellent PR possible. In addition, excellent communication management can be the catalyst that begins to make organisations excellent and continues to make them more excellent as time passes.

1.5.5.2   Two-way symmetrical communication as the world view

According to Grunig (1992:18), one of four models of PR is typically practised in the industry, namely; press agentry, public information, the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model.

Both press agentry and public information are one-way models of PR; they describe communication programmes that are not based on research and strategic planning.

The two-way asymmetrical model is a more sophisticated approach in that it uses research to develop messages that are most likely to persuade strategic publics to behave as the organisation wants.

Two-way symmetrical communication, on the other hand, describes a model of PR that is based on research and that uses communication to manage conflict and improve understanding with strategic publics. It is therefore suggested that excellent PR departments model more of their communication programmes on two-way symmetrical communication.

Following Grunig (1992:18), the two-way symmetrical model is considered to be the world view in this study. This theory reflects the basis of social media (to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3), as, by its nature, social media are based on the flow of two-way communication.

1.5.5.3   Three academic disciplines and their subfields

The three main academic disciplines for this study are information technology (IT), PR and Communication Management, and Media Studies. Under each academic discipline, the following subfields are identified:
• Information Technology (IT): social media;
• PR and Communication Management: crisis communication and relationship management;
• Media studies: new mass media and traditional mass media.

These three disciplines and their respective subfields are briefly discussed here in order to define each within the context of the meta-theoretical framework of the current study.

- <u>Information technology (IT)</u>

According to Butler (1997:[2]), there are four distinct periods in the history of IT systems. Each period is characterised by a principal technology used to solve the input, processing, output and communication problems of the time. The four periods include:

- Pre-mechanical (period 3000 B.C. – 1450 A.D.);

- Mechanical (period 1450 – 1840);

- Electro-mechanical (period 1840 – 1940); and

- Electronic (period 1940 to present).

According to Brynjolfssen and Hitt (2000:23-48), information technology (IT) is defined as computers as well as related digital communication technology. Information technology (IT) encompasses the general power to reduce the costs associated with co-ordination, communications, and information processing. The majority of modern industries are therefore being significantly affected by computerisation in the current IT era.

Gregory (2004:245–254) states that IT is closely linked with globalisation. The ability to send or access information instantly and across any time or geographical barriers brings opportunities and threats to the PR officer. Crises that require communication with strategic stakeholders can escalate rapidly. At the same time, definitive information about a crisis can be provided, resulting in an effective and timeous response.

Information technology can thus be viewed, from the perspective of communication, as both a threat and an opportunity for organisations and PR practitioners.

- <u>Social media</u>

According to Mayfield (2007:[1]), social media are best understood as a new kind of online media, which share the following characteristics; participation, openness, conversation, community, connectedness.

The social media phenomenon is discussed in great detail and depth in Chapter 3 of this study.

- Public relations (PR) and communication management

The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) National Assembly (1982:[1]) formally adopted a definition of public relations (PR) which is today widely accepted as a standard industry definition: "Public relations help an organisation and its publics adapt mutually to each other".

According to the same definition, PR, as a management function, also encompasses the following:

- Anticipating, analysing and interpreting public opinion, attitudes and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organisation;
- Counselling management at all levels of the organisation with regard to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account their public ramifications and the organisation's social or citizenship responsibilities;
- Researching, conducting and evaluating, on a continuing basis, programmes of action and communication to achieve the informed public understanding necessary to the success of an organisation's aims. These may include marketing, financial, fund raising, employee, community or government relations; and other programs and;
- Planning and implementing the organisation's efforts to influence or change public policy means setting objectives, planning, budgeting, recruiting and training staff, developing facilities, in short, managing the resources needed to perform all of these..

Simplifying the above definition of PR, Grunig (1992:4) defines PR as the overall planning, execution and evaluation of an organisation's communication with both external and internal publics or groups that affect the ability of an organisation to meet its goals. For the purpose of this study, this definition is accepted as a definition for public relations (PR).

According to Gregory (2004:245–254), the PR industry is an industry in the ascendancy. The formation of the Global Alliance of Public Relations Institutes (hereafter referred to as Global Alliance) in 2002 recognised the growth of the global communications industry, as well as the need to regulate and promote the profession. The Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management is the confederation of the world's major PR and communication management associations and institutions, representing 160,000 practitioners and educators around the world. The Global Alliance's mission is to unify the PR profession, raise professional standards all over the world, share knowledge for the benefit of its members and be the global voice for public relations in the public interest (Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management, 2011:[1]).

Gregory (2004:245–254) further states that the current global village (linked to globalisation) in which organisations operate creates the need for the PR industry to communicate in an appropriate way that spans timelines, cultures, religions, languages and communication delivery systems.

Different definitions of PR are discussed in detail in Chapter 2 of the study. However, the accepted definition of PR in this study will be the planning, executing and management of all internal and external publics of an organisation; and [it] forms an integral part of the overall communication management strategy of the organisation.

- ***How PR functions and Communication Management relate***

Grunig and Hunt (1984:6) define PR as "the management of communication between an organisation and its publics", while Steyn (2007:140) defines communication management as the management of communication between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders/other societal interest groups. These two definitions and terms can, based on these definitions, be equated with each other.

Goodman, Genest, Cayo and Ng (2009:197) state that corporate communication is used as an umbrella term for a number of functions

regarded as strategic. These functions include "public relations, crisis communication, corporate citizenship, reputation management, community relations, media relations, investor relations", and the like. It is therefore assumed that the terms 'Public Relations', 'Corporate communication' and 'Communication Management' can be used interchangeably owing to the similar nature of the definitions provided, although some may argue slight differences between them.

- <u>Crisis communication</u>

According to Coombs (2007:1), a crisis is defined as a significant threat to operations that can have negative consequences if not handled properly. In crisis management, the threat is the potential damage a crisis can inflict on an organisation, its stakeholders, and an industry. A crisis can create three related threats: public safety, financial loss, and loss of reputation.

- <u>Relationship management</u>

Ledingham and Brunig (2000:xiii) state that "the emergence of relationship management as a paradigm for PR scholarship and practice calls into question the essence of public relations - what it is and what it does or should do, its function and value within the organisational structure and the greater society, and the benefits generated not only for the sponsoring organisations but also for the publics those organisations serve and the communities and societies in which they exist".

According to Ledingham (2003:181-198), the Relationship Management Theory perspective holds that PR balances the interests of organisations and publics through the management of organisation–public relationships. Within that perspective, PR is seen as the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends.

Four pivotal developments spurred the emergence of the relational perspective as a framework for PR study, teaching, and practice (Ledingham, 2001a:285–295):

• Recognition of the central role of relationships in PR;

• Reconceptualising PR as a management function;

• Identification of components and types of organisation–public relationships, their linkage to public attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and behaviour, and relationship measurement strategies; and

• Construction of organisation–public relationship models that accommodate relationship antecedents, process, and consequences.

• <u>Media studies</u>

Akin (2005:[1]) defines mass media as all forms of information communicated to large groups of people, from a handmade sign to an international news network.

Wimmer and Dominick (2006:2) define mass media as any form of communication that simultaneously reaches a large number of people, including (but not limited to) television, radio, newspapers, books, magazines, the Internet, billboards, films and recordings.

According to the meta-theoretical framework of this study, the following sub-fields of mass media are identified: traditional mass media and new mass media.

• <u>New and traditional mass media</u>

Both sub-fields are briefly summarised in Table 1.3, and discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Table 3.3:   Subfields in media studies as an academic discipline

ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE		
MEDIA STUDIES		
SUBFIELD	**DESCRIPTION**	**EXAMPLES**
Traditional mass media	All forms of mass media, excluding Internet and electronically- based forms of media.	TV, radio, newspapers, books, magazines and outdoor media, such as billboards
New mass media	According to van Dijk (2006:9), the new media are defined by three characteristics simultaneously; they are integrated and interactive and also used digital code at the turn of the 20th and 21st century. It follows that their most common alternative names are multimedia, interactive media and digital media.	Internet, social media, websites, mobi sites, blogs and social networking sites

Hongcharu and Eiamkanchanalai (2009:33) make definitive channel characteristic distinctions between traditional mass media and new mass media.

The channel characteristics include synchronicity, anonymity and privacy, information processing, audience control, self-delivery, purpose-based searching and contextual availability. Each channel characteristic is briefly discussed:

• Synchronicity is defined as the degree to which the sender sends the message to the receiver and the receiver can respond to the messaging simultaneously (Lui & Shiram, 2005:103-124);

• Anonymity and privacy is the ability of participants in the media to conceal their identity (Hongcharu & Eiamkanchanalai, 2009:31-35);

• Information processing is the way in which the audience processes the information: self-paced and externally-paced (Belch & Belch, 2009);

• Audience control generally favours new mass media channels, as opposed to traditional mass media. The audience can control content absorption, which is generally not the case with traditional mass media channels (Hoffman & Novak, 1996:50-68);

• Self-delivery is possible with new mass media channels, as they enable the direct delivery of informational products or services to customers;

- This is not possible when using traditional mass media channels (Hongcharu & Eiamkanchanalai, 2009:31-35);

- When it comes to the new mass media, the internet as a medium is loaded with information, so search instructions must be very specific. Purpose-based searching is appropriate for this (Rodgers & Thomson, 2000:1); and

- Contextual availability refers to the availability of the environment surrounding the marketing communication messages (Hongcharu & Eiamkanchanalai, 2009:31-35).

A comparison of the traditional mass media with the new mass media channel characteristics is listed in Table 1.4.

Table 4.4: A comparison between traditional mass media and new mass media

Characteristic	Traditional mass media	New mass media
Synchronicity	Impossible	Delayed response
Anonymity and privacy	Sender: revealed Receiver: concealed	High
Information processing	Self-paced for print. Externally paced for electronic	Both
Audience control	Impossible	Possible
Self-delivery	Impossible	Possible
Purpose-based searching	Does not form an objective to search	Must form an objective to search
Contextual availability	Abundant	Scattered

Source: Adapted from Hongcharu and Eiamkanchanalai (2009:31-35).

This study is investigating the factors influencing the increased application of social media in South African PR practice. It is evident from the preceding discussion that the channel of mass media that includes social media is the new mass media channel. This research study therefore investigates mass media in a specifically new mass media context. The latter will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.5.6 Theories from the respective academic disciplines

Table 1.5 indicates the main theories, according to the meta-theoretical framework used in this study:

Table 5.5: Theories discussed in academic disciplines

Theory	Academic discipline
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)	Information Technology (IT)
Maslow's hierarchy of needs	Media studies
Uses and Gratifications theory	PR and Communication Management

The core elements of each theoretical argument are briefly mentioned here, based on Figure1.1. The theoretical arguments are discussed in more detail in the relevant chapters of the study, as indicated in the respective sections below.

- **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**

According to Davis (1989:319-340), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is an adaptation of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) specifically tailored for modelling user acceptance of information systems. The goal of TAM is to provide an explanation for the determinants of computer acceptance that is general, as well as capable of explaining user behaviour across a broad range of end-user computing technologies and user populations, while at the same time being both parsimonious and theoretically justified.

Figure 1.2 illustrates the elements of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

Figure 2.2: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)
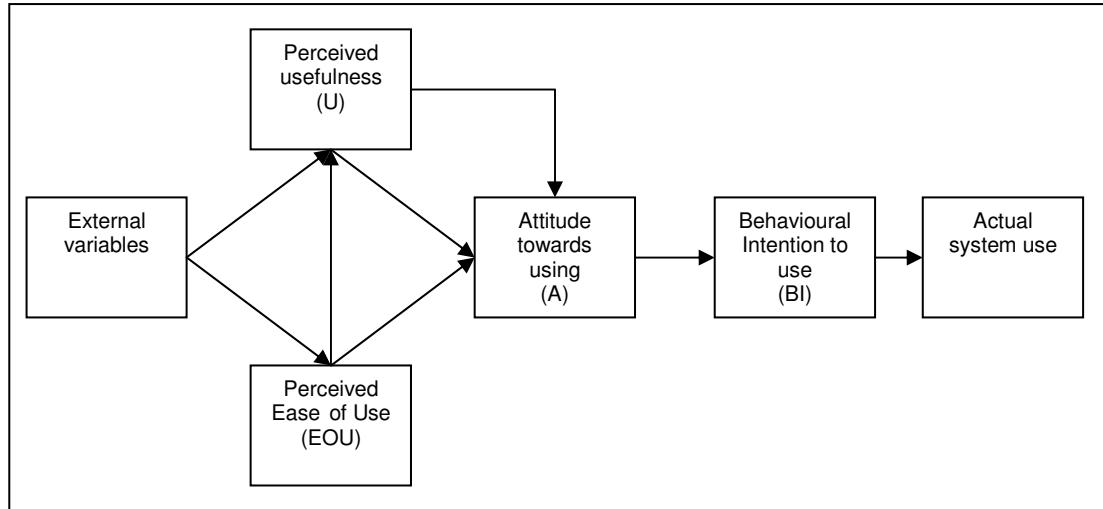
Source: Davis (1989:319).

According to Davis (1989:319), as can be seen in Figure 1.2, TAM posits that two particular beliefs, perceived usefulness (U) and perceived ease of use (EOU), are of primary relevance for computer acceptance behaviours. Perceived usefulness (U) is defined as the prospective user's subjective expectation at using a specific application system will increase his or her job performance within the organisational context. Perceived ease of use (EOU) refers to the degree to which the prospective user expects the target system to be free of effort.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is explored in further detail in Chapter 3.

• **Stakeholder theory**

The origins of stakeholder theory draw on four key academic fields; Sociology, Economics, Politics and Ethics – and especially the literature on corporate planning, systems theory, corporate social responsibility and organisational theory (Mainardes, Alves & Raposa, 2011:4).

Freeman's (1984) research, which is generally accepted as having launched the concepts in stakeholder theory, defines how stakeholders with similar interests or rights form a group. What Freeman sought to explain was the

relationship between a company with its external environment and its behaviour within this environment. The author set out his model as if it were a chart in which the company is positioned at the centre and is involved with stakeholders connected with it.

According to Mainardes *et al.* (2011:230), the basic premises of the stakeholder theory are:

- The organisation enters into relationships with many groups that influence or are influenced by the company;

- The theory focuses on the nature of these relationships in terms of processes and results for the company and for stakeholders;

- The interests of all legitimate stakeholders are of intrinsic value and it is assumed that there is no single prevailing set of interests;

- The theory focuses upon management decision-making;

- The theory explains how stakeholders try to influence organisational decision-making processes to make it consistent with their needs and priorities; and

- Organisations should attempt to understand and balance the interests of the various participants.

In Chapter 2, the stakeholder theory is further explored and applied in the context of this study.

- **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Over the past few years, the social media phenomenon has shown unprecedented growth and increased use on a global scale. Ray (2008:[1]) argues that the reason that online communities, driven mostly by social media, have succeeded in such phenomenal growth can be seen as based in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1967:93-127): communities exist to satisfy human needs.

According to Hall and Nougaim (1968:12-35), Maslow's theory of human motivation (1967:93-127) asserts that human motives emerge as a sequential

pattern according to a hierarchy of five need levels. Listed in order from lowest to highest, these levels are (Hall & Nougaim, 1968:12-35):

- Physiological: tissue needs such as hunger and thirst;

- Safety: needs for security or absence of threat;

- Affiliation: need for close affective relationships;

- Achievement and esteem: need for achievement and self respect;

- Self-actualisation: need for the use and growth of one's potential, skills and abilities.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is further explored in Chapter 3, which takes a theoretical perspective on Maslow's hierarchy, followed by a suggested model conceptualising social media in corporate communication management.

- **Uses and Gratification Theory**

Ruggiero (2000:3) argues that, in the mass communication field, the uses and gratification theory is a meticulous social science theory, so research into mass communication science and speculation on it ought to be based on this theory.

The focus of the uses and gratification theory is on what people do with the media rather than on the influence or impact of the media on the individual (Katz, Blumer & Gurevitch, 1974:19-34). By conceiving of the audience as actively choosing and using media in response to specific needs, the foundations for examining gratifications obtained from the media are put in place.

Quan-Haase and Young (2010:350) point out that what distinguishes audiences in the uses and gratification theory from audiences in earlier communication theories is that they are classified as active, discerning and motivated in their media use.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN

As discussed earlier in this chapter, this study replicates an annual quantitative international, longitudinal trend study examining the impact of social media and other aspects of the new technologies on PR practice (Wright & Hinson, 2009).

Chapter 5 is dedicated to discussing the research design of the study. It also focuses on the data reliability and validity.

1.7 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

This study involves a number of key concepts and terms, most of which have been explained in this chapter. The following require further explication:

Table 6.6: Further explanation of of key terms

Key term	Definition	Reference
Emerging economy	An economy with low-to-middle per capita income. Such countries constitute approximately 80% of the global population, representing about 20% of the world's economies.	(Heakel, 2009:[1])
Social media	A term used to describe the web-based tools, applications, spaces and practices that people use to interact with each other and to share information online. Examples include social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook and Twitter, blogs, news delivery sites and content-sharing sites	(Anderson, 2009:[1])
Social networking sites (SNS)	For example, Facebook and Twitter	
Blog	A frequent, chronological publication of personal thoughts and web links.	(Marketing Terms, 2007:[1])
Forums	An online community where visitors may read and post topics of common interest.	(Marketing Terms, 2007:[1])
RSS	Really Simple Syndication	
UCCs	User created content	

1.8 RESEARCH ETHICS

1.8.1 Copyright and plagiarism

The researcher declares that the work is free of plagiarism and there is no infringement of copyright.

1.8.2 Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from participation at any time

All participants in both phases of the study were involved on a strictly voluntary basis. The participants in the electronic survey were informed in writing that their participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any stage.

1.8.3 Informed consent and the deception of participants

In the covering letter that was sent to all participants it was stated that by completing the survey participants were giving their full consent to participation. It was also stated that once the survey was complete, consent could not be withdrawn.

1.8.4 Confidentiality and anonymity

During the research, all participants were informed in writing that their participation was confidential and anonymous.

1.8.5 Researcher's objectivity, honesty and integrity

The researcher in this study committed to complete transparency, honesty and integrity when conducting the research and data analysis.

1.9 DELIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The study has several delimitations related to the constructs and theoretical perspectives of the study.

Regarding its context, the study is limited to the PR industry. The study therefore did not consider the role of other communication and marketing practitioners who might influence communication with an organisation's publics.

Several basic assumptions underlined the proposed research study. It was assumed that:

- All the PR practitioners surveyed were engaging with some form of social media or were or in contact with them;
- Quantitative research is an appropriate means of exploring this human phenomenon;
- Survey research succeeded in gathering the required data from the PR practitioners regarding the impact of social media on their communication activities with the company's publics; and
- As the rise of bloggers in emerging economies is stronger than that in first-world countries like the US (Patricios, 2009:[1]), it was assumed that the impact of social media on PR practice in South Africa is potentially different from that on the same industry in countries with developed economies.

1.10 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

There are seven chapters in this study. Chapters 1-4 contain the background discussion and literature review. In Chapters 5 and 6, the research methodology and data collection are discussed, and Chapter 7 concludes the study with recommendations. Table 1.7 shows a layout of the chapters.

Table 7.7:   Layout of chapters

Chapter	Contents
CHAPTER 1: Orientation and motivation	This chapter explores the background and motivation on which the study is based. It discusses the main research problem and specific research objectives of the study. It presents a meta-theoretical framework as part of the conceptualisation of the research to hand. Finally, it includes a brief description of the strategy of research inquiry, definition of key terms, and the demarcation of chapters.
CHAPTER 2: Public Relations and Communication Management	From the theoretical point of view, the relationship management theory and stakeholder theory are evaluated in Chapter 2. In this chapter, corporate communications management and public relations are defined, and each is discussed as a role player in the other. The corporate communications and public relations industries are also discussed in the South African context.
CHAPTER 3: The social media landscape	From the academic perspective, a theoretical take on Maslow's hierarchy of needs is adopted, followed by a suggested model conceptualising social media in corporate communications management. The users and gratification theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) are also discussed. The chapter deals with a discussion on traditional media and the social media phenomenon, and draws a comparison between traditional media and social media. The different forms of social media are then detailed, followed by the perceived advantages and disadvantages of social media. South Africa is discussed as a developing country with an emerging economy. In conclusion, the social media landscape in South Africa is explored.
CHAPTER 4: Legal and ethical implications of social media	In this chapter, social media platforms, specifically blogs, Facebook and Twitter, are discussed from an ethical and legal perspective.
CHAPTER 5: Research design and methodology	In this chapter, the research strategy of inquiry and broad research design are discussed. The method of sampling, data collection, reliability assessment and data analysis used in this study are also discussed.
CHAPTER 6: Reporting and discussion of findings	The results of the survey are discussed in this chapter. The results are also compared with results from the original study (Wright & Hinson, 2009).
CHAPTER 7: Conclusion and recommendations	In the final chapter the, conclusion and recommendations of the study are detailed.

1.11 FLOW CHART OF CHAPTERS

The figure below illustrates how the chapters will be presented. In Chapter 1, the meta theoretical theory was discussed. In Chapter 2 the academic discipline of PR and communication management will be discussed and in Chapter 3 media studies will be described. Chapter 4 concludes the literature review by focusing on the legal and ethical implications of social media. Chapter 5, 6 and 7 will focus on the research design, process, results, conclusion and recommendations.

Figure 3.3: Flow chart of chapters

Research objective:	To determine the impact of social media on the practice of PR in South Africa as a developing country with an emerging economy.

CHAPTER 1   *"Orientation and motivation"*

CHAPTER 2	**CHAPTER 3**	**CHAPTER 4**
PR & communication management	*The social media landscape*	*The legal and ethical implications of social media"*

CHAPTER 5
"Research design and methodology"

Quantitative research

CHAPTER 6
"Reporting and discussion of findings"

CHAPTER 7
"Conclusion and recommendations"

2 CHAPTER 2
Corporate Communication Management and Public Relations

2.1 INTRODUCTION

"The general message emerging from the accumulated publications is that public relations is in the process of embracing the new opportunities. Practitioners seek to participate in the online conversation on behalf of the organisation they represent, to expand their influence by using the immense space and speed that social media can offer, and to reach out to new stakeholders and influencers. There is now no question about the relevance and benefits of new communication technologies to the practice, and no doubt that currently social media offers both a major challenge, and a major opportunity for public relations" (Toledano, 2010:231).

The purpose of this chapter is to construct the framework in which PR/communication management, social media and relationship building with stakeholders interact, influence and rely on one another.

In Chapter 2, the academic disciplines of communication management and PR are defined and reviewed, as discussed in existing literature. The review is also extended to corporate communication and Van Riel's (2003:163) three main groupings in corporate communication: management communication, marketing communication and organisational communication. The role and relationships of PR in communication management is defined and discussed, focusing on its elements, principles and functions.

The impact and change that Internet technology and social media are having on communication management, and the PR industry in particular, are discussed both academically and practically. The discussion ends with the implications for PR education of new Internet applications and media platforms.

The chapter concludes with an overview of the PR industry in South Africa, drawing on recent research to establish the current state of the practice in the country as an emerging economy.

2.2   COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

According to Tripathi (2009:2), communication management equals process creation, where it has to balance three elements: the message(s), media channel(s) and audience(s). It can therefore be assumed that the core functionality of communication management is to manage a message, the channel through which it is communicated, and the audience at whom it is aimed. Figure 2.1 illustrates the communication function in its simplest form.

Figure 2.1: Communication management illustrated in its simplest form
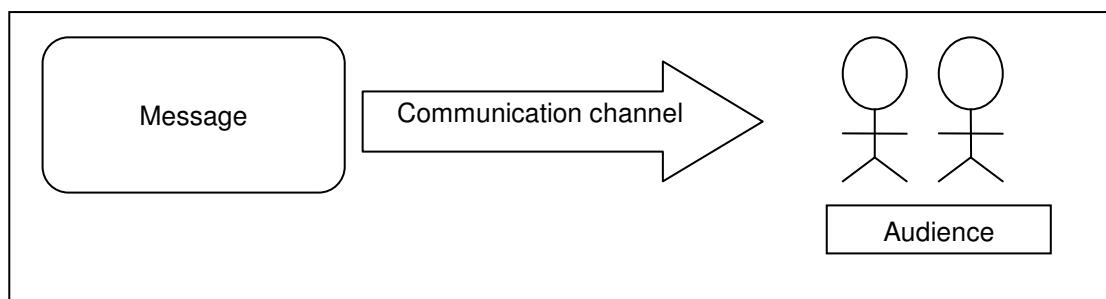
Communication management as a practice can be defined as communication on behalf of an organisation. It is communication managed with the aim of increasing organisational effectiveness by creating and maintaining relationships with stakeholders (Steyn & Puth, 2000:19).

2.3   CORPORATE COMMUNICATION

As discussed in Chapter 1, Goodman *et al.* (2009:197) state that corporate communication is used as an umbrella term for a number of communication functions regarded as strategic in an organisation. According to his reasoning, 'public   relations',   'corporate   communication'   and   'communication

management' can be used interchangeably owing to the similar nature of the definitions provided, although some may argue slight differences between them. Contributing to the discussion, Van Riel (2003:163) adds that, at the beginning of the twenty first century, most universities paid attention to corporate communication, which had been located within business administration and economics since the 1970s. The names used, however, vary greatly. Among them are strategic communication, company communication, organisational communication and, of course, corporate communication.

Van Riel (2003:163) defines corporate communication as the orchestration of all instruments in the field of organisation identity (communication, symbols and the behaviour of the organisation's members) in such an attractive and realistic manner as to create or maintain a positive reputation for groups with which the organisation has a dependent relationship. This results in a competitive advantage for the organisation.

One or two years later, Van Riel and Fombrun (2007:25) defined corporate communication as a discipline, since "the set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communications aimed at creating favourable starting points with stakeholders on which the company depends. Corporate communication consists of the dissemination of information from a variety of specialists and generalists in an organisation, with the common goal of enhancing the organisation's ability to retain its ability to operate".

Theoretically speaking, corporate communication can be divided into three main forms of communication: management communication, marketing communication and organisational communication (Van Riel, 2003:163).

The next section will briefly discuss and define these three main forms of communication.

2.3.1 Three domains of corporate communication

2.3.1.1 <u>Management communication</u>

Management communication is the communication by managers, at different levels, with internal and external target groups (Van Riel, 2003:161). Puth (2002:11) maintains that there can be no doubt that communication is vital to all management functions. In fact, without communication there can be no management. Puth (2002:12) expands on this statement by arguing that the communication skills of an organisation's leaders and their understanding of leadership communication directly influence all other management functions in the organisation [corporation].

In the context of interpersonal and group communication, it is generally accepted that (Puth, 2002:12):

- On average, at least 70% of a leader's [manager's] time is spent on communicating in some form or another;
- The average manager has to speak half a million words a month; and
- Most leaders spend approximately 4473 minutes a month listening to people.

Puth (2002:11) concludes the argument by theorising that leadership and communication go hand in hand. There can be no leadership [management] without communication. To the extent that an organisation essentially consists of its people, it can be said that leadership is communication with people in all of its manifestations.

2.3.1.2 Marketing communication

Marketing communication is the managerial system that ensures timely and comprehensive input into the corporate information and decision-making (generative) process, and the consequent expression of credible, persuasive representations of beneficial exchange opportunities with actual and prospective customers and other stakeholders. Marketing is thus the interface element of the corporate appreciative system (Varey, 2002:128).

Hinson (2005:101) states that marketing communication, as in the standard marketing literature, has always been used to refer to the promotion element in the marketing or services marketing mix. Several American texts have

traditionally defined the marketing-communication mix to be: sales promotion, direct marketing, advertising, personal selling and PR/publicity.

2..3.1.3 <u>Organisational communication</u>

Tompkins (1984:662) defines organisational communication as the study of sending and receiving messages that create and maintain a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more people. Thus, organisational communication in its most basic form refers to the study of how people communicate within an organisational context.

Tukiainen (2001:47) states that members of a working organisation view the communication culture construct from four dimensions of meaning. These dimensions include: the use of the communication system, superior communication and ways of conduct, horizontal face-to-face communication and the functioning of the communication process.

Johansson (2007:275) maintains that, broadly speaking, organisational communication researchers study internal formal communication, and PR researchers study external formal communication. However, Johansson argues that the divide is not defensible, but instead is counterproductive.

Firstly, it is difficult to separate internal from external communication. Internal communication expands beyond organisational borders and external communication experiences great interest from organisational members. On occasions, news on internal processes is first provided to members from external sources like media organisations. Secondly, most communication departments are responsible for both internal and external communication, and practitioners work with communication in its entirety. Thirdly, both research traditions can benefit from each other's strengths.

For the purpose of this study, the aforementioned argument will be supported by the theory informing this research project, that internal and external (in this instance specifically PR) communication are interlinked and work in conjunction with each other.

2.3.2 The functions of corporate communication

Van Riel (2003:165) suggests that the three central questions or functions in the field of corporate communication are: identity cluster, reputation cluster and management of communication.

Each of these central questions or functions is discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.3.2.1 The identity cluster

Van Tonder (2006:12) states that in most current academic sources the matter of corporate identity is mostly addressed as either corporate identity or organisational identity. Corporate identity is substantiated by items from two conceptual groupings in recent research.

The first concept, corporate identity, is traditionally defined as the visual interpretation of an identity, generally referred to as, inter alia, the organisation's corporate colours, logo, taglines and symbols (Van Tonder, 2006:12).

The second grouping, the organisational identity concept, was introduced by Albert and Whetten (1985:263) as those core, distinctive and enduring features unique to an institution.

2.3.2.2 The reputation cluster

According to Carmeli and Tishler (2005:13), the corporate reputation is a perception held by people on both the internal and the external sides of the organisation. A positive organisational reputation is a definitive strategic resource, as it is a direct reflection of the competitive position of the organisation in its competitor market.

2.3.2.3 Management of organisational communication

In its simplest form, organisational communication could be defined as "the studying of sending and receiving messages that create and maintain a

system of consciously coordinated activities of forces of two or more persons"
(Tompkins, 1984:662).

As the literature discussed points out, organisational communication is thus
defined, in its simplest form, as both external and internal communication on
behalf of the organisation (or corporation). This includes all elements of
communication with all the different stakeholders of the organisation.

2.4 THE ROLE OF PR IN COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

According to Van Ruler (2000:403), organisations have long placed an
emphasis, either internally or through third parties, on activities designed to
promote their contact with external parties. These activities are collectively
known as public relations (PR) or as information in the private sector and
public sector respectively.

Grunig (1992:4) equates public relations (PR) with communication
management, defining it as the overall planning, execution and evaluation of
an organisation's communication [thus corporate communication] with both
external and internal public-groups that affect the ability of an organisation to
meet its goals.

PR is no longer the common denominator of the professional in numerous
countries, such as the Netherlands. According to Dozier (1992:327), this could
be ascribed to a perceived need for the profession to have a certain status, or
else it serves as an indication that PR professionals prefer to be seen as
managers rather than technicians.

2.4.1 Defining public relations (PR)

According to Matrat (1990:8), PR, in the sense that the term is generally used,
forms part of the strategy of management. Its function is twofold: to respond to
the expectations of those whose behaviour, judgments and opinions can

influence the operation and development of an enterprise, and in turn to motivate them.

PR practice is the art and science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organisational leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve the interests of both the organisation and the public (Davies, Chun, Da Silva & Roper, 2002:32).

Extracting from the previously stated definitions, PR in this study will be defined as the planning, executing and management of all internal and external publics of an organisation; and forms an integral part of the overall communication management strategy of the organisation.

2.4.2   Elements, principles and functions of PR

Davies *et al.* (2002:32) state that PR in an organisation can be virtually synonymous with media relations. Figure 2.2 summarises the range of broad activities associated with the PR role.

Figure 2.2:   The elements of public relations
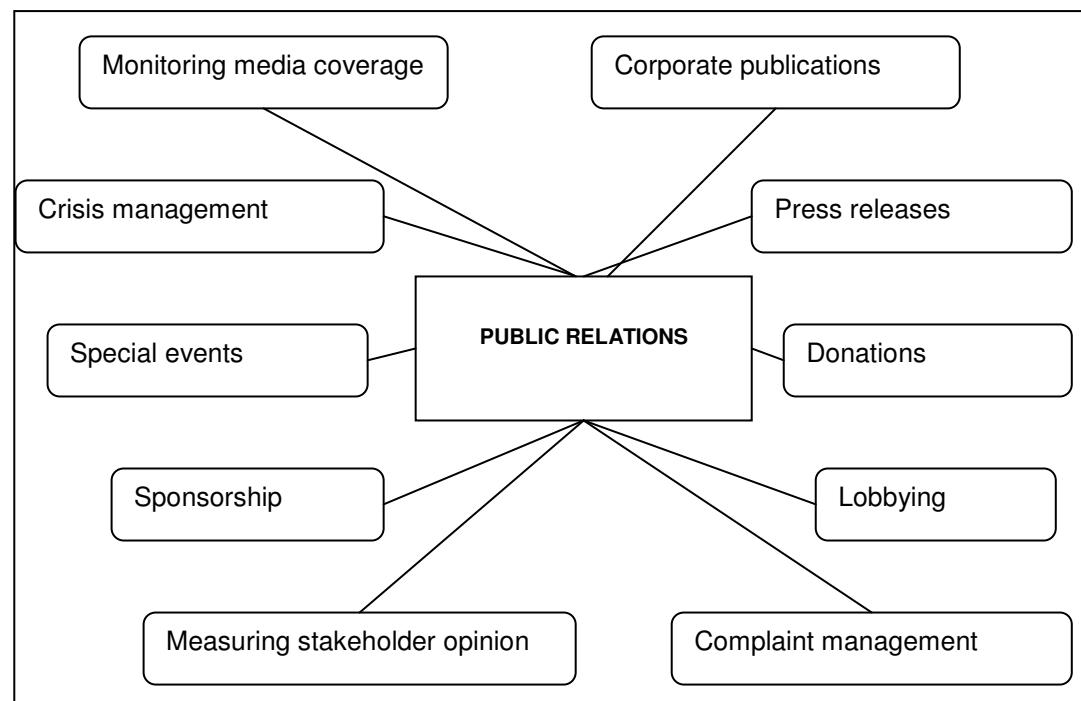
Source: Davies *et al. (*2002:32).

It is possible to extract certain facts about the principle preoccupations and attributes of PR, according to Folarin (2005:203):

- PR is pre-occupied with establishing and maintaining mutual understanding and goodwill between, inter alia, an organisation and its public, a government and its subjects, a ruler and the ruled, a statesman and his compatriots;

- PR is largely a communications discipline or profession with its tentacles in various other branches of knowledge. Simply put, it is an interdisciplinary field;

- PR is at once a science and an art;

- PR is primarily a management function; tough, like other management function, it has its technician operations;

- PR activities are planned and deliberate, not whimsical or fortuitous;

- PR activities are sustained or continuous, not *ad hoc* or tied to the expedient;

- PR is essentially proactive and predictive, although it is often compelled to be reactive; and

- PR thrives on dialogue and persuasion, but is antithetical to social monologue.

According to Grunig and Grunig (2002), public relations is a unique management function that helps an organisation interact with the social, political, and institutional components of its environment. The value of PR can be determined by measuring the quality of the relationships the organisation establishes within its institutional environment.

Conclusions drawn in the research by Grunig and Grunig (2002:34) maintain that the principles of excellent public relations are:

- PR is a unique management function that helps an organisation to interact with the social, political, and institutional components of its environment;

- The value of PR can be determined by measuring the quality of the relationships the organisation establishes within its institutional environment;

- PR serves both a strategic managerial role and a technical role;

- PR departments strategically plan, administer and evaluate PR programmes;

- PR helps to shape the underlying conditions of organisational excellence in terms of the organisational culture and structure;

- Communication activities are integrated through the PR department or a senior communication executive;

- PR is empowered by the dominant coalition of the organisation;

- PR is not subordinate to marketing or other management functions;

- PR is two-way and symmetrical;

- PR executives are ethics counsellors and internal advocates of social responsibility;

- PR departments have a professional knowledge base; and

- Activism and crises create the demand for excellent PR.

2.5 BUILDING AND MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAKEHOLDERS

The above discussion makes it evident that corporate communication, PR and communication management are rooted in their definitions and that the three terms can function interchangeably. More importantly, it is also clear that their major objective is to build and maintain relationships with internal and external stakeholders. PR practice is thus linked to the theory of relationship management and the stakeholder theory, as mentioned in the conceptualisation and meta-theoretical framework section in Chapter 1.

2.5.2 Relationship Theory

According to Schoen (2005:13), PR theory has been shifting from its base in communication to one in relationships. Researchers are beginning to recognise relationships rather than communication as playing the central role in PR. Communication with key publics is merely one tool of the PR practitioner.

Schoen (2005:20) states that the emergence of the relational perspective can be traced from Ledingham's (2003:182-3) four major developments in PR:

•   Recognition of the central role of relationships in PR;

•   Reconceptualising PR as a management function;

•   Identification of components and types of organisation-public relationships, their linkage to public attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and behaviour, and relationship measurement strategies; and Construction of organisation-public relationship models that accommodate relationship antecedents, process and consequences.

Ledingham (2003:181) summarises the literature on the relational perspective of PR, constructing a general relationship theory. The major premise of relationship management holds that PR balances the interests of organisations and publics through the management of organisation-public relationships. Loyalty, satisfaction and expectations are all central to the organisation-public relationship. An organisation must be involved with and supportive of its key publics. These actions encourage loyalty to the organisation on the part of the community in which it operates. Research also shows that relationship scores are useful in predicting customer satisfaction; thus, the organisation-public relationship should be considered when an organisation develops customer-satisfaction plans. And finally, an organisation's ability or failure to meet a public's expectations often determines whether or not the relationship is sustained (Schoen, 2005:20).

2.5.3 Stakeholder theory

As mentioned in Chapter 1, according to Mainardes *et al.* (2011:230), the basic premises of stakeholder theory are:

- The organisation enters into relationships with many groups that influence or are influenced by the company;

- The theory focuses on the nature of these relationships in terms of processes and results for the company and for stakeholders;

- The interests of all legitimate stakeholders are of intrinsic value and it is assumed that there is no single prevailing set of interests;

- The theory focuses upon management decision-making;

- The theory explains how stakeholders try to influence organisational decision-making processes so that they will be consistent with their needs and priorities; and

- Organisations should attempt to understand and balance the interests of the various participants.

Mainardes *et al.* (2011:228) state that, according to the stakeholder theory, the organisation should take into consideration the needs, interests and influences of peoples and groups who either impact on or may be impacted by its policies and operations (Frederick, Post & St Davis, 1992:226).

Hence, according to Clarkson (1995:92), the stakeholder concept contains three fundamental factors: the organisation, the other actors; and the nature of the company-actor relationships.

These concepts represent phenomena in themselves, according to Mainardes *et al.* (2011:228):

- The relationship between the company and stakeholders;

- The attitude of the stakeholder towards the company;

- The company as dependent upon stakeholders;

- The stakeholder wielding power over the company;

- The stakeholder as dependent on the company;

- The company as holding power over the stakeholder;

- The company and stakeholder as mutually dependent;

- The company and the stakeholder as engaged in contractual relations;

- The stakeholder as holding a right over the company;

- The stakeholder as running some kind of risk;

- The stakeholder as having a moral right over the company; and

- The stakeholder as having an interest in the company.

In summary, it is evident that the PR practice is moving towards a relationship management practice instead of following a purely communication management approach. This stakeholder relationship management practice is important in investigating the management of stakeholder relationship when these relationships are taking place between the organisation and its stakeholders, via social media platforms.

2.6 THE NEW ERA: PR AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In almost every professional publication that ones look at today, someone is making a claim about the power of social media communication technologies to improve public relations practice (Taylor & Kent, 2010:207-214).

"Over the last decade, the Internet has remarkably changed the way in which companies and institutions communicate and interact with their audiences. The same is true about how organisations communicate with the news media, as well as how these media conduct their work. With new tools such as blogs, wikis or RSS technologies becoming increasingly more popular recently, the idea of the Internet as the key tool for sharing knowledge, ideas or corporate information is growing. And although the impact of this new reality on corporate communications in companies in organisations is not well defined, it is obvious that the Internet is a rapidly changing environment and all PR professionals should be aware of its importance" (Alfonso & Miguel, 2006:267).

In both communication theory and practice there is no doubt that vast development and increased use of technology is having a significant impact on the industry.

"Social media, the term commonly referring to blogs and social networks sites online, have been heralded as ushering in a change allowing worldwide, networked communication [to be] instantaneous. Such media describe the online practices that use technology and enable people to share content, opinions, experiences, insights, and media themselves" (Larischy, Avery, Sweetser & Howes, 2009:314).

Sallot, Porter and Acosta-Alzuru (2004:269-278) found that public relations practitioners (PRPs) perceive that the use of Internet technology has empowered them to enhance their roles as managers or technicians and improve their status in their organisational structures. Practitioners who use Internet technology to manage client issues improve their reputation with the clients, which in turn enhances their prestige and power (Sallot *et al.*, 2004: 269-278).

Research suggests that companies will learn to embrace social media in the future, not only for external marketing and brand-building but also for internal communications (Gartner, 2010:[1]). Further findings in the research include (Gartner, 2010:[1]):

- By 2014, social networking services will replace e-mail as the primary vehicle for interpersonal communications for 20% of business users;
- By 2012, over 50% of enterprises will be using activity streams that include micro blogging, but stand-alone enterprise micro blogging will have less than 5% penetration;
- Throughout 2012, over 70% of IT-dominated social media initiatives will fail;
- Within five years, 70% of collaboration and communications applications designed on PCs will be modelled after user-experience lessons from smartphone collaboration applications; and

- By 2015, only 25% of enterprises will routinely use social network analysis to improve performance and productivity.

These findings and predictions further emphasise the current impact of social media on marketing communications as an entity. It can therefore be assumed that both communication management and PR are being significantly affected by the increased use of social media.

2.7 SOCIAL MEDIA IN PR: PREVIOUS STUDIES

Two previous studies investigating the use of social media by PRPs will be discussed in the next section. Respondents in the first study (Eyrich, Padman & Sweetser, 2008: 412 – 414) were PRPs in the USA, while research for the second study (Avidar, 2009: 437-439) was conducted amongst PRPs in Israel.

2.7.1 PRPs' use of social media in the USA

Eyrich *et al.* (2008:412) claim that when it comes to communication technology research suggests that PRPs are currently on a par with the adoption of online tools. The majority of PRPs state that the use of communication technology has eliminated some of the challenges of their occupation, expediting the circulation of information to reach wider audiences. Social media not only allow PRPs to reach out to and engage their publics in conversation, but also provide an avenue to strengthen media relations.

An online survey sought to provide an academic baseline for the adoption of social media as a whole (beyond blogs), and to establish PRPs' opinion about tools in the industry as well as power. The study surveyed the adoption by working PRPs' of 18 social media tools as well as their perceptions on the growth of social media trends in PR practice (Eyrich *et al.*, 2008:412).

The three research questions that guided the research were (Eyrich *et al.*, 2008:413):

• Which social media tools do PRPs use?

• How prevalent do practitioners see social media to be in the industry?

• Are personal adoption and perceived adoption in the industry related?

The results of the study provided a brief overview of social media adoption trends in PR practice in the USA. PRPs have adopted nearly six different social media tools into their profession. More established and institutional tools such as e-mail and the Internet have clearly been adopted. However, PRPs are also very comfortable using newer technologies such as blogs and podcasts. At the same time, the PRPs surveyed had been slower to integrate more technologically complicated tools catering to a niche audience, such as text messaging, social networks and virtual worlds (Eyrich *et al.*, 2008:414).

2.7.2 PRPs' use of social media in Israel

According to Avidar (2009:437), the Internet and the World Wide Web have provided the field of PR with additional space to grow. The elements of social media enable information-sharing and discussion among publics and within organisations, promoting diversity, individuality and freedom of expression.

In Israel there are approximately 400 PR firms that work with the private, public and non-profit sectors. During September 2008, a web-based survey of Israeli PRPs (hereafter referred to PRPs) was conducted among 45 practitioners. The aim of the study was to explore Israel's societal culture as an environment with which PRPs have to align (Avidar, 2009:438).

The survey used was based on a questionnaire originally developed by Wright and Hinson (2008), and partially by Gillin (2008:[1]). The research questions that guided the study were (Avidar, 2009:438):

• Do Israeli PRPs use online social media elements?

• How do Israeli PRPs perceive online social media elements?

• How do Israeli PRPs see the future of social media?

According to Avidar (2009:438-439), the results of the study revealed that most practitioners had experience with or had started to familiarise themselves with elements of social media. Nevertheless, the use of social media by Israeli PRPs was still in the initial stages, and they had not yet availed themselves of their potential. In addition, the Israeli clients of PR services did not as yet acknowledge the potential and importance of social media elements in achieving campaign goals.

When the participants in the study were asked about their perceptions of social media, their answers were ambiguous. On one hand, most Israeli practitioners believed social media and traditional media complemented each other and thus were not in conflict. On the other hand, practitioners could not agree whether social media or blogs had enhanced Israeli PR practice Avidar (2009:439).

The final section of the survey explored the opinions of Israeli practitioners on the future of social media. The findings indicated that practitioners believed in the future of social media and thought their use would grow (Avidar, 2009:438-439).

To summarise, Israeli PRPs are generally willing to use and experiment with social media elements, but their use is still in the initial stage. The challenge for Israeli PRPs is to understand social media and to use the media elements for the benefit of the practice, as well as for their clients.

The comparison of elements of the two studies: Eyrich *et al.* (2008:414) and Avidar (2009:438-439) are summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Comparing elements of the global studies

Elements	PRPs' use of social media tools and communication technology	Social media: societal culture and Israeli PR practice
Author(s)	Eyrich, N, Padman, M.L. and Sweetser, K.D.	Avidar, R.

Elements	PRPs' use of social media tools and communication technology	Social media: societal culture and Israeli PR practice
Year	2008	2009
Country	USA	Israel
Economy	First World Country	First World Country
Respondents	283 respondents	45 respondents
Main findings	PRPs have adopted nearly six different social media tools in their profession. More established and institutional tools such as e-mail and Internet have clearly been adopted in the industry. PRPs are also very comfortable using newer technologies such as blogs and podcasts. PRPs were slower to integrate more technologically complicated tools that cater for a niche audience.	Most practitioners had experience with or had started to familiarise themselves with social media elements. The use of social media elements by Israeli PRPs was still in its initial stages. The Israeli clients of PR services had not yet acknowledged the potential and importance of social media elements. Practitioners believed in the future of social media and thought their use of them would grow.

From the previously discussed sections, it is evident that, on an international scale, the PR practice is undergoing a phase of change when it comes to the use of social media by practitioners and the impact on the field.

This change is being experienced in the industry at a practical level. However, it is also reflected academically in the numerous studies considered and discussed, inter alia, in Chapter 2.

Finally, the change is inevitably being experienced at the educational level, as practitioners are being educated to know, practise and manage social media as a communication channel for practitioners, their clients and audiences. The change in education will be discussed in the following section.

2.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR PR EDUCATION

Taylor and Kent (2010:207) argue that the demand to use social media and new communication technology is also influencing PR education. Research is also being conducted to examine the socialisation of PR students relating to

their expectations and understanding of how to use technology in their profession.

Their research article is comprised of five different sections. The first part of the article reviews socialisation literature (Jablin, 1987: 679-740; Jablin:2011: 732-818) which suggests that education and professional publications influence how practitioners perceive their chosen field of work (PR). In the second section, the role of social media and PR are discussed. The article goes on to provide details of a content analysis of the topic of social media in the Public Relations Society of America's newspaper, *Public Relations Tactics*. In the fourth section of the article, the results of the content analysis of the *Public Relations Tactics* and the implications for the PR profession are discussed. The final section of the article provides conclusions and future directions for public relations educators, public relations practitioners, and members of the profession who write for association publications (Taylor & Kent, 2010: 207-208).

According to Taylor and Kent (2010:210), *Public Relations Tactics* is read by students, faculty, and practitioners alike. It thus represents an appropriate source for an analysis of the professional claims made about social media.

The research was based on four specific research questions:

• What claims about social media power are published in *Public Relations Tactics*?

• What evidence about social media power is provided in *Public Relations Tactics*?

• What suggestions are provided to readers of *Public Relations Tactics* on how to use social media in their professional communication?

• What are the concerns or questions raised about the social media in PR in the articles examined?

The researchers conducted an analysis of one year's issues of *Public Relations Tactics*, and concluded that young PRPs prepare for entry into the field through education and extracurricular experiences. One of the most

influential socialising forces in any profession is likely to be publications that provide advice and guidance to future members. When it comes to professional socialisation, Taylor and Kent (2010:213) found that, without exposure to professional articles and content, students glean their ideas about the profession from the mass media and personal experience.

2.9 SA PR INDUSTRY: AN OVERVIEW

Because of the previous South African government's *apartheid* policies, white South Africa continued to exist as a developed, Westernised country with a modern infrastructure, while black South Africans were not allowed the same rights and privileges.. The impact of this political system on PR was that the practice in white South Africa continued to develop along Western lines, with largely white practitioners subscribing to American and British PR practices (Holtzhausen, Petersen & Tindall, 2003:305–341).

Below is a summary of the qualitative research findings by Holtzhausen *et al.* (2003: 305–341) on PR and political change in South Africa over the ten-year period (1984 – 2004) following the end of the country's apartheid policies.

- **PR evolved into a management function**: More management appreciation and recognition of the profession were the most pervasive changes to PR practice in the decade following 1994;

- **PR practice became more professional**: Increased professionalism was linked to the diminishing perspectives on PR as a social event function, which resulted from better PR education at the tertiary level, better educated practitioners and the role of the *Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa* (PRISA);

- **Changes in the social environment affected PR practice**: Organisations had to openly exhibit high levels of social responsibility. Black economic empowerment (BEE) and affirmative action (AA) have become important *foci;*

- **The nature of communication in PR changed**: With changes in the political climate came changes in the way in which practitioners had to

communicate. Communication had to be inclusive and participative, while practitioners also had to take the cultural attributes of their publics into consideration;

- **New emphases in PR practice**: Because of democratisation, there were greater demands for more transparency, so organisations were forced to communicate and convince the public of their involvement in the communities around them and the extent to which they were helping people. Practice required more specialisation in areas like social investment, conserving the environment, and intercultural communication and development communication;

- **Changes in the political environment affected PR practice**: The new political environment brought government closer to the public, particularly local government;

- **The impact of globalisation and technology**: Globalisation and technology apparently did not have a particular impact. Some responses directly linked globalisation to the increased importance of technology; and

- **Changes in the media environment affected PR practice**: Several practitioners referred to how increased press freedom made the media more accessible, but also more competitive. As a result, media relations have gained in importance.

Le Roux (2010:20) conducted a study investigating the current state of South African PR practice. She summarised her findings as follows:

"It is clear that the South African environment offers the public relations practitioner both challenges and opportunities. This environment has, at the very least, forced public relations practitioners and academics to adapt their First World thinking to include Third World thinking (Steyn, 2005:793-794) to adjust the practice to the specific challenge faced in the South African environment."

Le Roux (2010:20) further adds that:

- Firstly, PR in South Africa should contribute to the greater good of society and the performance of the organisation but often does not live up to these expectations of the function;

- Secondly, in this quest, PR professionals globally face various challenges, which are similar in some instances but different in others; and

- Lastly, South African PRPs in particular face unique challenges.

2.10 CONCLUSION

It is evident that communication management, and PR specifically, is an industry that is of great importance to all organisations. Different audiences and stakeholders have vested interests in organisations operating in a community and the PR function manages the flow of communication between these organisations and the stakeholders.

The increased use of new media and social media technologies is making an impact on the PR practice. Some practitioners and organisations have embraced this change, while others are still in the process of doing so.

Chapter 3 discusses social media in great detail, with an investigation into the new media landscape in South Africa.

CHAPTER 3
THE SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, the concepts 'traditional media' and 'social media' are defined and discussed in detail. The literature review focuses on the decline in traditional media in recent years, and the rise of social media during the same period.

Social media are discussed by definition, along with their perceived advantages and disadvantages as reviewed in existing literature.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is discussed in the context of the increased use of social media, followed by a theoretical consideration of social media using Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a frame of reference. Finally, the theoretical discussion concludes with a discussion on the uses and gratification theory.

This chapter also reviews social media as an influence on PR and communication management, as well as discussing social media use in South Africa. In the last section of this chapter, a comparison is drawn between traditional media and social media.

Apart from blogs, the following forms of social media will be evaluated in terms of their use in the PR industry in this study: forums, photo sharing, podcasts, RSS (Really Simple Syndication), search engine marketing, social bookmarking, social networks, micro-blogging sites, and video sharing.

3.1   THE DECLINE OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA

As indicated earlier, traditional media are described as the creation, production and distribution of information and entertainment content, which pre-dates the commercial content businesses of the internet. For the purposes of this study, traditional media are regarded as all forms of "old" media, which excludes any forms of new media. Radio, television, newspapers and magazines are, however, included.

With the emergence and growth of the Internet, the decline, purpose, potential and role of traditional media outlets have been under the spotlight in the communications industry over the past few years. Davis (2009:[1]) maintains that American newspapers are on the verge of disappearing and it will not be long before the rest of the world's traditional printed media take the fall as well.

Alberts (2010:[1]) argues that the Internet has decreased the need for traditional media because it has enabled consumers to join social societies within their immediate physical and social circles, as well as on an international and broader level. The demise of traditional media can be attributed largely to the following:

- **Decline in readership**: The distribution of free news and information on the web has led to the decline in readership of traditional publications.

- **Decline in revenues**: The decline in readership means that advertisers will be inclined to spend their money elsewhere and this leads to a decline in advertising revenue.

- **Real-time updates**: Traditional media cannot compete with the instantly updated user-generated content (UGC) that is immediately available for the world to see.

- **The rise of UGC websites**: Audiences have the unlimited real-time commentary on content, while traditional media are static and are a one-way communication tool.

- **Online Audio/Video channels**: Audiences can choose what they want to watch and listen to whenever and wherever they want without advertising interrupting their experience.

3.1.1 Audience penetration: traditional (old) media versus new media platforms

Table 3.1 indicates the years it took different media elements to reach a market audience of 50 million.

Table 3.1:   Comparison between different mass media audience penetration

Mass medium	Years it took to reach a market audience of 50 million users
Radio	38 years
TV	13 years
Internet	4 years
iPod	3 years
Facebook	2 years

Source: Alberts (2010:[1]).

This information proves that it took traditional mass media like the television and radio much longer to penetrate and be adopted by audiences than it did the new media. New technologies and mass media like Facebook and Twitter penetrated the audience market at a high speed and adoption rate.

3.1.2 Communication flow: traditional media versus social media

The two major underlying differences between traditional media and new media are the different flow of communication and the speed at which it flows. In traditional media, the message flows from an event to a witness, who then delivers the message to the media organisation. The final step in the flow of communication is when the message is communicated from the media organisation to the community (or audience). A typical example of this process would be when an organisation releases its annual financial results by means of a media statement. The statement is communicated via newswire services and consequently submitted to journalists, who integrate the results and then publish them in newspapers and other forms of media (Anderson, 2009:[1]).

When it comes to the new media, an organisation is able to release its annual results directly into a social media sphere. The results are instantaneously available to all stakeholders and relevant communities (or audiences). These two processes are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: The flow of communication in traditional media as opposed to social media
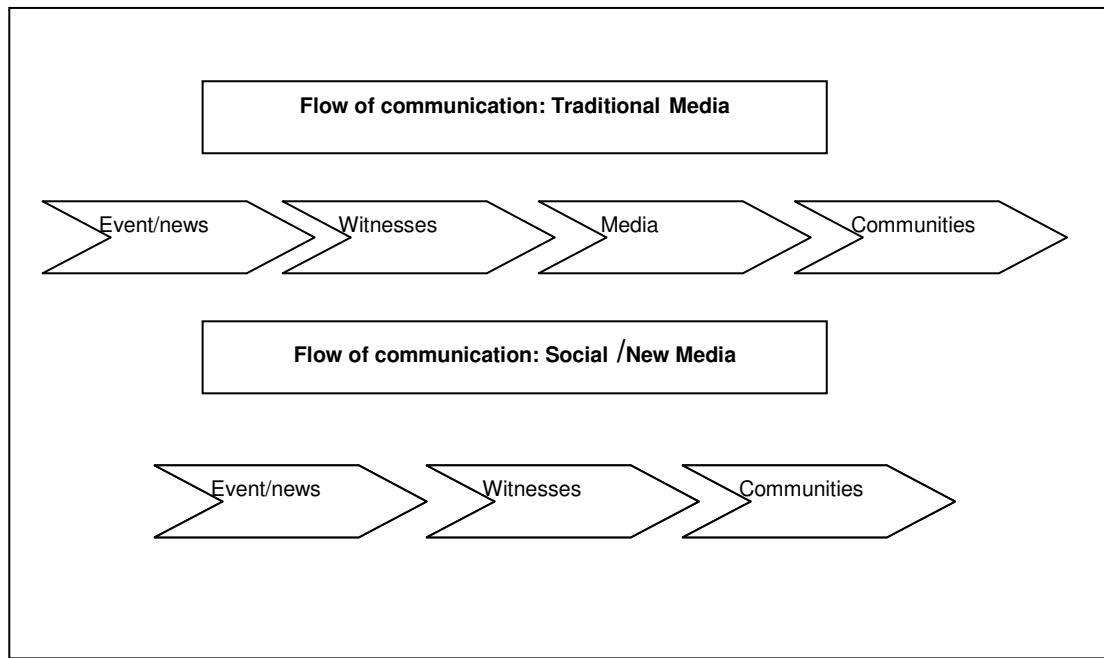
Source: Anderson, (2009:[1]).

3.1.3 Other major differences: traditional media as opposed to new media

Table 3.2 contains a summary of the major differences between traditional and new media.

Table 3.2:   Differences between the traditional media and the new media

Elementary differences	Traditional media	New media
One-way vs. Two-way communication	No two-way conversation is allowed	Two-way conversation is allowed
Real or near real time response	Delay in response time	Instantaneous nature
Authenticity in consumer data	Reliance on samples of data estimated to be authentic	Real-time input from persons using product or service

Elementary differences	Traditional media	New media
A spectrum of relationships	Focuses on company to user and user to company	Many different relationships: company to customer; customer to company; customer to customer; current customer to potential customer and other similar relationships
Interactive media	No direct involvement	Direct involvement
Self produced media	No medium for self-produced media	Any individuals or companies can produce own media platforms, such as video clips
A focus on content	Traditional media creators determined the content of media	Social media users are expectant of valuable, informative content
Equalization amongst authorities	One-way communication results in traditional media creator determining authority	Two-way communication results in relationship building between different parties, establishing authority
Adaptation and growth	Change and growth are delayed in comparison with social media	Owing to instantaneous nature, growth and change are constant and continuous
Low cost	Traditional media are broad messaging, diluting return on investment for the messenger	Social media offer capacity to reach a unique audience that is receptive to the message, thus eliminating the costs of traditional media
Control	The creators of the message traditionally has full control of the message	All participants in the conversation has control over the messaging

Source: Adapted from www.microgeist.com. (2009:[1]).

3.2 THE SOCIAL MEDIA PHENOMENON

Kwai Fun Ip and Wagner (2008:242) define social networking web sites as sites used for creating and maintaining social connections among individuals, adding that they have become an important medium whereby people interact in the online world.

Anderson (2009:[1]) explains social media as a term used to describe the web-based tools, applications, spaces and practices that people use to interact with each other and share information online, which is specifically applicable to this study. For example, social networks like Facebook, Twitter and MySpace provide online tools that can be used for sharing media and engaging in online conversations, while also providing users with online personal space that forms a repository of shared content and social interactions.

A 2008 research project (McCann, 2008:[5]) surveyed 17 000 Internet users worldwide in March of the same year The report found that social media, in particular blogs, are becoming a more important aspect of global media consumption for Internet users than some traditional media channels. The report states that video clips, blogs, podcasts, social networks and RSS are all essential components of the online media diet. Some of the other key findings include (McCann, 2008:[5]): 83% watch video clips, up from 62% in the last study in June 2007; 78% read blogs, up from 66%; 57% of Internet users are now members of a social network; RSS consumption is growing rapidly up from 15% to 39%; podcasts are now mainstream digital content, listened to by 48%.

Social networks have been a key driver for the growth of social media (McCann, 2008:[5]): 22% of social network users have installed a widget or application; 55% have shared photos; 22% have shared their videos; 31% have started a blog; the world's biggest social network is MySpace with 32% weekly reach followed by Facebook on 23%.

The report also found that social media are a confirmed global phenomenon, with the top markets for blogging being China, where 70% of Internet users write a blog, 66% in the Philippines and 60% in Mexico. The top markets for social networking were the Philippines (83%), Hungary (76%) and Poland (76%). Finally, China is the world's largest blogging market, with 42 million bloggers as opposed to 26 million in the United States (McCann, 2008:[5]).

Although these statistics provide detailed insight into the rise of social media on a global scale, the study does not offer a view of the use of social media in Africa, specifically South Africa.

3.2.1 The perceived advantages and disadvantages of social media

Ketsdever (2008:[1]) suggests that, in general, the advantages of using social media are: democratisation of media, relationships and conversation, the creativity and re-mix culture, being able to embrace passion and identity, community sharing and connecting, and increased transparency on the part of government and organisations.

There are several advantages to using social media in PR. Hartzer (2007:[1]) lists them as: being able to attract and maintain the attention of a vast demographic; the viral nature of social media; their level of interactivity; and the high visibility they offer on the Internet. Vara (2006:[1]), on the other hand, describes the following characteristics of social media as advantageous to public relations: they are mostly free of charge; it is an easy way of promoting a brand by means of word of mouth; those using social networks are able to retain a sense of anonymity and are therefore regarded as genuine promoters of the brand, instead of being commercially manipulated.

To infer from the advantages listed; social media can be described as advantageous to the PR industry because of their visibility, their ability to attract a vast audience, as opposed to audiences attracted by the traditional media, and their ability to facilitate conversation (two-way communication) and in doing so creating relationships between the communicator (PRP) and publics.

In contrast to the above, there are also several disadvantages to using social media in the PR industry. Ketsdever (2008:[1]) discusses the following criticisms (or disadvantages) of social media in general: valuable content is often overlooked, owing to a lack of effective content filters; writers have problems in consistently delivering content; anonymity can engender polarisation and hate; information overload; and a work/life balance is difficult to achieve.

Vara (2006:[1]) lists the disadvantages as: word of mouth publicity can be negative; the use of so many forms of social media has led to many organisational reputations being tarnished; and the nature of social media leads to reduced privacy, as information is in the public space.

According to these statements, the disadvantages of using social media could be described as; an overload of information for the potential reader, the risk of a tarnished organisational reputation and the problems inherent in supplying high-quality content at a consistent pace.

3.2.2 Essential features of social media web sites

Kim, Jeong and Lee (2010:218) list the essential features of social media web sites as: personal profiles, establishing online connections, participating in online groups, communicating with online connections, sharing UCCs, expressing opinions, finding information and holding the users.

3.2.2.1   Personal profiles

Most social media platforms request members to create their own profiles. These individual profiles usually differ in the types of information included. Further, some sites have members specify privacy settings in order to control who may access what types of information on their personal profiles (Kim *et al.*, 2010:218).

3.2.2.2   Establishing online connections

Most social media platforms provide facilities for members to discover connection candidates from other members. The facilities include automatic discovery of the existing members of a site from the e-mail and messenger address books of a new member, browsing all existing groups on the site, a friend-recommendation engine that suggests friends of friends, and a keyword-based search engine for looking up members' names (Kim *et al.*, 2010:218).

3.2.2.3   Participating in online groups

Social media platforms allow and encourage members to form new groups, and/or join them. In most cases, members and non-members can view all the user-created content (UCCs) in all the groups. However, only members may post UCCs (Kim *et al.*, 2010:219).

3.2.2.4   Communicating with online connections

Social media platforms provide various facilities for members to use in communicating with their online connections and groups. These include e-

mail, instant messaging, text messaging, public and private bulletin boards, and Internet phone services (Kim *et al.*, 2010:219).

3.2.2.5 Sharing UCCs

Most social media platforms allow members to post various types of user-created content (UCCs), such as blogs, microblogs, photos, images, music, videos, bookmarks and text. Friends and others may view or play these UCCs, send their links (URLs) to their online connections and even offline friends, and save them to private collections for future viewing and sharing with others (Kim *et al.*, 2010:220).

3.2.2.6 Expressing opinions

Most social media platforms allow members to leave comments on the posts and content created by other users, as well as content generated by them. Some sites allow members to vote on them, too (Kim *et al.*, 2010:220).

3.2.2.7 Finding information

Both members and non-members have two types of facilities for finding the information they need on social media platforms. The facilities are keyword-based search engines and browsing. The search engines can be used to look for the names of people, names of groups, and particular UCCs (Kim *et al.*, 2010:220).

3.2.2.8 Holding the users

Many social media platforms provide various features designed to have the users spend extended periods of time on the sites, and have them return frequently. Many sites display data related to whatever the users are specifically looking for (Kim *et al.*, 2010:220).

3.2.3 The seven functional blocks of social media

Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011:243) use a honeycomb framework of seven functional building blocks to unpack and examine social media platforms: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups.

Every different building block allows the researcher to unpack and examine a specific facet of social media user experience, and its implications for firms. These building blocks are not mutually exclusive, nor do they all have to be present in a social media activity. They are constructs that allow one to make sense of how different levels of social media functionality can be configured.

Figure 3.2: The seven functional blocks of social media
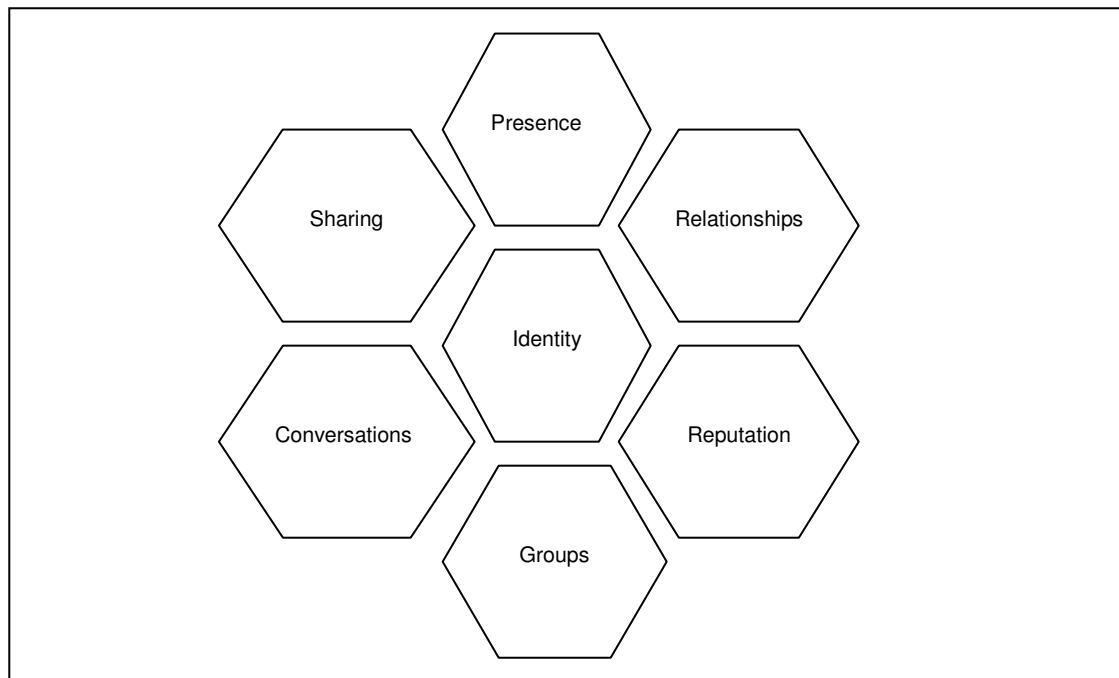
Source: Kietzmann *et al.* (2011:243).

Each of the seven functional blocks of social media is briefly identified by Kietzmann *et al.* (2011:243):

• **Identity**: the extent to which users reveal themselves;

• **Presence**: the extent to which users know whether others are present;

• **Sharing**: the extent to which users exchange, distribute and receive content;

- **Conversations**: the extent to which users communicate with one another;

- **Groups**: the extent to which users are ordered or form communities;

- **Reputation**: the extent to which users know the social standing of others and content; and

- **Relationships**: the extent to which users relate to each other.

3.2.4 Social media research and trends

The rise and use of social media is indisputable. A recent study found that social networks and blogs now account for one in every four and a half minutes online (The Nielsen Company, 2010:[1]).

Facebook, YouTube and Wikipedia, three of the world's most popular brands online, are social media-related and the world now spends over 110 billion minutes on social networks and blog sites. This equates with 22% of all time online or one in every four and half minutes. For the first time ever, social network or blog sites are visited by three quarters of global consumers who go online, after the numbers of people visiting these sites increased by 24% over last year. The average visitor spends 66% more time on these sites than they did a year ago, almost 6 hours in April 2010 in comparison with 3 hours, 31 minutes in 2009 (The Nielsen Company, 2010:[1]).

In the next section, the research findings will be summarised in Tables 3.3 to 3.4 (The Nielsen Company, 2010:[1]).

Table 3.3 lists the most popular brands online globally in 2010, as found in the research (The Nielsen Company, 2010:[1]). The global study refers to the online activities in the following countries: Australia, Brazil, China, Denmark, Spain, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the Unites States of America.

Table 3.3:   Most popular online brands visited by the world Internet population

Brand	% of visitors	Time per person spent online (hh:mm:ss)
Google	82%	1:21:51
MSN/WindowsLive/Bing	62%	2:41:49
Facebook	54%	6:00:00
Yahoo!	53%	1:50:16

Brand	% of visitors	Time per person spent online (hh:mm:ss)
Microsoft	48%	0:45:31
YouTube	47%	0:57:33
Wikipedia	35%	0:13:26
AOL Media Network	27%	2:01:02
eBay	26%	1:34:08
Apple	26%	1:00:28

Source: The Nielsen Company (2010:[1]).

Brazil is highest on the list, with the highest percentage (86%) of Internet consumers visiting a social network. Australian web users average the most time on social networking sites, averaging 7 hours 19 minutes in April, followed by the U.S. and Italy with around six and a half hours each (The Nielsen Company, 2010:[1]).

Table 3.4 summarises the reach of social networks and blog sites, by country, including Australia, Brazil, Spain, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Table 3.4:   Reach and use of social networks and blog sites

Country	% reach of active users	Time per person (hh:mm:ss)
Brazil	86%	5:03:37
Italy	78%	6:28:41
Spain	77%	5:11:44
Japan	75%	2:50:50
US	74%	6:35:02
UK	74%	5:52:38
France	73%	4:10:27
Australia	72%	7:19:13
Germany	63%	4:13:05
Switzerland	59%	3:43:58

Source: The Nielsen Company (2010:[1]).

Capturing two-thirds of the active unique audience in April 2010, Facebook's reach is the widest in Italy. This makes the site relatively more popular in Italy than in the three major English-speaking markets. Australia, the US and the UK follow Italy, with over 60% of active online consumers visiting the site.

In contrast, Japanese people have the least appetite for Facebook, with reach and time spent markedly lower than in any of the other countries measured (The Nielsen Company, 2010:[1]).

Table 3.5 summarises the Facebook reach and use by country, which includes Australia, Brazil, Spain, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the Unites States of America.

Table 3.5:   Reach and use of Facebook

Country	% reach of active users	Time per person (hh:mm:ss)
Italy	66%	7:00:21
Australia	63%	7:45:28
United States	62%	6:43:22
United Kingdom	62%	6:19:59
Spain	57%	4:04:53
France	57%	4:33:05
Switzerland	45%	4:18:47
Germany	27%	3:42:50
Brazil	26%	1:46:50
Japan	3%	0:31:38

Source: The Nielsen Company (2010:[1]).

In conclusion, the research findings include (Bullas, 2010:[1]):

- Social media networks and blogs consume nearly 25% of people's time online (one in every four and half minutes online);

- The world spends 110 billion minutes on social media networks and blog sites;

- The number of people who are visiting social media sites increased by 24% over the last year;

- The average visitor spends 66% more time on these sites than they did a year ago (6 hours in April 2010 as opposed to 3 hours 31 minutes last year);

- Brazil is the top nation when it comes to Internet consumers, with 86% visiting a social media network (74% of USA Internet users visit a social media network);

- Australian users average the most time per month on social networking sites in all of their manifestations, at 7 hours and 19 minutes (USA Internet users average 6.5 hours);

- Facebook's reach is the widest in Italy, capturing two-thirds of the active unique audience in April, which is higher than the English-speaking countries USA, Australia and the UK, at 60%;

- Japan has the lowest reach of Facebook active users at 3% ;

- The microblogging platform Ameba, the Japanese equivalent of Twitter, is visited by 38% of Japanese people online; and

- Facebook is the world's most visited social media brand, with 54% of the world's Internet population visiting it.

3.3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE INCREASED USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This section of the literature review seeks to answer the following questions about the increased use of social media, based on the theories identified in the meta-theoretical framework in Chapter 1:

- **Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)**: Why are audiences accepting the new technology (social media) with such apparent ease and speed?

- **Maslow's hierarchy of needs**: What advantages and needs are being met for audiences using social media?

- **Uses and gratifications theory**: What uses and gratifications are audiences getting out of using social media?

3.3.1 The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, according to Kate, Haverkamp, Mahmood and Feldberg (2010:20), TAM suggests that when users are presented with a new technology, different variables influence the decision as to whether and how they will use it. Two causal linkages influence this decision: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) of the relevant technology. Perceived usefulness explains the user's perception of the extent to which the technology will improve his/her work performance. Perceived ease of use relates to the user's perception of the effort required to use the system or the extent to which a user believes that using a particular technology will be effortless (Davis, 1989:319-340).

The study by Kate *et al.* (2010:25-26) concluded that the main purpose of the paper was to deepen the understanding of the social influence variable within TAM and extend it by taking a social network perspective. The conceptual research was grounded in literature on social networks, social influences and subjective norms and led to the proposition that social network characteristics such as tie strength, network centrality and network density have a positive influence on the subjective norm. As such, the paper proposed a more social perspective on technology acceptance in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

It can therefore be concluded that the two causal linkages influencing the decision to accept new technology, perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) of the relevant technology, have been embraced by social media platform users on a global scale. This is evident in the overwhelming evidence discussed earlier in Chapters 1 and 3, indicating that the use of social media has increased significantly in recent times.

3.3.2 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Ray (2008:[1]) argues that the reason that online communities, driven mostly by social media, have undergone such phenomenal growth can be based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1967): communities exist to satisfy human needs. He argues that online communities do not necessarily provide satisfaction for humans' physiological needs, but social media-like tools are providing more safety protection.

Reviewing Figure 3.3, one may assume that belonging to a community fulfils one of the most basic human needs (social needs/sense of belonging/love), according to Maslow (1967). With Internet use becoming more relevant and with increasing global use, it follows that belonging to a community will advance to the digital/online sphere.

Figure 3.3: Maslow's hierarchy of needs
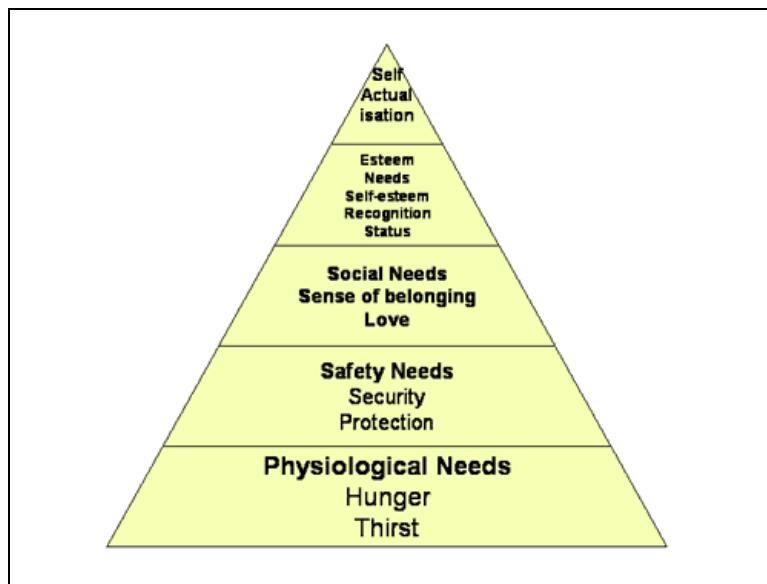
Source: Maslow (1967:93-127).

3.3.2.1 Twitter – a social media platform that gratifies the need to connect with others

To illustrate this perspective, a recent study is discussed, based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the social media platform Twitter.

Twitter is an Internet social network and micro-blogging platform with both mass and interpersonal communication features for sharing 140-character messages, called tweets, with other people, called followers (Chen, 2011:755).

Research was conducted to investigate whether active use on Twitter gratified the need to feel connected with other people on the Internet. The study's main objective was to determine whether Twitter is just the chaotic noise that some say or has the potential to gratify the basic human need to connect with other people. The study took an exploratory look at the social media platform Twitter, a medium that researchers have had little time to study because it is relatively new in comparison with traditional forms of media, such as newspapers, television, and film. Even among social networks, Twitter has

received less attention than larger and older applications like Facebook (Chen, 2011:755).

Chen (2011:756) states that both Murray (1953: 35-48) and Maslow (1987:93-127) defined needs as forces that push people in a certain direction in order to gratify those needs. They both identified a need to affiliate (Murray, 1953:35-48) or feel a sense of belonging (Maslow, 1987: 93-127) that relates directly to this study's concept of the need to connect with other people on Twitter.

Hierarchical regression of survey results from 317 Twitter users found that the more months a person is active on Twitter and the more hours per week the person spends there, the greater gratification of the need for an informal sense of camaraderie, called connection. Controlling for demographic variables does not diminish this positive relationship. Additionally, the frequency of tweeting and the number of direct replies concerning public messages between Twitter users mediate the relationship between active Twitter use and gratification of the need for connection (Chen, 2011:755).

3.3.3 Uses and gratification theory

As observed in Chapter 1, the focus of the uses and gratification theory is on what people do with the media rather than the influence or impact of the media on the individual (Katz *et al*., 1974:19-34). In conceiving of the audience as actively choosing and using media in response to specific needs, the foundations for examining gratifications obtained from the media are put in place.

According to Quan-Haase and Young (2010:351), early theories on mass communication viewed the mass media as having a uniform and immediate influence on individuals whom they perceived as susceptible to influence and unable to form their own opinions. The assumption was that the exposure to standardised cultural goods turned audience members into a homogeneous, uncritical and passive mass with little will power to resist the appeal and influence of the mass media. The goal directedness of audience members is

what distinguishes uses and gratifications theory from early communication theories.

3.3.3.1   <u>Facebook and text messaging – instant gratification of needs</u>

Quan-Haase and Young (2010:350) conducted a study based on work that examined the gratifications experienced in using Facebook compared with those of instant messaging. This comparison between media allowed conclusions to be drawn on how user needs can be fulfilled by different social media.

Data were collected from undergraduate students during a multi-method study based on 77 surveys and 21 interviews. A factor analysis of gratifications fulfilled by using Facebook revealed six key dimensions: pastime, affection, fashion, share problems, sociability and social information. A comparative analysis showed that Facebook is about having fun and knowing about the social activities occurring in one's social network. Instant messaging, on the other hand, is geared for maintaining and developing relationships (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010:350).

A study conducted by Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008:169) aimed to evaluate why people use friend-networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, what the characteristics of the typical college user are, and what uses and gratifications are met by using these sites, according to the uses and gratifications theory.

Results included, inter alia (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008:174), that, as many college students were using these friend networking sites and spending a significant amount of their time on them, the sites must be meeting personal and social user needs. For example, popular uses and gratifications like "to keep in touch with old friends", "to keep in touch with current friends" and "to make new friends" indicated that users were meeting a "friend" need. Similarly, uses and gratifications such as "to learn about events", "to post social

functions", and "to feel connected" indicate that users were fulfilling a need by using the site as a source of information.

3.4 CONCEPTUALISING SOCIAL MEDIA IN PR: A SUGGESTED MODEL

All forms of social media are undoubtedly making an enormous impact on the PR practice and the methods that have been traditionally used in the industry. Meerman Scott (2007:13) argues that the traditional rules of PR are no longer applicable in the industry, and that the web has transformed the traditional PR rules. Practitioners thus have to transform PR strategies if they want to maximise the potential created by a web-enabled marketplace.

According to Wright and Hinson (2008:1), the phenomenon of blogging and other aspects of the social media contain the PR strategies and potential to bring dramatic changes to many aspects of PR. The development of various new technologies has significantly empowered a wide variety of strategic publics by giving them dynamic new media. A large number of people are using these media for communicating effectively with a variety of internal and external audiences.

Breakenridge (2008: xvii) describes social media as anything that uses the Internet to facilitate conversation between people. While it was traditionally a process whereby companies marketed to audiences, it now humanises the process of communication. Social media force PR to stop broadcasting and start connecting. Monologue has given way to dialogue.

Prior to the social media boom, PR professionals relied on third-party influencers like the media to enforce organisational brands. The Internet has actually changed everything for the public relations practitioner (Breakenridge, 2008:13).

It is evident from the theoretical discussion in Chapter 2 that PR is responsible for relationship-building between an organisation and its stakeholder. It is therefore important to have a model whereby communication is conducted on behalf of the organisation, and that model will include social media as a form of stakeholder-relationship management.

The model in Figure 3.4 illustrates the influencing role of social media in the PR practice.

Figure 3.4: PR and social media
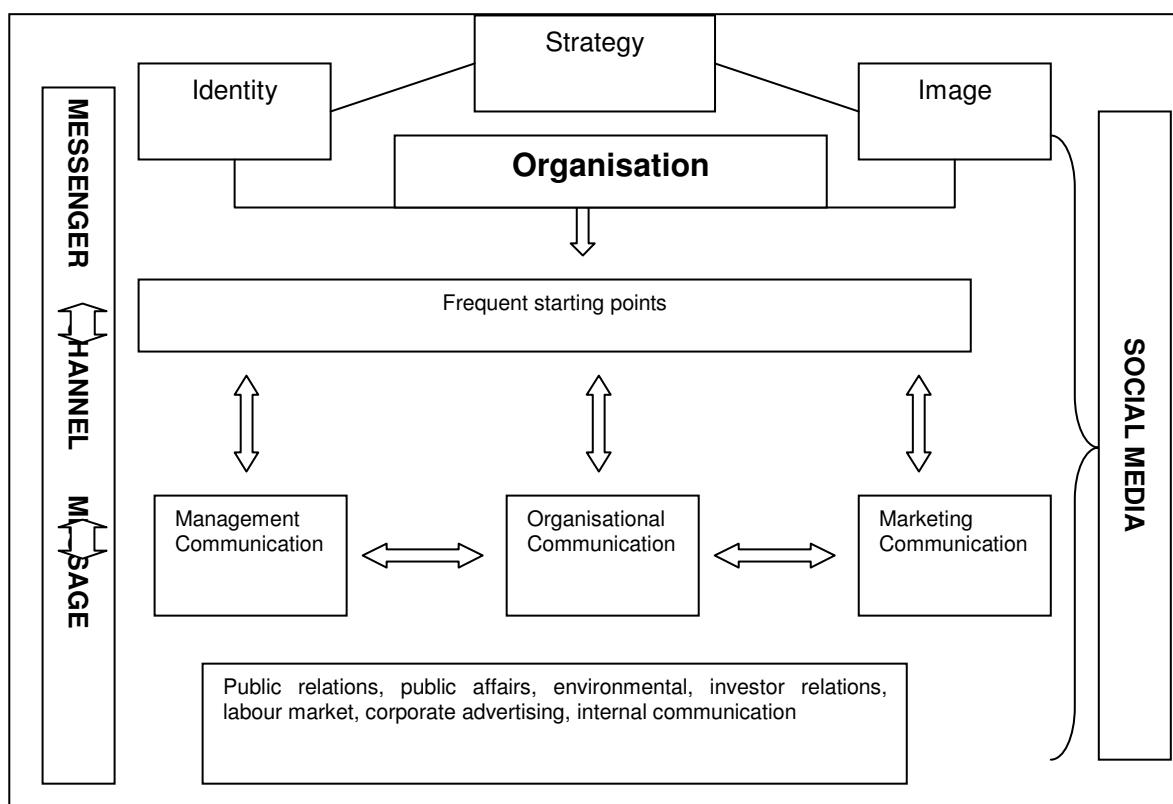
Source: Adapted from: Welch and Jackson (2007:177-198).

The communication process originates from the strategy, identity and image of the organisation. A message is then developed and communicated through various channels and mediums to the audience or messenger.

Traditionally, this was how PR was managed. With the advent of social media, different relationships are emerging and communicating with one another. For example, organisational employees communicate with potential customers,

customers with environmental stakeholders and corporate marketing with labour relations.

The increased use of social media has two main effects on the traditional PR model. First, it is the mainspring for communication within many different relationships. Secondly, social media create a two-way communication environment, where many different parties are *engaging in conversation*, as opposed to the one-way message communication practised in the traditional media.

It is therefore signally important to investigate and determine how the increased use of the Internet and social media is affecting the PR industry in the emerging economy of South Africa.

In the following section, the main social media platforms in South Africa are briefly discussed.

3.5   SOCIAL MEDIA IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN OVERVIEW

3.5.1 South Africa as an emerging economy

Hoskisson, Eden, Lau and Wright (2000:249) define emerging economies as those countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa that have gone through economic liberalisation and the adoption of a free-market system, as well as transition economies such as China and the former communist countries, which are also characterised by increasing liberalisation and the encouragement of private enterprise. Fourteen emerging economies are identified: Argentina, Chile, China, Croatia, Hungary, Mexico, Peru, Poland, Slovenia, South Africa, Uganda, Venezuela, India and Korea.

South Africa, with a market-based economy, was ranked 32nd on the global scale in 2009 in terms of its nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Since

the country is the world's top producer of metals like gold, platinum and chromium, and gemstones such as diamonds, the economy is dominated by the sales of natural resources (Forex Traders, 2011:[1]).

When compared with other emerging market countries, South Africa has the edge when it comes to affordability and the availability of capital, financial sophistication, corporate tax rates and infrastructure. Nevertheless, it has a relatively expensive work force that often lacks education on the use of modern technology (Forex Traders, 2011:[1]).

3.5.2 Social media use in South Africa

According to Taylor (2010:207-214), from the perspective of the use of social media, African countries are ranked far lower than their global counterparts. On the other hand, when compared with most other African countries, South Africa's use of social media is significantly higher.

South Africa ranks amongst the top ten progressive countries in the world undergoing a connectivity insurgency, despite poor broadband conditions. The result of this revolution in connectivity is an ever-increasing use of social media by South Africans. The country ranks number ten in the world of those using the social networking site Twitter, surpassing first-world countries like China, Japan and the Philippines (Mendelsohn & Adams, 2010:[1]).

3.5.3 Demographic overview of the average South African Internet user

Gossier (2008:[1]) states that Africa is not absent from the Internet and that, in fact, the contrary is true. Africa is the fastest-growing mobile market in the world, with the continent at large undergoing an unprecedented connectivity revolution. Mobile phones in particular are proliferating at an incredible rate, with penetration ranging from 30% to 100% throughout the continent.

According to Muller (2011:[1]), the Digital Media and Marketing Association (DMMA) in South Africa releases regular reports on the traffic measurement

vendor for websites in the country. The statistics released in May 2011 showed that South Africa's Internet population was affluent, with a typical income of between R12,000 and R70,000+ per month. The statistics further revealed that ADSL was used by over half of all Internet users in South Africa, followed by mobile broadband connections and wireless networks. When it came to South African cities with the most Internet users, Johannesburg reigned supreme with 28.7% of all website visitors in SA, followed by Cape Town with 19.5% and Pretoria with 13.8%. White South Africans still account for the majority of Internet users in the country (64%), followed by blacks (24%), coloureds (6%) and Indians (5%) (Muller, 2011:[1]).

The research found that the South African Internet users were mainly males (68.89%), with females at 31.11 percent. The means of connection among South African Internet users was indicated as follows: 50.09% with ADSL, 20.16% with mobile networks, 12.81% with wireless networks, 5.05% with dial-up connections and 3.16% with mobile Internet (using a cell phone), while 5.05% were unknown (Muller, 2011:[1]).

The following section provides an overview of the demographics for South Africa's Internet users (Muller, 2011:[1]), according to regular reporting by the Digital Media and Marketing Association (DMMA) in South Africa.

Table 3.6 offers a breakdown of the South African cities, and their corresponding Internet use. It is clear that the city with the biggest Internet user penetration in South Africa is Johannesburg, followed by Cape Town.

Table 3.6:   Geographical breakdown of South African Internet users

City	Percentage of population
Johannesburg	28.67%
Cape Town	19.41%
Pretoria	13.99%
Durban	7.24%
Other Gauteng cities/towns	6.26%
Other Western Cape	4.26%
Mpumalanga	3.00%
Other Kwazulu-Natal	2.81%
Port Elizabeth	2.51%
North West	2.47%

Source: Muller (2011:[1]).

Table 3.7 summarises the population race demographic of Internet users in South Africa. Even though the majority of people in South Africa are overwhelmingly black, their user penetration is only 24.33%, compared with whites in first place at 64%.

Table 3.7:   Race breakdown of Internet users in South Africa

Race	Percentage of population
White	64.00%
Black	24.33%
Coloured	6.43%
Indian	5.23%

Source: Muller (2011:[1]).

Table 3.8 is an indication of the breakdown according to age of South African Internet users. Taking into account the first three largest age groups using the Internet in South Africa, the age group can be determined at 21-50 years of age. Together, this group is comprised of approximately 45% of the South African Internet users.

Table 3.8:   Breakdown according to age of South African Internet users

AGE	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION
15-17	0.28%
18-20	2.49%
21-24	7.49%
25-30	17.88%
31-34	11.55
35-40	16.08%
41-44	9.02%
45-50	11.65%
51-54	7.00%
55-60	7.84%
>60	8.71%

Source: Muller (2011:[1]).

3.6   MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN SA

The following section discusses the most popular social media platforms used in South Africa. These include blogs, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Mxit.

3.6.1 Facebook

Socialbakers is a reliable online organisation which measures and reports daily updated statistics including, inter alia, the demography and population penetration of Facebook users in individual countries (Socialbakers, 2011:[1]).

In July 2011 it was reported that there were 4,095,280 Facebook users in South Africa, with 71.27% of the online population and 7.69% of the general population being penetrated (Socialbakers, 2011:[1]).

3.6.2 Twitter

During some recent research, millions of tweets and tens of thousands of users in South Africa were profiled to better understand the South African Tweeter. This information (based on Twitter data from March and April 2010) was aggregated into dozens of graphs and word clouds for easy reading and dissemination (Fuseware, 2010:[1]).

Table 3.9 summarises the main findings of the research on Twitter users in South Africa.

Table 3.9: Twitter users in South Africa

TWITTER ELEMENT	PERCENTAGE
Number of Active* SA Twitter users	55000
Monthly tweets from SA	1.5 million
Twitter web penetration	4.5% of SA sites reference Twitter
Twitter SA site popularity	7th most visited website in SA
Average Twitter followers for SA	115
Average friends for SA	122
Average total tweets per user for SA	346
% of protected accounts	0.38%
%of geo-location enabled accounts	12.96%
%of Twitter verified accounts	0.014%

Source: Fuseware (2010:[1]).

The research also found that 23% of all South African tweets were re-tweets (where followers repeat an original tweet by another user). 17.3% of all tweets were questions, and almost half (47%) of tweets were by users addressing

each other. Users accessing the social network from their mobile phones were determined at 35 – 40% (Fuseware, 2010:[1]).

3.6.3 YouTube

According to Da Silva (2010:[1]), since its launch in 2005, YouTube has grown massively to become the world's largest online video website, with the number of users worldwide reaching a massive 450 million users worldwide, with about 2 billion views per day, and 24 hours of new content uploaded every minute. YouTube mobile saw a growth of 2000 percent in 2009, as the average Android user watches 10 video playbacks per day. In May 2010, YouTube launched the South African version of its platform.

3.6.4 LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the eleventh most popular site in South Africa based on a combination of average daily visitors and page views and there are 1,102,536 LinkedIn users in the country (Mubayiwa, 2011:[1]).

3.6.5 Mxit

Mxit is Africa's largest social network, providing free a mobile and PC instant messaging application. The platform has over 20 million South African subscribers, most of them aged between 12 - 25 years (Goldstuck, 2010:[1]).

3.7   CONCLUSION

This chapter investigated and defined social media in detail, drawing a comparison between new media and social media. The increased use of social media platforms holds several advantages and disadvantages for both users and organisations.

South Africa is an emerging economy with a distinctly different Internet (and social media) user profile in comparison with those of countries with developed economies.

Social media platforms and the South African social media landscape are discussed at length in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4
LEGAL AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, social media platforms are discussed from an ethical and legal perspective. The focus is on the social media platforms of blogs, Facebook and Twitter.

The survey, replicated from the original study by Wright and Hinson (2009), focuses on the ethical aspects arising from specifically employee blogging. This chapter therefore investigates how ethics, employee blogging and the possible subsequent dismissal of employees relate to one another. This is discussed from a literary and theoretical perspective.

Recent case studies are summarised, in which employees have been dismissed from their employment because of their activities on blogs, Facebook or Twitter.

The literature reviewed in this chapter forms a theoretical background to the ethical aspects of employee blogging, which is tested in the survey.

4.2 BLOGS AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

4.2.1 Three generations of the blog

Du and Wagner (2006:789) describe three generations of the blog.

• **First-person diaries**: The first generation of weblogs were first-person diaries, with the focus being a log of the web, allowing webloggers to comment on other web-based articles. What made this generation of

blogs desirable was that it allowed users, with no or very few technical skills, to share text content via single-click web publishing. The user interface of these weblogs was normally quite basic. As weblogging popularity increased, so did the interest of webloggers in commenting on each other's articles;

- **Improved software**: The second generation weblogging software included more between weblog communication features, including the important permalink (permanent URL to each individual weblog entry). Another second generation change was the improvement in user interface to enable more features that people were familiar with from the word processing environment, as well as multi-media components (Du & Wagner, 2006:789); and

- **Enhanced connectivity**: The third generation weblogs that are currently emerging bundle existing and new tools together to enhance productivity and to further enhance connectivity on the Web. Third generation weblogs are application blogs, which provide practical applications for the webloggers to use. These third generation weblogs seek to port an increasing number of activities from the physical world into the digital platform and carry real-world relationships online (Du & Wagner, 2006:789).

4.2.2 A categorisation of bloggers

The study by Kwai Fun Ip and Wagner (2008:242) describes four types of blog users, with their unique profiles and technology needs. Based on use intensity, four types of bloggers were categorised: habitual, active, personal and blogging lurkers.

- **Habitual** (enthusiastic): Habitual users were the highest intensity users, who had apparently formed a strong habit of visiting their weblogs or weblogs of their weblog group. Habitual users described themselves as "have to" access the weblog sites several times a day, to write their own entries, to see whether their weblogs had received any comments, or to check on their friends' postings. Habitual users

reported spending many hours on posting their own weblog entries or commenting on blog posts by other users. Group aspects of weblogging were highly important to habitual users. They were eager to share, no matter within their group of friends or with the general public, and had adopted the weblogging software because of peer pressure. The users felt strongly that they should also post to weblogs, as their peers were doing so. Habitual users thought weblogging was one of the best ways of passing idle time. For this user group, technology features that promoted sociability were of great importance (Kwai Fun Ip & Wagner, 2008:245);

- **Active users**: The second user type was categorised as active users. Although less intensive in their weblog use, this type of user would regularly visit their weblogs, once a day or once every two to three days, usually during leisure time (Kwai Fun Ip & Wagner, 2008:245). They would spend time reading weblogs by their friends and posting comments, or would post their own journals and permit their friends to access them. They would not post entries every day, but as often as they felt the need to share. Although not such intensive users as habitual webloggers, they were also eager to stay connected with their friends. They preferred similar technology features to those of the most intensive users (Kwai Fun Ip & Wagner, 2008:245);

- **Personal users**: The third type of users was labelled personal users. These users would keep weblogs as a truly personal diary, shared only partially with friends and rarely with the general public. Friends might be allowed to read some daily life information, but would not have access to personal secrets, such as proprietary knowledge, or negative comments about their friends. This user type showed little concern for peer group or sharing. Correspondingly, technology features of relevance for this group were those that enabled privacy as well as easy publishing, archival, and access (Kwai Fun Ip & Wagner, 2008:245); and

- **Blogging lurkers**: The fourth type of users we encountered was blogging lurkers. These users kept a weblog but would rarely or never post to it. Oftentimes, these users had little interest in sharing their own

stories, but were eager to learn about their friends' stories. They had to maintain a weblog just to be able to subscribe to other people's weblogs. Overall, this was a less involved type of user, with less defined use intensity or group belonging and correspondingly less distinct technology feature needs (Kwai Fun Ip & Wagner, 2008:246).

Table 4.1 contains a summary of the characteristics of different blog user types.

Table 4.1: A summary of the characteristics of different blog users

Characteristics of different user types	Types of bloggers/characteristics			
	Habitual	**Active**	**Personal**	**Blogging lurker**
Typical frequency of blog access	Several times a day	Once daily	Once daily	Not fixed
Typical duration of blog access	Hours per day	Around 1 hour per day	Depends on own needs	Not fixed
Interest in blog as a sharing device	High-active and passive	High-active and passive	Low	Low active, high active
Peer influence	High	High	Low	Unknown
Group belonging	Strong	Strong	Weak/None	Unknown
Preferred tools	Community building, journal writing	Community building, journal writing	Journal writing, content management	None

Source: Kwai Fun Ip and Wagner (2008:245).

4.2.3 Employee blogging and ethics

Owing to the increase in Internet use, an ever-increasing number of weblogs, or "blogs", as they are known, have seen the light of day in recent years. Millions of people around the world are diarising their daily lives in online diaries and social networks. It is estimated that as many as 5% of United States of America employees maintain a personal blog (Joyce, 2006).

Employees who blog or who keep online social network diaries are of growing concern for employers, and the lines between ethical and unethical behaviour is blurring. Although there are no real statistics on the number of employees dismissed from their jobs because of something they wrote or diarised on

personal blogs or social networks, the scenario is occurring more frequently (Joyce, 2006).

As blogging has increased in popularity and use, so has its capacity for potential legal risks (Mercado-Kierkegaard, 2006:129). The legal limits are crossed when bloggers reveal proprietary or confidential information in blogs in a definitive nature about another person and employers.

Several cases against bloggers have been brought before the courts in the United States of America. The justice system has responded to these claims with mixed verdicts. In addition to this, according to Mercado-Kierkegaard (2006:129), there have been many instances of blogging persecution in other countries, especially Iran, which have initiated interest among human rights activists. Table 4.2 contains a summary of cases where employees in the United States of America were dismissed for blogging.

Table 4.2: Employees dismissed for their blogging activities in the USA

Blogging-related dismissals by employee
Heather Armstrong, a web designer, posted comments about the workplace on her personal blog, including comments on the office Christmas party.
A Wells Fargo employee blog made fun of some co-workers on his blog.
Nadine Haobosh, an associate beauty editor at the *Ladies' Home Journal*, who was about to take a position at *Seventeen* magazine, blogged about work.
A professor at DeVry University criticised the school on her blog.
Mark Jen started his own blog soon after starting work for Google. Shortly thereafter, he posted his impressions of a Google sales meeting.
A contractor working for Microsoft took pictures of Apple computers being delivered to the Microsoft campus and posted the pictures on his blog.
Mark Pilgrim's supervisor discovered Pilgrim's personal blog, which included posts regarding Pilgrim's past addictions; the supervisor demanded that Pilgrim take down the blog and Pilgrim refused.
Rachel Mosteller posted comments on her blog criticising her employer. Mosteller used a pseudonym, did not name her company or where it was based, and did not name her co-workers.
Joyce Park, a Web developer for Friendster, a company, posted three publicly available items about work on her blog, Troutgirl.
A Starbucks supervisor used an anonymous blog to talk with family/friends and to vent frustration about personal life/work; he complained on his blog when a manager would not let him go home because of an illness.
A Delta Airlines flight attendant published pictures of herself in her uniform aboard a Delta plane.
A reporter at the *Houston Chronicle* posted information about family life and local politicians on his personal blog.

Source: Valentine, Fleishman, Sprague and Godkin (2010:106).

4.2.4 Potential legal liabilities in blogging

According to Mercado-Kierkegaard (2006:130), the emergence of blogging has brought with it a range of legal ramifications, but since it is a relatively new phenomenon, there is as yet an insufficient body of law. The following illustrates the potential legal liabilities in blogging.

4.2.4.1   Libel (defamation)

Mercado-Kierkegaard (2006:130) states that libel is a legal term describing a written form of defamation. Defamation is the act of harming the reputation of another by making a false statement to a third person, thereby exposing the plaintiff to contempt, public hatred or degradation.

4.2.4.2   Doocing

Macmillan English Dictionary (2005:[1]) to be ''dooced'' means to lose one's employment because of something one has written in an Internet weblog. According to Mercado-Kierkegaard (2006:130), the word "dooced" was coined in 2002 by Heather Armstrong, a Los Angeles web designer who lost her employment after writing about work colleagues in her personal blog, dooce.com. The term made its British English debut in January 2005, when Joe Gordon, a senior bookseller in Waterstones in Edinburgh, was dismissed from his employment, allegedly having made offensive remarks about the company in his online satirical newsletter, Woolamaloo Gazette. The affair set a British precedent.

4.2.4.3   Anonymity and trade secrets

To prevent possible reprisals from employers and censorship, many organisations are recommending that bloggers remain anonymous to protect themselves from recriminations and censors (Mercado-Kierkegaard, 2006:133).

4.2.4.4   Copyright infringement

According to Mercado-Kierkegaard (2006:134), copyright protects the form of expression of a creator against copying. Copyright protection is given to the authors of 'original works of authorship, including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works. Copying the whole, or nearly the whole of a text written by someone else onto one's blog, or putting a copyrighted picture onto the weblog without the right holder's consent is copyright infringement.

4.2.4.5   Privacy

According to Mercado-Kierkegaard (2006:134), private facts are personal details about someone that have not been disclosed to the public. Once publicly disclosed by that person, however, the facts move into the public domain.

4.2.4.6   Blog owners and Internet Service Provider (ISP) responsibility

Visitors' comments (Mercado-Kierkegaard, 2006:135) posted to a blog owner can claim immunity provided that (a) the blogger can prove that the offence was committed without his or her knowledge and (b) the blogger had exercised all due diligence to prevent commission of such offence or contravention. Any statements made by commentators are published by the commentator and not by the blogger. That alone should protect bloggers from lawsuits for the remarks made by commentators on their blogs.

To conclude, Mercado-Kierkegaard (2006:135) maintains that blogging has allowed millions of people all over the world to exercise their right to legitimate free expression. However, although freedom of expression is an absolute right, it is bound by the rights of others. Bloggers who write anything negative, false or defamatory about a corporation or an individual are exposing themselves and their companies to the possibility of libel suits.

4.2.4.7   The impact of blogging

While early weblogs may have been used mostly by technology-savvy users with an interest in journalistic reporting, weblogs are currently attracting a younger generation who diarise and share their daily lives with others. This transition in the technology and its use may have significant implications.

Firstly, it may reshape social computing, shifting importance away from traditional technologies such as e-mail. Secondly, developments in social computing may increasingly impact on organisational computing, as, on the one hand, organisations need to find ways of addressing their customers through the weblogging medium, while, on the other hand, they may wish to take advantage of the social computing skills of webloggers and their technology to improve organisational information processing and knowledge management (Kwai Fun Ip & Wagner, 2008:243).

4.2.5 Ethics and employee dismissal for blogging

Since the survey replicated from the original study by Wright and Hinson (2009) focuses on the ethical aspects of employee blogging in particular, it is important to note, from the literary and theoretical perspective, how ethics, employee blogging and the possible subsequent dismissal of employees are related to one another.

According to Barnett and Valentine (2004:338), the ethical decision-making process begins when an individual recognises an ethical dilemma. Subsequently, the individual makes a judgment and forms behavioural intentions, which are thought to be predictive of actual behaviour. This process is affected by individual, situational and issue-contingent factors.

An exploratory study evaluating the ethical considerations related to employees dismissed from work for their blogging activities found that the

judgements made by subjects that dismissing an employee for blogging were unethical were negatively related to unethical intentions to dismiss an employee for blogging (Valentine et al., 2010:87).

According to Valentine *et al.* (2010:88), American law favours the organisational capacity to dismiss employees who blog. However, legal compliance is not the only challenge, because ethics is also a concern when Human Resource (HR) professionals decide to dismiss employees who blog or keep social network diaries. In other words, a conceptual distinction exists between legality versus ethics when making such decisions.

The framework of the study was based on the idea that ethical decisions about blogging terminations, when consistent with perceptions of issue contingencies and corporate ethical values that raise awareness of ethical issues, should mitigate employer-employee conflict and reduce litigation, because social contracts are honoured and organisational ethical standards are supported (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994:252). This is illustrated in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: A summary of the hypothesised relationships among the blogging situation, moral intensity, corporate ethical values and the ethical decision-making process
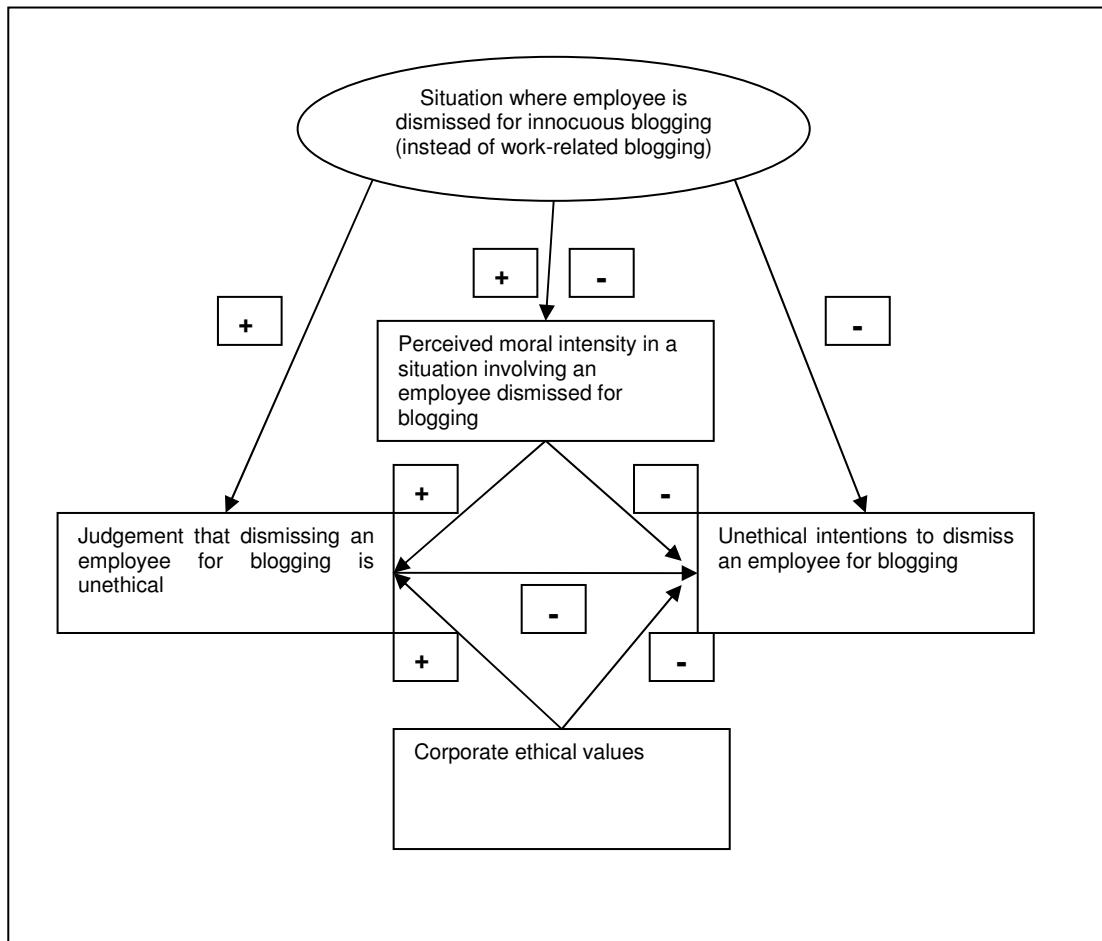
Source: Adapted from Valentine *et al.*, 2010:89.

The following research questions were investigated in the study (Valentine *et al.*, 2010:88):

- What is the relationship between ethical judgments and unethical intentions in situations involving the termination of an employee for blogging?

- What is the relationship between perceived moral intensity and ethical reasoning in situations involving the termination of an employee for blogging?

- What is the relationship between perceived corporate ethical values and ethical reasoning in situations involving the termination of an employee for blogging?

- How does terminating an employee for innocuous blogging (as opposed to blogging about work) impact on ethical reasoning?

It is noted that these research questions are particularly important, given that human resource policies related to employee blogging are an emerging concern, and no uniform guidelines are based on established standards concerning the acceptability of blogging activities (Valentine *et al.*, 2010:88).

In the literature review of the study a framework for ethical reasoning is used comprising four steps that demonstrate how individuals face ethical problems from psychological and behavioural perspectives (Jones, 1991:366; Rest, 1986:1-27):

- The process begins with the awareness of an ethical issue;
- This is followed by judging the behaviours in question;
- The individual then makes ethical judgments; and
- Finally, the individual establishes a future intention to behave in a manner consistent with ethical evaluations.

Survey data were collected from employed college students and working practitioners. The findings of the study indicated that the subjects' ethical judgments that dismissing an employee for blogging was unethical were negatively related to unethical intentions to dismiss an employee for blogging. Moral intensity was positively related to ethical judgments and negatively related to unethical intentions to dismiss an employee for blogging. Individual perceptions of ethical values were negatively associated with unethical intentions. Finally, subjects perceived that terminating an employee for innocuous blogging that did not target an employer was ethically more intense than terminating an employee for work-related blogging (Valentine *et al.*, 2010:88).

According to Kuchinskas (2005:[1]), the search engine company Yahoo! published official guidelines for employees who author blogs that mention the business of the organisation, its products or co-workers. Binder (2006:[1]) advises that companies need to decide whether or not they want to take advantage of either the 'hype' that corporate-sanctioned bloggers can create or the advice on how to handle employees who blog without authorisation.

Wright and Hinson (2008:13) found that, since the first version of the study in 2006, the practitioners' view on whether it is ethical for employees to write or post negative comments about the organisations they work for, had dropped from 49% in 2006, to 29% in 2007, to 25% in 2008. These findings indicated that the increasing numbers of employees who were actively blogging about their organisations apparently negatively impacted PR practitioners or their perceptions at least, at an escalating rate.

4.3 FACEBOOK LEGAL AND ETHICAL DILLEMAS

4.3.1 Employee activity on Facebook and ethics

According to Langheinrich and Karjoth (2010:51), Facebook-enabled employees risk neglecting their actual work in favour of extensive networking (as of April 2010, almost 7% of all corporate Internet traffic is said to have come from accessing Facebook pages) or unknowingly spilling company secrets to competitors.

Langheinrich and Karjoth (2010:54) state that most companies do not publish detailed information on teams, their members and their current projects. However, the implicit publication of connections on a social networking site such as Facebook could easily provide outsiders with detailed insight into the internal operational structure.

Sensitive insights could be provided through individual Facebook profiles. If, for example, a key accounts manager were to add a client to the list of "friends" on Facebook, this information would not only be of interest to competitors, but might also potentially violate a customer confidentiality agreement. Even private chats between colleagues at the same company could mean trouble, as system errors might briefly expose even private conversations to a wider audience worldwide. When Facebook rolled out its new "preview my profile" feature on May 5, 2010, a glitch made private chat

records and pending friend requests temporarily available to the public (Wortham, 2010:[1]).

4.3.2 Employees dismissed for Facebook activities

According to Smith and Kanalley (2010:[1]), Facebook's mission is to make the world a more open and connected place. However, the fact that there are instances of employees being dismissed from their employment as a result of their activities on Facebook proves that being open and connected on the social networking site can be viewed as a threat or as offensive to employers and organisations. Table 4.3 summarises 12 cases in which employees were dismissed for their activities on Facebook.

Table 4.3: A summary of 12 cases where employees were dismissed for their activities on Facebook

FACEBOOK ACTIVITY-RELATED DISMISSALS BY EMPLOYEE
An employee of *Nationale Suisse* called in sick to work, claiming that she could not work in front of a computer as she needed to lie in the dark. When she was discovered to be surfing Facebook from home, she was terminated from employment.
Caitlin Davis, a cheerleader with the New England Patriots, was dismissed from her employment because she posted some photos to Facebook.
A juror in the United Kingdom was dismissed after she disclosed sensitive case information on her Facebook profile. She proceeded to request her Facebook friends to weigh in on the case.
Virgin Atlantic took disciplinary action against 13 crew members who participated in a Facebook discussion that criticised the safety standards of the company and insulted passengers. The comments were promptly removed, the employees dismissed and Virgin disclosed no details other than a statement saying the unruly employees had "brought the company into disrepute".
Ashley Johnson, a former waitress at Brixx, a pizza restaurant, claims she was fired from her job for complaining about customers on her Facebook account.
Dan Leone, a game-day employee at the Philadelphia Eagles stadium, claimed that he was dismissed from his employment after he criticised the team on Facebook.
Farm Boy, a Canadian grocery store chain, dismissed seven employees for creating a Facebook group that mocked customers and included "verbal attacks on customers and staff."
A Georgia high school teacher claims she was forced to resign after her principal "questioned her about about her Facebook page".
Andrew Kurtz, a Pittsburgh Pirate Pierogi mascot, was fired after he took to Facebook and voiced his opinion about the management of the team.
Colleton County paramedic and fire-fighter Jason Brown was dismissed from his job after posting a video that showed an exchange between two cartoon characters at a hospital.
Oregon wide receiver Jamere Holland slammed the athletic programme of the school after hearing a linebacker had been kicked off the team.
Six Australian state corrections workers came under fire for a Facebook group that criticised their manager and a government plan to privatise several prison facilities.

Source: Smith and Kanalley (2010:[1]).

4.4 TWITTER LEGAL AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS

4.4.1 Employee activity on Twitter and ethics

According to Kiergeraad (2010:577) Twitter, which started as a micro-blogging website, is the third most popular social network after Facebook and My Space. Twitter is increasingly becoming a prime means of communication among individuals and businesses. It is now being used in courts for issuing injunctions. However, Twitter "tweets" also constitute a potential litigation minefield for lawyers, businesses and employers. As a social-networking tool, Twitter can raise a variety of legal issues, such as, inter alia, the right of publicity, breach of confidentiality, infringement of privacy, fraud trademark infringement, copyright infringement, and reverse username hijacking.

Kiergeraad (2010:579) states that, in the legal world, new technology devices and social messages are taking society into new territory, where ethical challenges abound.

Users of social networking sites are empowered to access and transmit data, causing a myriad of legal complications. Tweeting, like blogging and Facebook use, has some serious legal repercussions for users, such as; copyright infringement, brandjacking, jury impropriety, doocing, security risk, evidence, defamation and libel, invasion of privacy, trade confidentiality and fraud (Kiergeraad, 2010:579). Each of these legal infringements is discussed in the following section.

4.4.1.1 Copyright infringement

According to Kiergeraad (2010:582), Twitter has a copyright policy which clearly states that the tweeter owns the rights to anything he posts to the service. The Twitter terms of service include that it claims no intellectual property rights over the material provided to the Twitter service by the users.

User profiles and materials uploaded remain their own property. Users can remove their profile at any time by deleting their account. This will also remove any text and images stored in the system. Twitter encourages users to contribute their creations to the public domain or consider progressive licensing terms.

4.4.1.2   Brandjacking

Many Tweeters use aliases. This could lead to trademark dilution if the tweeter used the name of a company or a product, thereby confusing the consumers. Brandjacking is bound to happen (Kiergeraad, 2010:583).

4.4.1.3   Jury impropriety

The instance of jurors sending Twitter messages raises new issues for judges. As jurors turn to tweeting to update on cases, mistrials, exclusion of jurors and imposition of fines are becoming more common (Kiergeraad, 2010:583-584).

4.4.1.4   Doocing

Inappropriate Internet and/or e-mail use can present a range of problems for employers, from defamation and copyright infringement to harassment and discrimination claims (Kiergeraad, 2010:585).

4.4.1.5   Security risk

Twitter is a powerful tool and when it falls into the wrong hands, can be a powerful weapon. Tweeting about local and national vulnerabilities during a pandemic could place people in danger (Kiergeraad, 2010:588).

4.4.1.6   Evidence

The question that demands an answer is that of whether tweets should be admitted as evidence. In India, the amended IT Act makes status messages and tweets admissible as electronic evidence and the onus of the posts on these accounts now rests solely on users. In the US, tweets are out of court statements which are not admissible in court unless they fit into an exception or an exclusion (Kiergeraad, 2010:589).

4.4.1.7   Defamation and libel

Damaging someone's reputation by posting false information about them can lead to legal action. The offhand criticisms that a tweeter makes about another individual could be interpreted as malicious. Companies may face liability if their employees post content to their Twitter account that defames or invades the privacy of third parties (Kiergeraad, 2010:590).

4.4.1.8   Invasion of privacy

There is no real privacy on the Internet. Tweets can reveal the Internet Protocol (IP) user's address and mobile information. In 2010, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) launched a complaint against Twitter, Inc. for various violations of the FTC Act 84. Twitter had engaged in a number of practices which, taken together, failed to provide reasonable and appropriate security to prevent unauthorised access to non-public user information and honour the privacy choices exercised by such users in designating certain tweets as non-public. Such information included: an e-mail address, IP addresses, mobile telephone numbers (for users who received updates by phone), and the username for any Twitter account that a user had chosen to block from exchanging tweets with the user (Kiergeraad, 2010:591).

4.4.1.9   Trade confidentiality

Employees can inadvertently send out tweets that convey proprietary or confidential information about the company or its clients. Inadvertent disclosure of company trade secrets through a Twitter account could expose the company to liability for trade secret misappropriation. These conversations, lawyers note, are legally binding and subject to the legal rules of electronic discovery, which means that tweets could be subpoenaed in a lawsuit (Kiergeraad, 2010:592).

4.4.1.10   Fraud

Individuals increasingly use social-networking tools like Twitter to commit fraud, and Twitter impersonation has become rampant. It is easy for individuals and organisations to set up multiple Twitter accounts using different names. In addition, there have been numerous reports of stolen identity and impersonation. Impersonation means pretending to be another person or entity in order to deceive. Impersonation is a violation of the Twitter rules and may result in permanent suspension of account (Kiergeraad, 2010:592).

Kiergeraad (2010:594) concludes by stating that although Twitter imposes a mere 140-character limit, there lurk real and potential legal dangers, even in this. Tweets are no different from letters, e-mails or text messages. With social media continually breaking new ground, even the 140-characters will find their way into litigation.

4.4.2 Employees dismissed for activity on Twitter

Table 4.4 summarises 13 cases in which employees were dismissed for their activities on Twitter.

Table 4.4: A summary of 13 cases in which employees were dismissed for their activities on Twitter

Twitter activity-related dismissals by employee
After an interview at Cisco Systems, Connor Riley confessed in a tweet that she would hate the job but relish the paycheck.
CNN dismissed senior Middle East editor Octavia Nasr over a controversial tweet she posted regarding Lebanon's deceased Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah.
David Le, a summer jobs contractor for the Washington D.C. Department of Employment Services (DOES), was working to help youths in Anacostia secure employment. Over the course of a month, Le posted a string of tweets that referred to Anacostia as a "ghetto" and admitted to slacking off on the job.
According to waiter Jon-Barrett Ingels at the Beverly Hills Barney Greengrass, a famous actress skipped out on a restaurant check and had her agent pay the tab the next day. Jon-Barrett was dismissed for tweeting on the subject.
Former MLB pitcher-turned-radio host Mike Bacsik was dismissed for making a racist tweet after a Mavericks-Spurs game.
Müller Tamás, a Vodafone Hungary employee responsible for handling the company's official Twitter account, was dismissed after he retweeted a T-Mobile Hungary post regarding network trouble--and added a joke/jab at T-Mobile.
A female employee at a St. Louis non-profit organisation was fired after her boss discovered (via Twitter) that she had been maintaining a secret sex blog.
An employee at California Pizza Kitchen (CPK) posted his opinion of the restaurant's uniform change. Using his bio information on Twitter, the managers of the CPK account tracked down the branch where he worked and dismissed him from their employment.
Australian comedian Catherine Deveny, who also wrote for Melbourne's *The Age*, was dismissed by the paper's editor after she made several insensitive tweets about celebrities attending an Australian awards show.
UK politician Stuart MacLennan was dismissed by Britain's governing Labour Party after he made offensive and profane comments about his political foes on his Twitter account.
The Palmeiras, a Brazilian football team, dismissed their manager, Vanderlei Luxemburgo, after he criticised one of his players on Twitter.
Australia's Queensland Liberal-National Party (LNP) expelled Nick Sowden, a Young Liberals member, after he tweeted racist remarks about President Obama.
Jennifer Carter, a former nursing school employee at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, responded to a tweet by Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour regarding budget trimming. Carter suggested that a better way to "trim expenses" would be for Barbour to "Schedule regular medical exams like everyone else instead of paying UMC employees overtime to do it when clinics are usually closed." Although Carter was referring to an incident that took place before she was employed at the Center, disclosing this information on Twitter was seen as a violation of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act's Privacy Rule. The Governor's office alerted Carter's employer, who compelled her to resign.

Source: Smith and Kanalley (2010:[1]).

4.5 CONCLUSION

Chapter 4 concludes the literature reviews of this study. In this chapter, it was explained that the use of social media by employees poses a major threat and

challenge to organisations and the PR industry, from the strategic, managerial, ethical and legal points of view.

In most countries, no legal or ethical guidelines have as yet been made official to guide employees and employers alike in managing the flow of communication on social media platforms. It is therefore important to investigate, as in the research survey, how PRPs view the ethical aspects of employee blogging and social media use, and how these are managed.

The research methodology and survey design used in the empirical research phase of this study are discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5
Research methodology

5.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM/WORLD VIEW

Worldviews or paradigms play as fundamental a role in scientific inquiry as they do in everyday life (Babbie, 2007:33). Either implicitly or explicitly, all researchers base their work on a series of philosophical beliefs or assumptions regarding the nature of reality (ontology), the nature of knowledge and how it can best be produced (epistemology), the role and the place of the researcher's values in the research process (axiology), and the most appropriate ways of investigating what can be known (methodology).

Guba and Lincoln (2005:191-215) distinguish between four research paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, constructivism and critical theory. This study is classified as post-positivist. Ponteretto (2005:126-136) describes post-positivism as a paradigm that arose out of dissatisfaction with some aspects of the positivist stance. Whereas positivists accept an objective, apprehendable reality, post-positivists acknowledge an objective reality that is only imperfectly apprehendable. Another key distinction between positivism and post-positivism is that the former stresses theory verification while the latter stresses theory falsification. The quantitative nature of the research design furthers the post-positivism paradigm by using a field research quantitative method.

5.2 OBJECTIVES

According to Varkevisser, Pathmanathan and Brownlee (2003:9-15), the objectives of a research project summarise what is to be achieved by the study, and the objectives should be closely related to the research problem. The general objective of a study states what researchers expect to achieve in the study in general terms.

Specific objectives should reveal the purpose of the study. The formulation of objectives should direct the study (narrowing it down to essentials); avoid the collection of data which is not strictly necessary for understanding and solving the problem that has been identified; and organise the study in clearly defined parts or phases (Varkevisser *et al.*, 2003:9-15).

The eleven objectives of this study were divided into two separate sets: one for replication and one for comparison. For ease of reference, the objectives are repeated here. The first seven objectives were replications of objectives that were tested in the original study (Wright & Hinson, 2009), and were tested in the context of South African PR practice:

- To determine whether social media (such as SNSs like Facebook and Twitter, blogs, news delivery sites and content-sharing sites) influence traditional, mainstream news media, or whether the reverse is true;

- To determine whether the instantaneous nature of social media forced organisations to respond more rapidly to criticism;

- To determine whether the emergence of social media changed the way in which organisations communicate;

- To determine whether blogs and social media complement or conflict with mainstream traditional news media;

- To determine whether it is considered ethical for employees to write and post negative statements about their organisations on blogs;

- To determine whether it is considered ethical on the part of organisations to monitor information their employees have written on weblogs; and

- To determine whether it is ethical for an organisation to conduct research or measurement studies that focus on information their employees are writing on weblogs.

The second set of objectives was used to compare the findings of the study by Wright and Hinson (2009) with the findings of this study (in order to determine

how South Africa, a developing country with an emerging economy measures up to the PR practice in developing countries).

The four comparative objectives are:

- To determine whether the influence of blogs and social media on mainstream media in South Africa is in line with the same global trends;

- To determine whether the way in which South African companies react to social media is on a par with that of their global counterparts;

- To determine whether the ethical views on employee blogging and company monitoring of employee blogging is the same as those of global companies; and

- To determine whether PR practitioners are responding to social media in an emerging economy by following the same communication management strategies those followed by global practitioners.

5.3 DESCRIPTION OF INQUIRY STRATEGY AND BROAD RESEARCH DESIGN

As discussed earlier in Chapter 1, the study being replicated (Wright & Hinson, 2009) is an annual report on an international, longitudinal trend study examining the impact of social media and other aspects of the new technologies on the PR practice. The study has been conducted annually since 2008, and results strongly suggest that new communication media are having a dramatic impact on PR practice worldwide. According to Wright and Hinson (2009:6), although the original intention of these annual trend surveys was to use the same questionnaire each consecutive year, the reality is that social media have changed dramatically since the research project was initiated. Consequently, it became necessary to make considerable annual updates to the measuring instrument. In light of that, some of the findings reported in the 2009 paper represented benchmarks reflecting differences in

answers from the previous year, while other results are for items investigated for the first time in 2009.

The appropriate descriptors that best apply to the broad research design of the proposed study are summarised in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1:   The descriptors for the broad research design of the study

DESCRIPTOR	DESCRIPTION
Empirical	An empirical study refers to research in which the researcher collects new data or in which the researcher re-analyses existing data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:75).
Basic (pure/fundamental) research	Basic research is undertaken purely to understand processes and their outcomes as the result of an academic agenda for which the key target audience is the academic community (Saunders *et al.,* 2007:592*).* Basic (pure/fundamental) research is not aimed at directly solving an organisational problem or informing managerial decision-making.
Cross-sectional	This is a cross-sectional study providing a snapshot of a certain period in time. PR practitioners were only interviewed once.
Primary data	Primary data refers to data collected specifically for the study.
Quantitative	Numerical data was collected during the research process by means of the online surveys.

5.3.1 Research design

According to Anderson, Sweeney and Williams (2003:7), quantitative data is numeric values that indicate 'how much' or 'how many'. Quantitative data is obtained using either the interval or ratio scale of development.

The research design of the study was quantitative in nature, with a sample of 101 South African PR practitioners completing an electronic survey on the Survey Monkey platform.

The research design focused on collecting quantitative information, based on the survey used by Wright and Hinson (2009).

The aim of a quantitative research design, according to Hopkins (2000:8), is to determine the relationship between one independent variable and another dependent or outcome variable in a population. Quantitative research designs are either descriptive or experimental in nature. In a descriptive research

design, subjects are measured once, whereas in experimental research designs subjects will be measured before and after a certain treatment Hopkins (2000:8). The subjects in this study were measured once, therefore making it descriptive in nature.

The scale of measurement for a variable is an interval scale if the data has the properties of ordinal data and the interval between observations is expressed in terms of a fixed unit of measurement. Interval data are always numeric (Anderson, Sweeney & Williams, 2003:6).

If the data has all the properties of interval data and the ratio of two values is meaningful, the appropriate scale of measurement for such variables is a ratio scale. Variables such as distance, height, weight, and time use the ratio scale of measurement (Anderson, Sweeney & Williams, 2003:6).

A descriptive study establishes only associations between variables. An experiment establishes causality. For an accurate estimate of the relationship between variables, a descriptive study usually needs a sample of hundreds or even thousands of subjects; an experiment, especially a crossover, may need only tens of subjects (Hopkins, 2000:8).

5.3.2 Survey design

As stated previously in Chapter 1, according to Wright and Hinson (2009:6), although the original intention of these annual trend surveys was to use the same questionnaire each consecutive year, the reality is that social media changed dramatically since the research project was initiated. Consequently, it became necessary to make considerable updates to the measuring instrument each year.

In their original study, Wright and Hinson (2009:6) tested the hypotheses by conducting a survey that was completed by a global sample of PR practitioners. In 2008, the survey consisted of 47 close-ended and two open-

ended questions. Usable responses were received from 328 subjects. In 2009, the survey was comprised of 42 close-ended and three open-ended questions. Usable responses were received from 574 subjects. Appendix A in the study contains a copy of the survey used in this study (a replica of the survey used by Wright and Hinson in 2009).

The first seven objectives of this study were tested in questions 1-17. The last four (comparative) objectives (to measure the results of this study against that of the original study), were tested by comparing these results to those of Wright and Hinson (2009:6-17).

A Likert-type scale with five scale points, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used for 20 statements. An averaging method was used to calculate composite scale scores.

The remaining questions in the survey were posed according to a multiple choice scale, and respondents were requested to select the option applicable to them.

5.4 SAMPLING DESIGN

The research design for this particular study was empirical in nature, employing a quantitative strategy of inquiry. This choice is supported by the strategy of inquiry used in the original research study that was replicated (in a South African context) (Wright & Hinson, 2009:6-17).

5.4.1 Target population

A national (South African) sample of PR practitioners participated in completing the questionnaires for the study. In order to qualify for inclusion in the study, the practitioners had to be actively practising PR at the actual time of data collection. This means that the PR practitioner is acting as a counsellor to management and as a mediator, helping to translate private

aims into reasonable, publicly-acceptable policy and action (Public Relations Society of America, 1982:[1]).

5.4.2 Sampling method

Probability sampling was used in the research design. The research is therefore able to answer research questions and to achieve objectives required for estimating statistically the characteristics of the population from the sample. A population (of about 50) selected from all the PR agencies registered with the media and marketing web portal in South Africa, *Bizcommunity* (South Africa's leading business to business website, focusing on advertising, marketing, media, retail and associated sectors)*,* was approached to complete the questionnaire. The database of PR practitioners from the South African PR organisation, PR Net (over 2000 members) was included. In addition, the survey was distributed to the *Public Relations Institute of South Africa* (PRISA) database of over 1300 members. In total, therefore, the survey was distributed to over 3000 South African PR practitioners. A total of 101 respondents successfully completed the survey.

5.5 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

5.5.1 Data collection

A link to the email questionnaire was sent to the sample of respondents. These questionnaires were to be completed and returned to the researcher within two weeks of receiving it in order to ensure a high response rate. The main constructs measured were in line with the research objectives stated earlier in the document. The demographic questions in the instrument were: age, gender and the type of organisation by whom the participant was employed.

Completed responses to the email questionnaire were recorded electronically as soon as they were submitted by respondents. Data collected from the Likert-type scale questions were calculated using the Chi square method to determine probability.

5.5.2 Data analysis

Data collected from the multiple choice questions were summarised for each coded option, so that the composite scores for each question could be calculated.

Once all the data had been statistically processed, they were compared with the scores obtained in the original study that was being replicated (Wright & Hinson, 2009:6-17) in order to see how these scores measured up against each other (last four objectives of the study).This was done by using the chi-square method.

The chi-square test is probably the most generally-used test for establishing significance between two sets of samples (or groups), where nominal data is concerned, according to Cooper and Schindler (2008:482). The chi-square test was used in this study to determine whether there was a significant difference between the results of this study those of Wright and Hinson (2008 & 2009).

According to Cooper and Schindler (2008:476), the researcher must decide on a statistical significance level prior to undertaking the research (α). The level of significance refers to the chance that relations or differences which might exist could be ascribed to a sampling error. A significance level of at least 0.05% is usually used (but sometimes a significance level of 0.01).

According to Anderson, Sweeney and Williams (2003:141), probability is a numerical measure of the likelihood that an event will occur. Thus, probabilities could be used as measures of the degree of uncertainty. Probability values are always assigned on a scale from 0 to 1. A probability

near zero indicates that an event is unlikely to occur; a probability near 1 indicates that an event will almost certainly occur, as illustrated in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Probability as a numerical measure of the likelihood of an event occurring
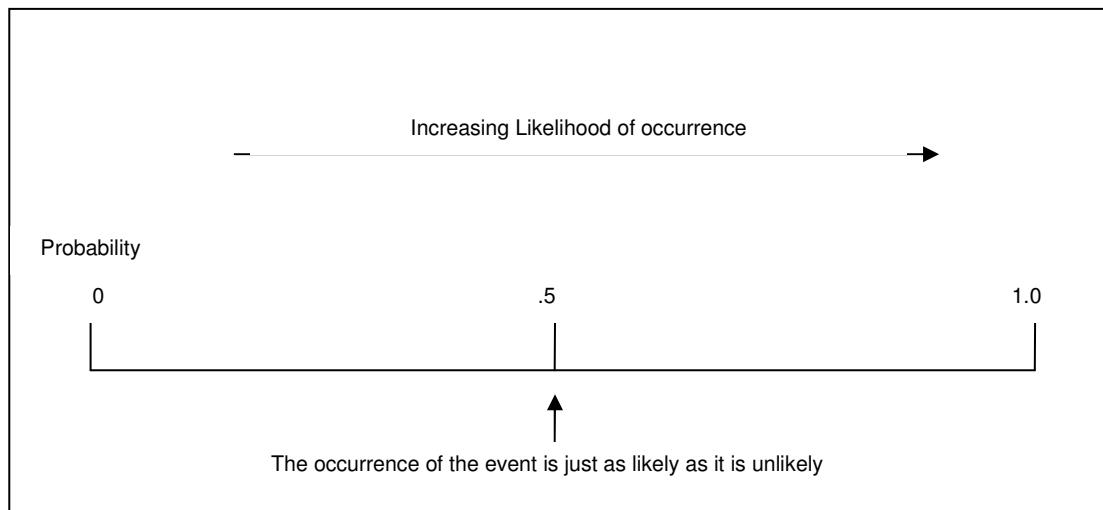
<u>Source</u>: Anderson, Sweeney & Williams (2003:142).

The significance level in this study was set at 0.05%. The hypotheses can therefore be accepted only when the p-value is smaller or equal to 0.05. There is thus a 5% or less chance that the difference between the samples could be blamed on a sample error or coincidence.

5.6 ASSESSING AND DEMONSTRATING THE QUALITY AND RIGOUR OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH DESIGN

5.6.1 Reliability assessment

Moss (1994:5-12) states that validity cannot exist without reliability, if reliability is defined as consistency among independent measures. Reliability is an aspect of construct validity. As assessment becomes less standardised, and distinctions between reliability and validity blur.

The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) was used to interpret output tables generated by SPSS to test the relational quality attributes.

Questions 1-10 in the questionnaire tested the main objectives of the study. Table 5.2 summarises the Cronbach Alpha results for these questions in the survey.

Table 5.2:   A summary of the Cronbach Alpha results for questions 1 to 12

	Cronbach's Alpha	**Cronbach Alpha's based on standarised items**	**N of items**
Question 1	.869	.877	3
Question 2	-.036	-.037	2
Question 3	.399	.539	5
Question 4	.864	.865	8
Question 5 and 6	.653	.654	2
Question 7 and 8	.368	.370	2
Question 9	.700	.707	4
Question 10	.951	.951	4

5.7 CONCLUSION

To summarise Chapter 5, it was established that this study was empirical in nature, with basic research, cross-sectional, primary data in a quantities format. The survey method, survey design and data analysis were also discussed.

In Chapter 6, the results and findings of the data are detailed and discussed.

CHAPTER 6

Research findings and discussion

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters of this document, the literature review and research methodology were discussed. In Chapter 6, the findings are reported and compared with to the original study. Thereby the objectives of the study, as set out in Chapter 1, will be met.

The results of this study are discussed by first examining the results of the original study by Wright and Hinson (2008) and the study that followed the year after (Wright & Hinson, 2009). Thereafter the results from this study will be included and compared to the two original studies.

As mentioned previously in Chapter 1 and 5, according to Wright and Hinson (2009:6), although the initial intent for the annual trend surveys was to use the same questionnaire each consecutive year, the reality is that social media changed dramatically since the research project was initiated. Consequently, it became necessary to make considerable updates to the measuring instrument each year. In light of that, some of the findings reported in the 2009 paper represented benchmarks reflecting differences in answers from the previous year, while other results are for items included in the study for the first time in 2009.

6.2 THE RESULT REPORTING TOOLS USED IN THE STUDY

The chi-square results of the study were summarised in Table 6.1 to Table 6.12. Due to rounding, some of the percentage results in Wright and Hinson's (2009:7) study did not add up to 100%. The researcher compensated for this by adapting the figures from Wright and Hinson (2009:7) to add up to 100,

keeping the numbers in the originally reported ratio. The original numbers are summarised in the second and third rows of each table (Table 6.1 to Table 6.12).

In row five, six and seven of each table, the adjusted results for Wright and Hinson's 2008 and 2009 results are provided, followed by the results for the same question of the South African study in 2011, that are the empirical results of this study based on a sample of 101. Lastly, in rows nine to eleven, the Chi-square goodness of fit results are shown for 2009 results compared to 2008, South African results compared to 2008 and South African results compared to 2009. The total chi-square-statistic results are given in the second last column towards the right of these rows. The probability of exceedance is in the last column on the right. In each of the Chi-Square tests, the corresponding degrees of freedom is equal to four.

6.3   RESULTS

According to Wright and Hinson (2009:6), as shown in Table 6.1, 73% of the 2009 year's respondents agreed that blogs and social media have changed the way organisations communicate, up from 61% agreement in 2008. The change in mean scores on this item grew from 3.3 in 2008 to 3.9 in 2009, all based on a five point scale where "1" represents "strongly disagree" and "5" indicates "strongly agree."

[It should be noted that, according to Wright and Hinson (2009:7), percentage scores might not always total 100% due to rounding. Mean scores throughout this report are based on responses to five-point Likert-type scales where 1"= "Strongly Disagree" and 5 = "Strongly Agree." Consequently, the higher the mean score the greater the agreement.]

Wright and Hinson (2009:7) state that agreement increases were found on questions specifically asking about external and internal communications. In 2008, 59% felt the emergence of social media (including blogs) changed the way their organisation handles external communications compared with 68%

in 2009. Agreement on whether or not social media has impacted internal communications grew from 38% to 45% during this same period. The results of this study indicated that 73% of respondents agreed that blogs and social media have changed the way organisations communicate. In addition, as much as 74% of respondents agreed that the emergence of social media has changed the way organisations handle external communication. The perceived agreement of respondents on how social media has changed internal communication was 57%.

Hypothesis regarding the emergence of social media including blogs has changed the way organisations communicate, handles external communications and handle internal communications:

Hypothesis 1:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions that the emergence of social media including blogs has changed the way organisations communicate:

    1a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

    1b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

    1c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_1: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions that the emergence of social media including blogs has changed the way organisations communicate:

    1a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

    1b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

    1c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the significance level in this study was set at 0.05%. Thus, the hypotheses can only be accepted when the p-value is smaller or equal to 0.05, thus there exists a 5% or less chance that the difference between the samples can be blamed on a sample error or coincidence.

For research hypothesis 1a, the p-value in Table 6.1 (row 6) indicates that the p-value is 0.113, therefore H_0 is not rejected.

The research hypothesis 1b, has a p-value in Table 6.1 (row 7) of 0.107, and H_0 is not rejected. Finally for hypothesis 1c, the p-value in Table 6.1 (row 8) is 0.00, so that H_0 is rejected. Therefore, the results indicate that, there were no significant differences between the responses to the question in 2008 and 2009 for the two years in Wright and Hinson. Also, it indicates that the South African study's results were similar to those of Wright and Hinson in 2008. However, when the South African results are compared to those of Wright and Hinson in 2009, significant differences emerge.

The next part of the question asked whether respondents agree or disagree that the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way organisations handle external communications.

Hypothesis 2:

H_0: There is no significant difference in distribution of opinions that the emergence of social media including blogs has changed the way organisations handle external communications.

> 2a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;
>
> 2b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and
>
> 2c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_2: There is a significant difference in distribution of opinions that the emergence of social media including blogs has changed the way organisations handles external communications.

2a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

2b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

2c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 2a the p-value in Table 6.2 (row 6) indicates that the p-value is 0.21, therefore H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 2b has a p-value in Table 6.2 (row 7) of 0.00, and H_0 is rejected. Lastly, for hypothesis 2c, the p-value in Table 6.3 (row 8) is 0.00, and H_0 is rejected.

Therefore, the results indicate that, there was no significant difference between the responses to the question in 2008 and 2009. At the same time, there was a significant difference between the results in Wright and Hinson's previous research and that of the South African study. The conclusion could thus be made that results in the South African study showed a stronger level of agreeableness that the emergence of social media, including blogs, has changed the way in which organisations handles external communications.

The next part of the question asked whether respondents agree or disagree that the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way organisations handles internal communications.

Hypothesis 3:
H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions that the emergence of social media including blogs has changed the way organisations handles internal communications:

3a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

3b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

3c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_3: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions that the emergence of social media including blogs has changed the way organisations handles internal communications.

      3a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

      3b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

      3c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

Research hypothesis 3a indicates in Table 6.3 (row 6) the p-value is 0.21 and H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 3b has, as indicated in Table 6.3 row 7), a p-value of 0.00, and therefore H_0 is rejected. Finally, as can be seen in Table 6.3 (row 8), research hypothesis 3c has a p-value of 0.00 and H_0 is rejected.

Therefore, the results indicate that, there was no significant difference between the responses to the question in 2008 and 2009. At the same time, there was a significant difference between the results in Wright and Hinson's previous research and that of the South African study. Therefore, the conclusion could be made that results in the South African study showed a stronger level of agreeableness that the emergence of social media, including blogs, has changed the way in which organisations handles external communications.

Table 6.1: Responses to the question: "Please tell us whether you agree or disagree that the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way your organisation (or your client organisations) communicates." – Hypothesis 1

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	6%	19%	13%	46%	27%	111%	
2	W&H 2009	3%	13%	11%	47%	14%	88%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	5.4	17.1	11.7	41.4	24.3	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	3.4	14.8	12.5	53.4	15.9	100.0	
5	SA 2011	5.0	8.9	11.9	40.6	33.7	100.1	
	Chi-square goodness-of-fit comparisons	**Cell chi-square**					**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
6	2009 – 2008	0.74	0.32	0.05	3.46	2.91	**7.48**	**0.113**
7	SA – 2008	0.03	3.94	0.00	0.02	3.61	**7.61**	**0.107**
8	SA – 2009	0.74	2.33	0.03	3.07	19.90	**26.07**	**0.000**

W&H = Wright and Hinson

Table 6.2: **Responses to the question: "Please tell us whether you agree or disagree that the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way your organisation (or your client organisations) handles external communications." – Hypothesis 2**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	6%	17%	18%	47%	21%	109%	
2	W&H 2009	3%	15%	14%	48%	11%	91%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	5.5	15.6	16.5	43.1	19.3	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	3.3	16.5	15.4	52.7	12.1	100.0	
5	SA 2011	4.0	8.1	14.1	35.4	38.4	100.0	
		Cell chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)
6	2009 – 2008	0.89	0.05	0.08	2.15	2.67	**5.84**	**0.21**
7	SA – 2008	0.41	3.60	0.35	1.38	19.00	**24.75**	**0.00**
8	SA – 2009	0.15	4.26	0.11	5.71	57.27	**67.50**	**0.00**

Table 6.3: **Responses to the question: "Please tell us whether you agree or disagree that the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way your organisation (or your client organisations) handles internal communications." – Hypothesis 3**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	6%	19%	13%	46%	27%	108%	
2	W&H 2009	3%	13%	11%	47%	14%	93%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	9.3	23.1	25.9	30.6	11.1	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	5.4	25.8	28.0	29.0	11.8	100.0	
5	SA 2011	5.1	14.1	27.3	27.3	26.3	100.0	
		Cell chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)
6	2009 – 2008	1.63	0.31	0.16	0.08	0.05	**2.21**	**0.70**
7	SA – 2008	1.87	3.53	0.07	0.35	20.76	**26.58**	**0.00**
8	SA – 2009	0.01	5.30	0.02	0.10	17.71	**23.14**	**0.00**

Wright and Hinson (2009:7) further state that even more agreement was found in both 2008 and 2009 when respondents were asked if they thought social media (including blogs) compliment mainstream traditional media, or are in conflict with them. Results show that 75% in 2008 believe they complement each other, compared with 85% in 2009. At the same time, those who agree social media and traditional media are in conflict with each other decreased. There was 29% agreement on this item in 2008 compared with 26% agreement in 2009. As indicated in Tables 6.4 and 6.5, 87% of respondents in the South African study agreed that social media and mainstream media compliment each other, with approximately 23% indicating that they believe traditional media and social media are in conflict with one another.

Hypothesis regarding whether social media (including blogs) and mainstream media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) compliment each other or are in conflict with each other:

Hypothesis 4:
H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media and mainstream media compliment each other:

    4a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

    4b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

    4c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_4: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media and mainstream media compliment each other:

    4a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

    4b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

    4c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 4a the p-value in Table 6.4 (row 6) indicates that the p-value is 0.02, and therefore H_0 is rejected. The research hypothesis in 4b has a p-value in Table 6.4 (row 7) of 0.01, and H_0 is rejected. Finally, for hypothesis 4c, the p-value in Table 6.4 (row 8) is 0.00, and H_0 is rejected.

Therefore, the results indicate that, there were significant differences between the responses to the question in 2008 and 2009. Also, it indicates that the South African study's results were significantly different to the results in both of the previous studies, with the biggest difference being between the 2009 results and that of the South African study.

The second part of the question investigated the opinions of respondents on whether social media (including blogs) and mainstream media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) are in conflict with each other:

Hypothesis 5:
H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media and mainstream media are in conflict with each other:

> 5a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;
>
> 5b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and
>
> 5c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_5: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media and mainstream media are in conflict with each other:

> 5a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;
>
> 5b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and
>
> 5c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 5a the p-value in Table 6.5 (row 6) indicates a p-value of 0.20, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 5b has a

p-value in Table 6.5 (row 7) of 0.07, and H_0 is accepted. As indicated in Table 6.5 (row 8), the p-value for research hypothesis 5c is 0.22, and therefore H_0 is accepted.

The conclusion can be made that the results in Wright and Hinson's 2008 and 2009 studies did not differ statistically significant from each other when respondents were asked whether they agree or disagree whether social media ad mainstream media are in conflict with each other. At the same time, is proven that the results in the South African study did not differ statistically significant from the results in both Wright and Hinson's two annual studies.

Table 6.4:   Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) and mainstream traditional media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) compliment each other?" – Hypothesis 4

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	3%	13%	12%	52%	20%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	0%	6%	7%	59%	26%	98%	
		Strongly agree	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Total**	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	3.0	13.0	12.0	52.0	20.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	0.0	6.1	7.1	60.2	26.5	100.0	
5	SA 2011	2.1	5.2	6.3	56.3	30.2	100.1	
		Cell chi-square					**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
6	2009 – 2008	2.98	3.64	1.97	1.29	2.13	**12.01**	**0.02**
7	SA – 2008	0.27	4.68	2.71	0.36	5.20	**13.22**	**0.01**
8	SA – 2009	428.03	0.14	0.10	0.25	0.51	**429.03**	**0.00**

Table 6.5: **Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) and mainstream traditional media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) are in conflict with each other?" – Hypothesis 5**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	12%	42%	17%	24%	5%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	16%	48%	11%	24%	2%	101%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	12.0	42.0	17.0	24.0	5.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	15.8	47.5	10.9	23.8	2.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	21.3	40.4	14.6	20.2	3.4	99.9	
		Cell chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)
6	2009 – 2008	1.23	0.73	2.20	0.00	1.82	**5.98**	**0.20**
7	SA – 2008	7.21	0.06	0.34	0.60	0.51	**8.72**	**0.07**
8	SA – 2009	1.88	1.07	1.26	0.53	1.02	**5.76**	**0.22**

Wright and Hinson (2009:8) found that there was considerable agreement suggesting blogs and social media enhanced public relations practice. Results show nearly three-quarters (72%) of the study's respondents believed social media have enhanced public relations. This was up from 66% in 2008. Furthermore, 65% felt the same way about blogs, up from 60% in 2008. Most (92% - up from 89% in 2008) of those surveyed thought blogs and social media influenced news coverage in the traditional media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) while 76% said that the reverse also was true (up from 72% a year ago). There was very solid agreement (88% up from 84% in 2008) that blogs and social media have made communications more instantaneous because they force organisations to respond more quickly to criticism. Compared to the above, 81% of respondents in the South African study agreed that social media have enhanced the practice of social media. However, only 70% of respondents felt the same away about blogs. The majority (92%) of respondents felt that social media (including blogs) influence the traditional mainstream media, with 74% feeling the reverse is true. The majority (92%) of respondents agreed that the instantaneous nature of social media have forced organisations to respond more quickly to criticism.

Hypothesis regarding whether social media and blogs have enhanced the practice of PR.

Hypothesis 6:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media have enhanced the practice of public relations:

>   6a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

>   6b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

>   6c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_6: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media have enhanced the practice of public relations:

>   6a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

6b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

6c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 6a the p-value in Table 6.6 (row 6) indicates that the p-value is 0.02, and therefore H_0 is rejected. The research hypothesis 6b has, in Table 6.6 (row 7), a p-value of 0.00, and H_0 is rejected. Finally, for hypothesis 6c, the p-value in Table 6.6 (row 8) is 0.21, and H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was a significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results and also a significant difference between the results in 2008 study, and that in the South African study. The results from the 2009 study and that in the South African study were, however not significantly different. Therefore, the results indicated that the respondents in the South African study agreed with the respondents in the 2009 study on whether social media have enhanced the practice of PR.

The next part of the question asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed that blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations.

Hypothesis 7:
H_0: There is no significant difference in opinion the distribution of opinions whether blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations:

7a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

7b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

7c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_7: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations:

7a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

7b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

7c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 7a the p-value as indicated in Table 6.7 (row 6) is a p-value of 0.07, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 7b has, as indicated in Table 6.6 (row 7), a p-value of 0.03, and H_0 is rejected. The p-value in Table 6.7 (row 8) for research hypothesis 7c is 0.40, and H_0 is accepted.

The results of this question showed that there was a significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results and also a significant difference between the results in 2008 study, and that in the South African study. The results from the 2009 study and that in the South African study were, however not significantly different. Therefore, the results indicated that the respondents in the South African study agreed with the respondents in the 2009 study on whether blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations.

The next part of the question asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed that social media influence the traditional mainstream media.

Hypothesis 8:
H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media influence the traditional mainstream media:

8a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

8b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

8c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_8: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media influence the traditional mainstream media:

8a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

8b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

8c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

As indicated in Table 6.8 (row 6), the p-value for research hypothesis 8a has a p-value of 0.74, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 8b has a p-value in Table 6.7 (row 7) of 0.83, and H_0 is accepted. Lastly, for hypothesis 8c the p-value in Table 6.8 (row 8) is 0.37, and H_0 is accepted.

The results of this question showed that there was no significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results and also no significant difference between the results on both studies, and that in the South African study. The results show that the probability was highest that the results in the South African study were closest to that of the 2008 study by Wright and Hinson.

The next part of the question asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed that traditional mainstream media influence social media (including blogs).

Hypothesis 9:
H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether traditional mainstream media influence social media:

9a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

9b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

9c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_9: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether traditional mainstream media influence social media:

9a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

9b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

9c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

Research hypothesis 9a has in Table 6.9 (row 6) a p-value of 0.32, and therefore H_0 is accepted. Research hypothesis 6b has, as indicated in Table 6.9 (row 7), a p-value of 0.80, and H_0 is accepted. Lastly, hypothesis 9c has in Table 6.9 (row 8), a p-value of 0.04, and H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was no significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results and also no significant difference between the results on both studies, and that in the South African study. However, there was a significant difference in the results from the South African study, compared to the results from Wright and Hinson's study in 2009. Thus, the conclusion can be made that the respondents n the South African study did not agree with the respondents in the 2009 study on whether traditional mainstream media influence social media.

The final part of the question asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed that since social media have made communications more instantaneous, have they forced organisations to respond more quickly to criticism.

Hypothesis 10:
H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether the instantaneous nature of social media have forced organisations to respond more quickly to criticism:

10a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

10b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

10c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{10}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether the instantaneous nature of social media have forced organisations to respond more quickly to criticism:

10a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

10b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

10c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For search hypothesis 10a the p-value in Table 6.10 (row 6) indicates that the p-value is 0.17, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 10b has, in Table 6.10 (row 7), a p-value of 0.00, and H_0 is rejected. Lastly, for hypothesis 10c, the p-value in Table 6.10 (row 8) is 0.01, and H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was no significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results. However, there was a significant difference in the results from the South African study, compared to the results from Wright and Hinson's study in both 2008 as well as 2009. Thus, the conclusion can be made that the respondents in the South African study did not agree with the respondents in both studies on whether traditional mainstream media influence social media.

Table 6.6: **Responses the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media have enhanced the practice of public relations?" – Hypothesis 6**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	1%	15%	18%	46%	20%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	1%	6%	20%	42%	30%	99%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	1.0	15.0	18.0	46.0	20.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	1.0	6.1	20.2	42.4	30.3	100.0	
5	SA 2011	2.1	3.1	13.5	47.9	33.3	99.9	
		Cell chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)
6	2009 – 2008	0.00	5.33	0.27	0.28	5.31	**11.18**	**0.02**
7	SA – 2008	1.21	9.44	1.13	0.08	8.84	**20.70**	**0.00**
8	SA – 2009	1.18	1.45	2.22	0.71	0.30	**5.85**	**0.21**

Table 6.7: Responses the question: "Do you agree or disagree that blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations?" – Hypothesis 7

		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	2%	16%	23%	45%	15%	101%	
2	W&H 2009	2%	8%	23%	43%	23%	99%	
		Strongly agree	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Total**	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	2.0	15.8	22.8	44.6	14.9	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	2.0	8.1	23.2	43.4	23.2	100.0	
5	SA 2011	2.1	4.2	24.0	51.0	18.8	100.1	
		Cell chi-square					**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
6	2009 – 2008	0.00	3.80	0.01	0.03	4.73	**8.57**	**0.07**
7	W&H 2008	0.01	8.56	0.07	0.93	1.05	**10.61**	**0.03**
8	W&H 2009	0.00	1.86	0.03	1.32	0.85	**4.06**	**0.40**

Table 6.8:   Responses the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media influence the traditional mainstream media?" – Hypothesis 8

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	0%	5%	6%	60%	29%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	0%	2%	6%	63%	29%	100%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	0.0	5.0	6.0	60.0	29.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	0.0	2.0	6.0	63.0	29.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	0.0	4.2	5.2	56.3	34.4	100.1	
		Cell chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)
6	2009 – 2008	0.00	1.80	0.00	0.15	0.00	**1.95**	**0.74**
7	W&H 2008	0.01	0.13	0.11	0.23	1.01	**1.48**	**0.83**
8	W&H 2009	0.01	2.42	0.11	0.71	1.01	**4.26**	**0.37**

Table 6.9:   Responses the question: "Do you agree or disagree that traditional mainstream media influence social media?" – Hypothesis 9

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	1%	10%	17%	54%	18%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	1%	4%	19%	54%	22%	100%	
		Strongly agree	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Total**	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	1.0	10.0	17.0	54.0	18.0	100.0	
5	W&H (adjusted) 2009	1.0	4.0	19.0	54.0	22.0	100.0	
	SA 2011	2.1	9.4	14.6	55.2	18.8	100.1	
		Cell Chi-square					**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
6	2009 – 2008	0.00	3.60	0.24	0.00	0.89	**4.72**	**0.32**
7	W&H 2008	1.21	0.04	0.34	0.03	0.04	**1.65**	**0.80**
8	W&H 2009	1.21	7.29	1.02	0.03	**0.47**	**10.01**	**0.04**

Table 6.10: Responses the question: "Do you agree or disagree that since social media have made communications more instantaneous they have forced organisations to respond more quickly to criticism?" – Hypothesis 10

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	0%	8%	7%	46%	38%	99%	
2	W&H 2009	0%	2%	10%	45%	43%	100%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	0.0	8.1	7.1	46.5	38.4	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	0.0	2.0	10.0	45.0	43.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	0.0	2.1	6.3	30.2	61.5	100.1	
		Cell Chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance(df=4)
6	2009 – 2008	0.00	4.58	1.21	0.05	0.56	**6.39**	**0.17**
7	W&H 2008	0.01	4.43	0.08	5.69	13.93	**24.14**	**0.00**
8	W&H 2009	0.01	0.01	1.37	4.87	**7.96**	**14.21**	**0.01**

Wright and Hinson (2009:9) state that in both 2008 and 2009, subjects were asked a variety of questions about how social media compare with traditional news media in terms of accuracy, credibility, truth, ethics and so forth. Results from both years, displayed in Tables 6.11 to 6.18, show respondents thought blogs and social media have a long distance to go before they will be equal to traditional media in these categories. This table also shows respondents did not give blogs and social media very high scores in terms of truth telling or advocating transparent and ethical cultures. However, respondents gave social media high marks for offering organisations low-cost ways to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics (80% agreement in 2008 and 84% agreement in 2009), serving as a watchdog for traditional mainstream media (61% agreement in 2008 and 71% agreement in 2009) and impacting corporate and organisational transparency (76% agreement in 2008 and 82% agreement in 2009).

The same questions were asked in the South African and as indicated in Table 6.11 to Table 6.18, only 19% of respondents thought that social media (including blogs) are more accurate than traditional mainstream media, with 35% not agreeing that social media and blogs are more credible than traditional mainstream media. The majority of respondents (29%) did not feel social media and blogs are a more trusted information source than traditional mainstream media, only about 18% thought that they tell the truth, and just under half (46%) felt that they advocate a transparent and ethical culture However, 80% of respondents thought social media offers organisations low-cost ways to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics, 62% perceived social media as serving as a watch-dog for traditional mainstream media. Finally, 83% of respondents agreed that social media and blogs are impacting corporate and organisational transparency

Hypothesis regarding whether social media is more accurate than traditional media, more credible than social media, are a more trusted information source than traditional mainstream media, tell the truth, advocate a transparent and ethical culture, offer organisations a low-cost way to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics, serve as a watch-dog for traditional

mainstream media and are impacting corporate and organisational transparency:

Hypothesis 11:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media are more accurate than traditional mainstream media:

    11a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

    11b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

    11c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{11}: There is a significant difference in opinion whether social media are more accurate than traditional mainstream media:

    11a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

    11b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

    11c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 11a the p-value in Table 6.11 (row 6) indicates that the p-value is 0.54, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis in 11b has a p-value in Table 6.11 (row 7) of 0.00, and H_0 is rejected. Finally, for hypothesis 11c the p-value in Table 6.11 (row 8) is 0.00, and therefore H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was no significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results. It also indicated that opinions of respondents from the South African study differed significantly on whether they agree that social media are more accurate that traditional mainstream media.

Hypothesis 12:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media are more credible than traditional mainstream media:

12a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those
         of 2008;

12b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the
         Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

12c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the
         Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{12}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media are more credible than traditional mainstream media:

12a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those
         of 2008;

12b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the
         Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

12c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the
         Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

Research hypothesis 12a in Table 6.12 (row 6) indicates a p-value of 0.41, and H_0 is accepted. Table 6.12 (row 7) indicates the p-value for research hypothesis 12b is 0.00, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The p-value in Table 6.12 (row 8) for research hypothesis 12c is 0.00, and H_0 is accepted.

The results of this question showed that there was no significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results. However, the results indicated that the South African respondents also did not share the same opinion with respondents from the previous studies on whether social media are more credible that traditional mainstream media.

Hypothesis 13:
H_0: There is no significant difference in distribution of opinions whether social media are a more trusted information source than traditional mainstream media:

13a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those
         of 2008;

13b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the
         Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

13c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{13}: There is a significant difference in distribution of opinions whether social media are a more trusted information source than traditional mainstream media:

13a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

13b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

13c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 13a the p-value in Table 6.13 (row 6) is indicated as 0.46, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The p-value for hypothesis 13 b is, as indicated in Table 6.13 (row 7), 0.05, and H_0 is rejected. The p-value for research hypothesis 13c has, as shown in Table 6.13 (row 8), a p-value of 0.00, and therefore and H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was no significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results. However, the results indicated that the South African respondents again did not share the same opinion with respondents from the previous studies on whether social media are a more trusted information source than traditional mainstream media.

Hypothesis 14:
H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media tell the truth:

14a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

14b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

14c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{14}: There is a significant difference in distribution of opinions whether social media tell the truth:

14a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

14b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

14c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 6.14 the p-value in Table 6.14 (row 6) is indicated shown as 0.00, and therefore H_0 is rejected. The research hypothesis 14b has a p-value in Table 6.14 (row 7) of 0.00, and H_0 is rejected. Finally, for hypothesis 14c, the p-value in Table 6.14 (row 8) is 0.21, and H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was a significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results. The 2009 results compared to the South African results were statistically significantly different, where the same was not true for the 2008 results compared to the South African results. Therefore, the conclusion can be made that the respondents agreed with the respondents in the 2008 study.

Hypothesis 15:

H_0: There is no significant difference in distribution of opinions whether social media advocate a transparent and ethical culture:

15a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

15b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

15c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{15}: There is a significant difference in distribution of opinions whether social media advocate a transparent and ethical culture:

15a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

15b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

15c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

Research hypothesis 15a in Table 6.15 (row 6) indicates that the p-value is 0.74, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 15b has, as indicated in Table 6.15 (row 7) of 0.16, and H_0 is accepted. In Table 6.15 (row 8) research hypothesis 15c indicates a p-value of 0.44, and H_0 is accepted.

The results of this question show that there was no statistically significant difference in respondents from both the 2008 as well as the 2009 studies and the South African study.

Hypothesis 16:

H_0: There is no significant difference in distribution of opinions whether social media offer organisations a low-cost way to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics:

16a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

16b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

16c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{16}: There is a significant difference in distribution of opinions whether social media offer organisations a low-cost way to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics:

16a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

16b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

16c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

Table 6.16 (row 6) indicates research hypothesis 16a has a p-value of 0.31, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 16b has a p-value in Table 6.16 (row 7) of 0.26, and H_0 is accepted. Lastly, for hypothesis 16c, the p-value in Table 6.16 (row 8) is 0.39, and H_0 is accepted.

The results of this question showed that there was no significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 and South African study results when asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed that social media offer organisations a low-cost way to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics.

Hypothesis 17:

H_0: There is no significant difference in distribution of opinions whether social media serve as a watch-dog for traditional mainstream media:

> 17a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;
>
> 17b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and
>
> 17c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{17}: There is a significant difference in distribution of opinions whether social media serve as a watch-dog for traditional mainstream media:

> 17a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;
>
> 17b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and
>
> 17c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 17a the p-value in Table 6.17 (row 6) indicates that the p-value is 0.33, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 17b has a p-value Table 6.17 (row 7) of 0.28, and H_0 is accepted. For hypothesis 17c the p-value in Table 6.17 (row 8) is 0.04, and H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was no significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results when asked whether respondents agreed or

disagreed that social media serve as a watch-dog for traditional mainstream media. The results also show that there was no statistically significant difference in respondents from the 2008 study, but that there was a significant difference between the results compared to the 2009 study.

Hypothesis 18:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media are impacting corporate and organisational transparency:

> 18a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;
>
> 18b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and
>
> 18c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{18}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether social media are impacting corporate and organisational transparency:

> 18a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;
>
> 18b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and
>
> 18c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 18a the p-value in Table 6.18 (row 6) is shown as 0.34, and H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 18b has a p-value in Table 6.18 (row 7) of 0.02, and therefore H_0 is rejected. Finally, hypothesis 18c has in Table 6.18 (row 8) a p-value of 0.62, and H_0 is accepted.

The results of this question showed that there was no significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results. The results also show that there was no statistically significant difference in respondents from the 2009 study, but that there was a significant difference between the results compared to the 2008 study.

Table 6.11: Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) are more accurate than traditional mainstream media?" – Hypothesis 11

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	25%	42%	26%	6%	1%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	18%	48%	28%	5%	1%	100%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	25.0	42.0	26.0	6.0	1.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	18.0	48.0	28.0	5.0	1.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	14.0	34.4	32.3	17.2	2.2	100.1	
		Cell Chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)
6	2009 – 2008	1.96	0.86	0.15	0.17	0.00	**3.14**	**0.54**
7	W&H 2008	4.84	1.38	1.53	20.91	1.44	**30.09**	**0.00**
8	W&H 2009	0.89	3.85	0.66	29.77	1.44	**36.61**	**0.00**

Table 6.12: Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) are more credible than traditional mainstream media?" – Hypothesis 12

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	19%	45%	26%	9%	2%	101%	
2	W&H 2009	12%	49%	29%	8%	1%	99%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	18.8	44.6	25.7	8.9	2.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	12.1	49.5	29.3	8.1	1.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	6.5	38.7	37.6	14.0	3.2	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance(df=4)
6	2009 – 2008	2.38	0.55	0.49	0.08	0.48	**3.97**	**0.41**
7	W&H 2008	8.06	0.77	5.46	2.91	0.75	**17.95**	**0.00**
8	W&H 2009	2.61	2.35	2.36	4.34	4.75	**16.40**	**0.00**

Table 6.13: **Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) are a more trusted information source than traditional mainstream media? – Hypothesis 13**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	16%	35%	29%	18%	2%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	10%	40%	31%	18%	1%	100%	
		Strongly agree	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Total**	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	16.0	35.0	29.0	18.0	2.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	10.0	40.0	31.0	18.0	1.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	8.6	29.0	35.5	22.6	4.3	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square					**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance(df=4)**
6	2009 – 2008	2.25	0.71	0.14	0.00	0.50	**3.60**	**0.46**
7	W&H 2008	3.42	1.03	1.46	1.18	2.65	**9.73**	**0.05**
8	W&H 2009	0.20	3.03	0.65	1.18	10.89	**15.94**	**0.00**

Table 6.14: Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) tell the truth?" – Hypothesis 14

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	14%	24%	49%	13%	0%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	8%	27%	53%	12%	1%	101%	
		Strongly agree	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Total**	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	14.0	24.0	49.0	13.0	0.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	7.9	26.7	52.5	11.9	1.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	8.6	18.3	54.8	16.1	2.2	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square					**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
6	2009 – 2008	2.64	0.31	0.25	0.10	96.07	**99.36**	**0.00**
7	W&H 2008	2.08	1.35	0.69	0.74	479.66	**484.52**	**0.00**
8	W&H 2009	0.06	2.66	0.10	1.50	1.48	**5.80**	**0.21**

Table 6.15: **Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) advocate a transparent and ethical culture?" – Hypothesis 15**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	11%	21%	31%	30%	7%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	7%	23%	32%	32%	6%	100%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	11.0	21.0	31.0	30.0	7.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	7.0	23.0	32.0	32.0	6.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	4.3	20.4	29.0	37.6	8.6	99.9	
		Cell Chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)
6	2009 – 2008	1.45	0.19	0.03	0.13	0.14	**1.95**	**0.74**
7	W&H 2008	4.08	0.02	0.13	1.93	0.37	**6.52**	**0.16**
8	W&H 2009	1.04	0.29	0.28	0.98	1.13	**3.72**	**0.44**

Table 6.16: Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) offer organisations a low-cost way to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics?" – Hypothesis 16

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	2%	7%	11%	62%	18%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	1%	6%	9%	58%	26%	100%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	2.0	7.0	11.0	62.0	18.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	1.0	6.0	9.0	58.0	26.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	2.2	9.7	7.5	55.9	24.7	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)
6	2009 – 2008	0.50	0.14	0.36	0.26	3.56	**4.82**	**0.31**
7	W&H 2008	0.02	1.04	1.11	0.60	2.49	**5.27**	**0.26**
8	W&H 2009	1.44	2.28	0.25	0.08	0.07	**4.11**	**0.39**

Table 6.17: Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) serve as a watch dog for traditional mainstream media?"– Hypothesis 17

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	4%	10%	24%	46%	15%	99%	
2	W&H 2009	2%	9%	18%	56%	15%	100%	
		Strongly agree	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Total**	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	4.0	10.1	24.2	46.5	15.2	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	2.0	9.0	18.0	56.0	15.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	2.2	12.9	22.6	40.9	21.5	100.1	
		Cell Chi-square					**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance(df=4)**
6	2009 – 2008	1.03	0.12	1.61	1.96	0.00	**4.72**	**0.32**
7	W&H 2008	0.84	0.78	0.11	0.67	2.66	**5.05**	**0.28**
8	W&H 2009	0.02	1.69	1.18	4.07	2.82	**9.77**	**0.04**

Table 6.18: Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) serve as a watch dog for traditional mainstream media?"– Hypothesis 18

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	1%	3%	20%	58%	18%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	1%	3%	14%	57%	25%	100%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	1.0	3.0	20.0	58.0	18.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	1.0	3.0	14.0	57.0	25.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	2.2	3.2	11.8	53.8	29.0	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square					**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance(df=4)**
6	2009 – 2008	0.00	0.00	1.80	0.02	2.72	**4.54**	**0.34**
7	W&H 2008	1.44	0.01	3.36	0.30	6.72	**11.84**	**0.02**
8	W&H 2009	1.44	0.01	0.35	0.18	0.64	**2.62**	**0.62**

Wright and Hinson (2009:11) also investigated whether people have different expectations in terms of honesty, truth telling and ethics between social media and the more traditional media. Results are shown in Tables 6.19 and Table 6.20.

According to Wright and Hinson (2009:11), Table 6.19 shows most (75% in 2008 and 80% in 2009) expected traditional mainstream media to be honest, tell the truth and be ethical. However, results displayed in Table 6.20 suggest expectations in these areas are considerably less (44% in 2008 and 41% in 2009) for blogs and other social media. As indicated in Table 6.19, respondents in this study solidly agreed (85%) that people who receive information from mainstream media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture. Less respondents (68%) agreed that people receiving information from blogs and other social media expect these outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture, as indicated in Table 6.20.

Hypothesis regarding whether people who receive information from mainstream media and social media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture.

Hypothesis 19:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether people who receive information from mainstream media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture:

19a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

19b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

19c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{19}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether people who receive information from mainstream media expect these news

outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture:

19a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

19b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

19c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 19a the p-value in Table 6.19 (row 6) indicates that the p-value is 0.30, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 19b, has a p-value in Table 6.19 (row 7) of 0.00, and H_0 is rejected. Lastly, for hypothesis 19c, the p-value in Table 6.19 (row 8) is 0.00, and H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was no significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results. It also indicated that opinions from respondents from the South African study differed significantly on whether people who receive information from mainstream media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture.

Hypothesis 20:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether people who receive information from blogs and other social media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture:

20a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

20b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

20c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{20}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether people who receive information from blogs and other social media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture:

20a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

20b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

20c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

Table 6.20 (row 6) shows that, for hypothesis 20a the p-value 0.28, and therefore H_0 is accepted. The research hypothesis 20b in Table 6.20 (row 7) is 0.00, and H_0 is rejected. For hypothesis 20c, the p-value in Table 6.20 (row 8) is 0.00, and therefore H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed was very similar to the previous one; where there was no significant difference in the 2008 and 2009 results. It also indicated that opinions from respondents from the South African study differed significantly on whether people who receive information from blogs and other social media expect these outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture.

Table 6.19: **Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that people who receive information from mainstream media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture?" – Hypothesis 19**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total		
1	W&H 2008	2%	12%	11%	50%	25%	100%		
2	W&H 2009	1%	8%	11%	60%	20%	100%		
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total		
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	2.0	12.0	11.0	50.0	25.0	100.0		
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	1.0	8.0	11.0	60.0	20.0	100.0		
5	SA 2011	3.3	4.3	7.6	41.3	43.5	100.0		
		Cell Chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)	
6	2009 – 2008	0.50	1.33	0.00	2.00	1.00	**4.83**	**0.30**	
7	W&H 2008	0.85	4.94	1.05	1.51	13.69	**22.04**	**0.00**	
8	W&H 2009	5.29	1.71	1.05	5.83	27.61	**41.49**	**0.00**	

Table 6.20: **Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that people who receive information from blogs and other social media expect these outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture?" – Hypothesis 20**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2008	3%	27%	26%	36%	8%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	3%	22%	35%	36%	5%	101%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	3.0	27.0	26.0	36.0	8.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	3.0	21.8	34.7	35.6	5.0	100.0	
5	SA 2011	3.3	9.8	18.5	46.7	21.7	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exccedance(df=4)
6	2009 – 2008	0.00	1.01	2.88	0.00	1.16	**5.05**	**0.28**
7	W&H 2008	0.03	10.96	2.16	3.18	23.46	**39.79**	**0.00**
8	W&H 2009	0.04	6.59	7.53	3.43	56.67	**74.26**	**0.00**

Wright and Hinson (2009:12) state that, since research is such an integral part of the corporate public relations process, the annual studies contained questions specifically related to social media measurement. As reported in Table 6.21, even though public relations practitioners frequently said research and measurement is important, few of the subjects in Wright and Hinson's (2009:12) annual studies claimed to actually be conducting this research. Although Table 6.21 shows only a very small number of organisations have commissioned or conducted such research or measurement, the percentage of those conducting such measurement increased between 2008 and 2009. Similarly, the respondents in this study claimed mostly claimed (at over 60%) not to be conducting research measuring information that employees are communicating on blogs, as indicated in Table 6.21

Hypothesis to test whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research or measurement study that focussed on information employees communicated on www blogs.

Hypothesis 21:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research or measurement study that focussed on information employees communicated on www blogs:

      21a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

      21b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

      21c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{21}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research or measurement study that focussed on information employees communicated on www blogs:

      21a: between Wright and Hinson findings in 2009 compared to those of 2008;

21b: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2008; and

21c: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 21a the p-value indicated in Table 6.21 (row 6) is 0.00, and therefore H_0 is rejected. The research hypothesis 21b has a p-value in Table 6.21 (row 7) of 0.00, and H_0 is rejected. Finally, for hypothesis 21c, the p-value in Table 6.21 (row 8) is 0.00, and H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there were significant differences in the 2008 and 2009 results, as well as the South African respondents, compared to both previous studies.

Table 6.21: **Responses to the question: "To the best of your knowledge, has your organisation ever commissioned or conducted a research or measurement study that focused on information employees communicated on www blogs?" – Hypothesis 21**

Row		Yes	No	Don't know / Not sure	Total	
1	W&H 2008	15%	55%	30%	100%	
2	W&H 2009	25%	58%	18%	101%	
			No	**Don't know / Not sure**	**Total**	
3	W&H (adjusted) 2008	15.0	55.0	30.0	100.0	
4	W&H (adjusted) 2009	25.0	58.0	18.0	101.0	
5	SA 2011	14.3	60.4	25.3	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square			**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
6	2009 – 2008	6.67	0.16	4.80	**111.63**	**0.00**
7	W&H 2008	4.58	0.10	2.96	**108.64**	**0.00**
8	W&H 2009	14.30	60.40	25.30	**200.00**	**0.00**

In an attempt to move the focus of this question from internal to external audiences, the 2009 survey asked about research measuring what external publics have communicated about organisations via blogs or social media. Results reported on in Table 6.22, suggest there is more activity measuring external than internal audiences, as 39% claim their organisations are actively measuring this area (as compared to the 25% who are measuring internally). Similarly, respondents in this study, as indicated in Table 68 (at 36%), indicated that their organisations are actively measuring this area.

Hypothesis to test whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research measuring what members of other strategic publics have communicated about their organisation via blogs or other social media.

Hypothesis 22:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research measuring what members of other strategic publics have communicated about their organisation via blogs or other social media:

> 22a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{22}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research measuring what members of other strategic publics have communicated about their organisation via blogs or other social media:

> 22a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

Table 6.22 (row 4) indicates that research hypothesis 22a has a p-value of 0.00, and therefore H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was a significant difference in the results from the 2009 study, compared to the South African respondents.

Table 6.22: **Responses to the question: "To the best of your knowledge, has your organisation ever conducted research measuring what members of other strategic publics have communicated about your organisation via blogs or other social media?" – Hypothesis 22**

Row		Yes	No	Don't know / Not sure	Total	
1	W&H 2009	39%	42%	19%	100%	
		Yes	**No**	**Don't know / Not sure**	**Total**	
2	W&H 2009 (adjusted)	39.0	42.0	19.0	100.0	
3	SA 2011	36.3	41.8	22.0	100.1	
		Cell chi-square			**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance(df=4)**
4	W&H 2009	0.19	0.00	0.47	**100.76**	**0.00**

Whilst Wright and Hinson (2009:13) expanded the number of questions that were asked about measurement, it was also decided to investigate what kind of measurement subjects thought should be taking place, and then compare that with what was actually happening. According to Wright and Hinson (2009:13), and as indicated in Table 6.23, subjects in that study strongly believed that a wide variety of research should be conducted in connection with blogs and social media. As the table reports, more than 90% of the respondents in the survey agreed this research should be taking place. This includes 90% supporting research that measures the amount of communication that was being disseminated about their organisations (or client organisations) through blogs and other social media; 96% encouraged studies that measure or analyse content of what's being communicated about their organisations (or their clients) in these new media; 94% agreeing public relations measurement should focus on the impact information disseminated about their organisations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on influential opinion leaders and members of other strategic publics; and 93% in favour of research measuring the impact information disseminated about their organisations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour (Wright & Hinson, 2009:13).

Results in South Africa were very similar to that in the original study. As also indicated in Table 6.23, subjects in this study also strongly believed that a wide variety of research should be conducted in connection with blogs and social media. About 90% of the respondents in the survey agreed this research should be taking place. This includes 94% supporting research that measures the amount of communication that was being disseminated about their organisations (or client organisations) through blogs and other social media; 95% encouraged studies that measure or analyse content of what's being communicated about their organisations (or their clients) in these new media; 95% agreeing public relations measurement should focus on the impact information disseminated about their organisations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on influential opinion leaders and members of other strategic publics; and 96% in favour of research measuring the impact information disseminated about their organisations (or their clients)

through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour.

Hypotheses to test if respondents agreed or disagreed on measures those public relations practitioners should measure.

Hypothesis 23:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions on whether PR practitioners should measure the amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organisations through blogs and other social media:

     23a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{23}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions on whether PR practitioners should measure the amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organisations through blogs and other social media:

     23a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

Table 6.23 (row 4) indicates that for research hypothesis 23a the p-value is 0.17, and therefore H_0 is accepted.

The results of this question showed that there were no significant differences in 2009 results, compared to that in the South African study.

Hypothesis 24:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions on whether PR practitioners should measure and/or analyse content of what's being communicated about their organisations in blogs and other social media:

     24a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

 H_{24}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions on whether PR practitioners should measure and/or analyse content of what's being communicated about their organisations in blogs and other social media:

     24a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 24a the p-value in Table 6.24 (row 4) is indicated as 0.00, and therefore H_0 is rejected.

Therefore, the results of this question showed that there were significant differences in 2009 results, compared to that in the South African study.

Hypothesis 25:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions on whether PR practitioners should measure the impact information disseminated about their organisations through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences:

25a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{25}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions on whether PR practitioners should measure the impact information disseminated about their organisations through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences:

25a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

Research hypothesis 25a has a p-value in Table 25 (row 4) of 0.00, and H_0 is rejected.

Therefore, the results of this question showed that there were significant differences in 2009 results, compared to that in the South African study.

Hypothesis 26:

H_0: There is no significant difference in distribution of opinions on whether PR practitioners should measure the impact information disseminated about their organisations through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour:

26a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{26}: There is a significant difference in distribution of opinions on whether PR practitioners should measure the impact information disseminated about their organisations through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour:

26a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

Table 6.29 (row 4) shows that the p-value for hypothesis 26a as 0.04, and H_0 is rejected.

Therefore, the results of this question showed that there were significant differences in 2009 results, compared to that in the South African study.

Table 6.23: **Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that public relations practitioners should measure the amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organisations (or client organisations) through blogs and other social media?" - Hypothesis 23**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2009	1%	3%	7%	55%	35%	101%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
2	W&H 2009 (adjusted)	1.0	3.0	6.9	54.5	34.7	100.0	
3	SA 2011	0.0	3.3	1.1	57.1	38.5	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)
4	W&H 2009	0.99	0.04	4.91	0.13	0.43	**6.49**	**0.17**

Table 6.24: **Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that public relations practitioners should measure or analyse the content of what's being communicated about its blogs and other social media?" - Hypothesis 24**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2009	0%	3%	7%	55%	35%	100%	
		Strongly agree	**Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**	**Total**	
2	W&H 2009 (adjusted)	0.0	3.0	7.0	55.0	35.0	100.0	
3	SA 2011	0.0	3.3	2.2	41.8	52.7	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square					**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
	W&H 2009	0.00	0.03	3.29	3.17	8.96	**15.44**	**0.00**

Table 6.25: **Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that public relations practitioners should measure the impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences?" - Hypothesis 25**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2009	0%	2%	5%	58%	36%	101%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
2	W&H 2009 (adjusted)	0.0	2.0	5.0	57.4	35.6	100.0	
3	SA 2011	1.1	2.2	2.2	51.6	42.9	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)
4	W&H 2009	120.03	0.02	1.53	0.59	1.48	**123.65**	**0.00**

Table 6.26: **Responses to the question: "Do you agree or disagree that public relations practitioners should measure the impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour?" - Hypothesis 26**

Row		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
1	W&H 2009	0%	1%	6%	59%	34%	100%	
		Strongly agree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	
2	W&H 2009 (adjusted)	0.0	1.0	6.0	59.0	34.0	100.0	
3	SA 2011	0.0	3.3	1.1	57.1	38.5	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square					Total Chi-square	Probability of exceedance (df=4)
4	W&H 2009	0.00	5.29	4.00	0.06	0.60	**9.95**	**0.04**

Wright and Hinson (2009:14) further found that, as indicated in Tables 6.28 to 6.30 there was a considerable gap between the kinds of research and measurement the study's subjects agreed should be taking place and what was actually going on. According to this table, 55% of the companies represented in this survey were involved in content analysis measurement, 44% claimed to be conducting basic output measures and only about one-quarter actually were using measurement that focuses on outcome research which measured the impact on opinion leaders and/or the formation of attitude, opinion or behaviour change. The majority of response in the South African study (over 46%) indicated that their companies are involved in content analysis measurement, only 44% claimed to be conducting basic output measures. Of the respondents in this study, 40% claimed they are using measurement that focuses on outcome research which measured the impact on opinion leaders and/or the formation of attitude, opinion or behaviour change.

Hypotheses to test whether respondents' organisations have ever conducted research to measure the amount of communication that is being disseminated about it in blogs and other social media, analysed the content of what is being communicated, the impact of this information and the impact this information has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour:

Hypothesis 27:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research measuring the amount of communication that is being disseminated about it through blogs and other social media:

27a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{27}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research measuring the amount of communication that is being disseminated about it through blogs and other social media:

27a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 27a the p-value in Table 6.27 (row 4) is indicates as 0.00, and therefore H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was a significant difference in the results from the 2009 study, compared to the South African respondents.

Hypothesis 28:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research measuring or analysed the content of what's being communicated about it in blogs and other social media:

28a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{28}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research measuring the amount of communication that is being disseminated about it through blogs and other social media:

28a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

Research hypothesis 28a has, as indicated in Table 6.28 (row 4), a p-value of 0.00 and H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was a significant difference in the results from the 2009 study, compared to the South African respondents.

Hypothesis 29:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research measuring the impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences:

29a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{29}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research measuring the impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences:

29a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

As indicated in Table 6.29 (row 4), the p-value for research hypothesis 29a is 0.00, and therefore H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was a significant difference in the results from the 2009 study, compared to the South African respondents.

Hypothesis 30:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research measuring the impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour:

30a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{30}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research measuring the impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour:

30a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 30a the p-value in Table 6.30 (row 4) is 0.00, and therefore H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was a significant difference in the results from the 2009 study, compared to the South African respondents.

Table 6.27: **Responses to the question: "To the best of your knowledge, has your organisation (or a client organisation) ever measured the amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organisations (or client organisations) through blogs and their social media?" – Hypothesis 27**

Row		**Yes**	**No**	**Uncertain / Don't know**	**Total**	
1	W&H 2009	44%	39%	17%	100%	
		Yes	**No**	**Uncertain / Don't know**	**Total**	
2	W&H 2009 (adjusted)	44.0	39.0	17.0	100.0	
3	SA 2011	41.6	23.6	34.8	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square			**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
4	W&H 2009	0.13	6.08	18.64	**24.85**	**0.00**

Table 6.28: **Responses to the question: "To the best of your knowledge, has your organisation (or a client organisation) ever measured or analysed the content of what's being communicated about its blogs and other social media?" – Hypothesis 28**

Row		Yes	No	Uncertain / Don't know	Total	
1	W&H 2009	55%	29%	16%	100%	
		Yes	**No**	**Uncertain / Don't know**	**Total**	
2	W&H 2009 (adjusted)	55.0	29.0	16.0	100.0	
3	SA 2011	46.6	19.3	34.1	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square			**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance(df=4)**
4	W&H 2009	1.28	3.24	20.48	**25.00**	**0.00**

Table 6.29: **Responses to the question: "To the best of your knowledge, has your organisation (or a client organisation) ever measured the impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences?" – Hypothesis 29**

Row		**Yes**	**No**	**Uncertain / Don't know**	**Total**	
1	W&H 2009	26%	51%	22%	99%	
		Yes	**No**	**Uncertain / Don't know**	**Total**	
2	W&H 2009 (adjusted)	26.3	51.5	22.2	100.0	
3	SA 2011	40.5	24.7	34.8	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square			**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
4	W&H 2009	7.72	13.96	7.12	**28.80**	**0.00**

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Table 6.30: **Responses to the question: "To the best of your knowledge, has your organisation (or a client organisation) ever measured the impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour?" – Hypothesis 30**

Row		Yes	No	Uncertain / Don't know	Total	
1	W&H 2009	25%	53%	23%	101%	
		Yes	**No**	**Uncertain / Don't know**	**Total**	
2	W&H 2009 (adjusted)	24.8	52.5	22.8	100.0	
3	SA 2011	40.2	25.2	34.5	99.9	
		Cell Chi-square			**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
4	W&H 2009	9.64	14.18	6.04	**29.86**	**0.00**

Wright and Hinson's (2009:15) research also asked questions inquiring about what percentage of the workday respondents spend with blogs and other social media. As summarised in Table 6.31, the findings indicated most (93%) devoted some of their work time to these new media with nearly half (48%) spending between one and ten% in this area and about a third (30%) devoting somewhere between 11 and 25 percent. As indicated in Table 6.31, 90 %of the respondents in this study spend some of their work day on social media and blogs with almost 36% spending between one and ten percent in this area and 22% spending somewhere between 11 and 25 percent.

Hypothesis to test how much time, on average, PR practitioners are spending on social media daily.

Hypothesis 31:

H_0: There is no significant difference in the distribution of opinions on the average, approximated percentage of time working in public relations and communications that practitioners spend on blogs and other social media:

      31a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{31}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinions on the average, approximated percentage of time working in public relations and communications that practitioners spend on blogs and other social media:

      31a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

As indicated in Table 6.31 (row 4) the p-value for research hypothesis 31a is 0.00, and therefore H_0 is rejected.

The results of this question showed that there was a significant difference in the results from the 2009 study, compared to the South African respondents. The biggest difference seemed to be with more South African practitioners spending 50% or more of their time on blogs and other social media.

Table 6.31: **Responses to the question: "On the average, approximately what percentage of your time working in public relations and communications is spent with blogs and other social media?" – Hypothesis 31**

Row		None	1%-10%	11%-25%	26%-50%	More than 50%	Total	
1	W&H 2009	7%	48%	30%	11%	4%	100%	
		None	1%-10%	11%-25%	26%-50%	More than 50%	Total	
2	W&H 2009 (adjusted)	7.0	48.0	30.0	11.0	4.0	100.0	
3	SA 2011	11.1	35.6	22.2	18.9	12.2	100.0	
		Cell Chi-square					**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
4	W&H 2009	2.40	3.20	2.03	5.67	16.81	**30.12**	**0.00**

A question inquired about situations in which an organisation's legal function impacted how blog or social media communication was managed (Wright & Hinson, 2009: 15). Table 6.32 shows more than one-third (38%) reported this happening. Results in South Africa were very similar, with just over 40% of respondents reported this happening.

Hypothesis to test if there are any situations (that PR practitioners are aware of) in which an organisation's legal function impacted how the organisation managed any aspects of blog or social media communication.

Hypothesis 32:

H_0: There are no significant differences in the distribution of opinions on whether there are any situations in which an organisation's legal function impacted how the organisation managed any aspects of blog or social media communication:

32a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

H_{32}: There are significant differences in the distribution of opinions on whether there are any situations in which an organisation's legal function impacted how the organisation managed any aspects of blog or social media communication:

32a: between the distribution of opinions in this study (2011) and the Wright and Hinson findings in 2009.

For research hypothesis 32a the p-value in Table 6.32 (row 4) is 0.45, and therefore H_0 is accepted.

The results of this question showed that there were no significant differences in opinions between the 2009 study, compared to results in the South African study on whether there are any situations in which an organisation's legal function impacted how the organisation managed any aspects of blog or social media communication.

Table 6.32: **Responses to the question: "Are you aware of any situation in which an organisation's legal function impacted how the organisation managed any aspects of blog or social media communication?" – Hypothesis 32**

Row		**Yes**	**No**	**Uncertain / Don't know**	**Total**	
1	W&H 2009	38%	31%	30%	99%	
		Yes	**No**	**Uncertain / Don't know**	**Total**	
2	W&H 2009 (adjusted)	31.0	31.3	30.3	92.6	
3	SA 2011	40.4	33.7	25.8	99.9	
		Cell Chi-square			**Total Chi-square**	**Probability of exceedance (df=4)**
4	W&H 2009	2.85	0.18	0.67	**3.70**	**0.45**

Wright and Hinson (2009:16) followed the previous question with an open-ended question, which revealed a number of unique sets of tensions exist between legal functions and the public relations or communications function in this area. Below is a list of some of the responses (Wright & Hinson, 2009:16):

- One respondent took lawyers to task for "stifling free and honest expression."

- Another wrote, "Blogs and social media demand real-time responses and this causes problems for companies that are required to vet all types of external communications through legal, which is not always easily done."

- One respondent suggested, "Applying legal constraints to social media has a chilling impact on the effectiveness of modern communication."

- Another pointed out, "Legal never will be comfortable with social media because social media can not be controlled in traditional ways."

- "[Lawyers are] a positive, proactive partner to us as we have developed guidelines for interaction with social media."

Respondent in the South Africa study included some of these comments:

- Complaints are addressed in a shorter reaction time than previously

- All correspondence to external publics has to go through the corporate communication department.

- In large international corporations the legal team often requires to approve a response to ensure that employees respond in line with the corporate strategy

- Big multi-national corporate (may not be named) - unwilling to venture into social media due to legal concerns.

- Legal don't understand new media/social media and still think they have the authority to approve all content.

- They have had to ensure that their corporate identity remains intact and unaltered. Everything that is put onto the social media site had to be scrutinised by legal in order to ensure that there is no legal implications to the company and complies with the CPA.

- The CPA regulation has a massive effect on how brands communicate in SM/ no more bait marketing

- Policies and strategies have had to be reviewed to contain do's and don'ts when communicating about the company on social media platforms.

- There was an incident whereby an employee made negative comments about the organisation on a social media site, and a result the organisation is in the process of drafting a policy to guide the proper usage of social media platforms.

- As PR practitioners we are responsible for enhancing and maintaining the reputation of our organisation. As such we have an obligation to ensure that any information that is being disseminating in any channels does not impact the organisation negatively. Social media allows opinions and content that may not be factually true to be widely communicated as it is most times the opinion of an individual. Sometimes it is necessary to ensure that that a legal stance is taken to ensure that individuals do not damage the reputation of an organisation.

- Being watchful of what is said. Competition and survey rules and guidelines. We have strong social media guidelines we have to follow.

- Social media (as per traditional communications) need to comply with legal and other departments - there are certain matters which cannot be discussed externally

- Listed companies have a much more cautious view to social media. And when mergers/acquisitions etcetera are announced; the legal parameters round restructuring and retrenchments make social media communication quite awkward.

Results from the last questions in the survey reported that; 98% of respondents indicated that they currently work in South Africa, 89% were female, with the balance being male, with all respondents being over 21 years of age (98% were between 21 and 60 years old, and 2% were over the age of 61). The respondents listed the organisations they work for as follows: 13% corporate organisations, 9% from government, 9% from large agencies, 38%

from small agencies or consultancies, 9% from educational institutions and 23% from other institutions. None were from health care or hospitals, or from research providers.

6.4   CONCLUSION

This chapter summarised and described in detail what the foundings were for each question that was asked in the survey. Each result was compared to the results in previous studies by Wright and Hinson in 2008 and 2009. The conclusion and recommendations for this study will be discussed in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7
Conclusion and recommendations

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins by restating the main purpose of the study. The importance of the study is highlighted, followed by a summary of the empirical findings of the research, comparing that with the original research. The implications for management are discussed, as well as the limitations of the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

7.2 THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to address the research gap that exists in the area of new media technologies, specifically social media and their effect on PR practice in South Africa, a developing country with an emerging economy.

7.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to make a three-fold contribution to the existent body of knowledge on the sources of social media and PR, from a theoretical perspective:

Firstly, from a practical perspective in South Africa as an emerging economy, the findings will assist PR practitioners with the future identification of the possible impact and effects that social media might already have had or could in future have, on communication strategies and objectives. This will also offer insight into how the social media sphere in the developing country of South Africa differs from those in other countries, which should ultimately influence the PR objectives, strategies and activities of an organisation.

Secondly, the study determined the extent to which social media are impacting on the PR industry in South Africa. It compares these results with the research findings of Wright and Hinson (2009) conducted in other countries.

Finally, the study gains an academic theoretical dimension by being conducted it in the context of a meta-theoretical framework. This theoretical dimension is not used in the original study by Wright and Hinson (2009). The study thus offers an academic view of the topic and its results, and makes an additional contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

7.4 A SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The study aimed to test 32 hypotheses. Table 7.1 contains a summary of the findings, as discussed in Chapter 6.

Table 7.1: A summary of the results of the 32 hypotheses tested in this study

Wording of alternative hypothesis		Summary
Question 1		
H_1: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion that the emergence of social media including blogs has changed the way in which organisations communicate.	2009 - 2008	H_1 was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_1 was rejected
	SA - 2009	H_1 was accepted
H_2: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion that the emergence of social media, including blogs, has changed the way in which organisations communicate.	2009 - 2008	H_2 was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_2 was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_2 was accepted
H_3: There is a significant difference in the distribution the emergence of social media, including blogs, has changed the way in which organisations communicate and handle internal communications.	2009 - 2008	H_3 was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_3 was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_3 was accepted
Question 2		
H_4: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media and mainstream media complement each other.	2009 - 2008	H_4 was accepted
	SA - 2008	H_4 was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_4 was accepted
H_5: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media and mainstream media conflict with each other	2009 - 2008	H_5 was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_5 was rejected
	SA - 2009	H_5 was rejected

Conclusion and recommendations

Wording of alternative hypothesis		Summary
Question 3		
H_6: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media have enhanced the practice of public relations	2009 - 2008	H_6 was accepted
	SA - 2008	H_6 was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_6 was rejected
H_7: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations.	2009 - 2008	H_7 was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_7 was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_7 was rejected
H_8: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media influence the traditional mainstream media.	2009 - 2008	H_8 was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_8 was rejected
	SA - 2009	H_8 was rejected
H_9: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether traditional mainstream media influence social media.	2009 - 2008	H_9 was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_9 was rejected
	SA - 2009	H_9 was accepted
H_{10}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether the instantaneous nature of social media have forced organisations to respond more rapidly to criticism.	2009 - 2008	H_{10} was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_{10} was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_{10} was accepted
Question 4		
H_{11}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media are more accurate than traditional mainstream media.	2009 - 2008	H_{11} was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_{11} was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_{11} was accepted
H_{12}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media are more credible than traditional mainstream media.	2009 - 2008	H_{12} was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_{12} was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_{12} was accepted
H_{13}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media are a more trusted source of information than traditional mainstream media.	2009 - 2008	H_{13} was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_{13} was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_{13} was accepted
H_{14}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media tell the truth.	2009 - 2008	H_{14} was accepted
	SA - 2008	H_{14} was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_{14} was accepted
H_{15}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media advocate a transparent and ethical culture.	2009 - 2008	H_{15} was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_{15} was rejected
	SA - 2009	H_{15} was rejected
H_{16}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media offer organisations a low-cost way to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics.	2009 - 2008	H_{16} was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_{16} was rejected
	SA - 2009	H_{16} was rejected
H_{17}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media serve as a watch-dog for traditional mainstream media.	2009 - 2008	H_{17} was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_{17} was rejected
	SA - 2009	H_{17} was accepted
H_{18}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether social media are impacting corporate and organisational transparency.	2009 - 2008	H_{18} was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_{18} was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_{18} was rejected
Question 5		
H_{19}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether people who receive information from mainstream media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture.	2009 - 2008	H_{19} was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_{19} was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_{19} was accepted

Wording of alternative hypothesis		Summary
Question 6		
H_{20}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether people who receive information from blogs and other social media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture.	2009 - 2008	H_{20} was rejected
	SA - 2008	H_{20} was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_{20} was accepted
Question 7		
H_{21}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted a research or measurement study that focused on information employees communicated on www. blogs.	2009 - 2008	H_{21} was accepted
	SA - 2008	H_{21} was accepted
	SA - 2009	H_{21} was accepted
Question 8		
H_{22}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted research measuring what members of other strategic publics have communicated about their organisation via blogs or other social media	SA - 2009	H_{22} was accepted
Question 9		
H_{23}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether PR practitioners should measure the amount of communication disseminated about their organisations through blogs and other social media.	SA – 2009	H_{23} was rejected
H_{24}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether PR practitioners should measure and/or analyse the content of what is being communicated about their organisations in blogs and other social media.	SA – 2009	H_{24} was accepted
H_{25}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether PR practitioners should measure the impact of information disseminated about their organisations through blogs and other social media on influential opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.	SA – 2009	H_{25} was accepted
H_{26}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether PR practitioners should measure the impact of information disseminated about their organisations through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour.	SA - 2009	H_{26} was accepted
Question 10		
H_{27}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted research measuring the amount of communication that is disseminated about them through blogs and other social media.	SA – 2009	H_{27} was accepted
H_{28}: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted research measuring the amount of	SA – 2009	H_{28} was accepted

Wording of alternative hypothesis		Summary
communication disseminated about them through blogs and other social media.		
H$_{29}$: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted research measuring the impact of information on them disseminated through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.	SA – 2009	H$_{29}$ was accepted
H$_{30}$: There is a significant difference in the distribution of opinion on whether respondents' organisations have ever commissioned or conducted research measuring the impact of information disseminated about them through blogs and other social media on formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour.	SA - 2009	H$_{30}$ was accepted
Question 11		
H$_{31}$: There is a significant difference between the average, approximate percentage of time practitioners spend working in public relations and communications and the time they spend on blogs and other social media.	SA - 2009	H$_{31}$ was accepted
Question 12		
H$_{32}$: There are significant differences in the distribution of opinion on whether there are any situations in which an organisation's legal function impacted on how the organisation managed any aspects of blogging or social media communication.	SA - 2009	H$_{32}$ was rejected

Most of the respondents in the South African study agreed that the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way in which organisations communicate and handle internal and external communication. There was a significant difference between the responses to the question in 2008 and those in 2009. This indicates that the results of the South African study were in line with those of Wright and Hinson in 2008, possibly indicating that the South African industry is a few years behind its international counterparts. Findings suggest that these changes are more prominent in external than in internal communications.

In the South African study, most respondents agreed that social media (including blogs) and mainstream media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television) complement each other. The data indicated that results in the South African study were significantly different from those of both the previous studies. The greatest difference lay between the 2009 results and the results

of the South African study. However, most of the respondents disagreed that the two different types of media contradict each another, with these results not differing significantly from the 2008 and 2009 studies. It can therefore be concluded that, in general, PR practitioners do not believe that social media and traditional media are in conflict with each another.

South African respondents strongly agreed that social media have enhanced the PR practice. These results were very close to the 2009 results. Almost 70% of South African respondents felt the same about blogs, as well as remaining in line with the results from the 2009 study. The respondents were in strong agreement that social and traditional media influence each another. However, results indicate that the influence of traditional mainstream media on social media in South Africa is in line with results from the 2008 study. The majority of respondents agreed, even more than they did in the 2008 and 2009 studies, that the instantaneous nature of social media has forced organisations to respond more rapidly to criteria.

Respondents were asked a variety of questions about how social media compared with traditional news media in terms of, inter alia, accuracy, credibility, truthfulness and ethics. Results from the 2008 and 2009 studies showed that the respondents thought blogs and social media had a long way to go before they were on a par with traditional media in these categories. Results from the South African study showed even lower scores for agreement on the questions. South African PR practitioners were therefore shown to regard traditional media as much more accurate, credible and trustworthy, as well as being a source of truth, in comparison with social media. However, respondents gave social media high marks for offering organisations low-cost ways to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics, serving as a watchdog for traditional mainstream media, and impacting corporate and organisational transparency.

The study also investigated whether PR practitioners have different expectations of social media and the traditional media in terms of qualities like honesty, truth-telling and ethics. South African respondents showed a high

level of agreement (about 85%) that people who receive information from mainstream media expect these news outlets to be honest and truthful and to advocate a transparent and ethical culture. However, the results indicated that expectations in these areas are considerably less (68%) for blogs and other social media. Results from the 2008 an 2009 studies showed the same trend, but the level of agreement was not as high as in the South African study, suggesting that South African PR practitioners, unlike their counterparts in developed countries, expect greater honesty, truth-telling and ethical practice from both traditional and social media.

Even though PR practitioners frequently say research and measurement are important, few of the subjects in all three studies claimed to actually be conducting such research. So far a few organisations have commissioned or conducted such research or measurement, but the percentage of those conducting such measurement has been increasing each year, according to Wright and Hinson's 2008 and 2009 studies results.

This study also investigated what kind of measurement subjects thought should be taking place, and then compared that with what was actually happening (Wright & Hinson, 2009:90). Subjects strongly believed that a wide variety of research should be conducted in the area of blogs and social media. As reported in Chapter 6, more than 90% of the South African respondents agreed that this research should be taking place.

However, the results indicated that very few organisations are actually conducting such research. Respondents from the 2008 and 2009 studies showed the same trend. The results in this study suggest that organisations in South Africa are, in fact, doing even less research in 2011 than was carried out in developed countries in 2009.

One question in the questionnaire asked for the percentage of their workdays respondents spent on blogs and other social media. Findings from the 2009 study indicate that most (93%) devoted some of their work time to these new media, with nearly half (48%) spending between 1-10 percent in this area and

about a third (30%) devoting somewhere between 11-25 percent of their work time. South African respondents indicated that 89% devoted some of their work day to social media and blogs. The greatest difference seemed to be that more South African practitioners were spending 50% or more of their time on blogs and other social media, compared with respondents in the 2009 survey at 4%.

Results suggested that there were no significant differences of opinion between the 2009 study, compared to results in the South African study on whether there were any situations in which an organisation's legal function impacted how the organisation managed any aspects of blog or social media communication. South African respondents indicated that 40% were aware of that the organisation managed any aspects of blog or social media communication.

7.5   MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This section explains the implications for management of the results of this empirical study. Understanding how social media are impacting on the South African PR industry is important for managers, because strategies, processes and resources are all affected.

From the results of the study it can be concluded that the emergence of social media has, without doubt, significant implications for the PR industry. PR managers could add value to their communication strategies by closely evaluating how the emergence of social media is changing the way their organisations communicate, both internally and externally.

Findings suggest that PR managers can use traditional media communication in conjunction with social media, as the two seem to be complementary, and will become even more so in the future. Existing traditional media communication can therefore be leveraged on social media platforms. For example, if a PR manager were managing a campaign in print and broadcast

radio, the campaign would, where possible, be extended to social media platforms.

PR communications strategies ought to allow for their organisations to respond more swiftly to criticism than in the past. It is also necessary to incorporate transparency and ethical practice into organisational communication, as the nature of social media demands higher ethical standards from organisations.

The perceived importance of conducting research into what employees and strategic publics are communicating on blogs and social media about organisations cannot be ignored. Not only should South African PR practitioners aggressively enter into such research, but they should also investigate the legal implications of these online conversations, evaluating and applying content should it be necessary.

Findings also suggest that PR practitioners rate social media and blogs very low in terms of accuracy, truth-telling and ethics. This places even more importance on research and measurement studies conducted on these platforms. If these platforms are indeed performing as unsatisfactorily in terms of ethics, as PR practitioners perceive, there must be a significant need for organisational reputation management on this level.

7.6   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As far as context is concerned, this study is limited to the PR industry. The roles of other communication and marketing practitioners who might influence communication to an organisation's publics were not considered.

The study tested only the constructs from the original study by Wright and Hinson (2009), and did not include any other aspects that might explain the impact of social media on the PR industry.

The sample of respondents was exclusively from South Africa. Even though the country is a third world with a developing economy, the results are not necessarily applicable to all other third world countries. For example, South Africa has a comparatively low Internet penetration rate, which could have a significant impact on the results, if compared with another third world country.

The results of Wright and Hinson's studies in 2008 and 2009 were compared with those of the South African study in 2011. In the interim, Wright and Hinson repeated their study on an annual basis in 2010 an 2011. The results of these studies were not included in this study.

7.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study used data from a relatively small sample size of 101 respondents, because of the pre-requisite that respondents had to be PR practitioners and exclusively South African. Although the survey was circulated to more than 3000 possible respondents, the response rate was very low. It is therefore suggested that the survey be repeated at a future time in other third world countries, to include a larger sample size. The inclusion of respondents from other third world countries would result in a more balanced view of the impact of social media on PR practice in third world countries with developing economies.

It is recommended that a study be carried out based on the findings of the annual survey by Wright and Hinson, including the results from the 2010 and 2011 surveys. This could become an annual, longitudinal survey, in which the results are compared with those of South African surveys.

A deeper research design could be developed in which, in addition to the annual study by Wright and Hinson, constructs from other similar studies are dissected and incorporated into the survey design.

A qualitative dimension could add further insight into how the emergence of social media is impacting on the South African PR industry. It is

recommended that further research be carried out to explore the topic using a qualitative research design.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Resp. no. [ ][ ][ ]

- The increased application of social media in the South African public relations industry -

Dear respondent

Thank you for your willingness to complete the survey. The purpose of this survey is determining what the impact is of social media on the public relations (PR) practice for PR practitioners in South Africa

This is an anonymous and confidential survey. You cannot be identified and the answers you provide will be used for research purposes only. There are no right or wrong answers.

Please answer all the questions by placing a cross (✗) in the appropriate block.

Q1.   Please indicate whether you agree or disagree that the emergence of social media (including blogs) has changed the way your organisation (or your client organisation)**.**

		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1.1	Communicates	1	2	3	4	5
1.2	Handles external communications	1	2	3	4	5
1.3	Handles internal communications	1	2	3	4	5

Q2.   Do you agree or disagree that social media (including blogs) and mainstream media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television)

		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
2.1	Complement each other	1	2	3	4	5
2.2	Are in conflict with each other	1	2	3	4	5

Q3.   Do you agree or disagree that

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
3.1	Social media have enhanced the practice of public relations	1	2	3	4	5
3.2	Blogs have enhanced the practice of public relations	1	2	3	4	5
3.3	Social media (including blogs) influence the traditional mainstream media?	1	2	3	4	5
3.4	Traditional mainstream media influence social media (including blogs)?	1	2	3	4	5
3.5	Since social media (including blogs) have made communications more instantaneous they have forced organisations to respond more quickly to criticism?	1	2	3	4	5

Q4.   Do you agree or disagree that social media

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
4.1	Are more accurate than traditional mainstream media?	1	2	3	4	5
4.2	Are more credible than traditional mainstream media?	1	2	3	4	5
4.3	Are a more trusted information source than traditional mainstream media?	1	2	3	4	5
4.4	Tell the truth?	1	2	3	4	5
4.5	Advocate a transparent and ethical culture?	1	2	3	4	5
4.6	Offer organisations a low-cost way to develop relationships with members of various strategic publics?	1	2	3	4	5
4.7	Serve as a watch-dog for traditional mainstream media?	1	2	3	4	5
4.8	Are impacting corporate and organisational transparency.	1	2	3	4	5

Q5.   Do you agree or disagree that:

		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
5.1	People who receive information from mainstream media expect these news outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture?	1	2	3	4	5

Q6.   Do you agree or disagree that:

		Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
6.1	People who receive information from blogs and other social media expect these outlets to be honest, tell the truth and advocate a transparent and ethical culture?	1	2	3	4	5

Q7.   To the best of your knowledge, has your organisation ever commissioned or conducted a research or measurement study that focused on information employees communicated on www blogs?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / not sure	3

Q8.   To the best of your knowledge, has your organisation ever conducted research measuring what members of other strategic publics have communicated about your organisation via blogs or other social media?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / not sure	3

Q9.   Do you agree or disagree that public relations practitioners should measure:

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
9.1	The amount of communication that is being disseminated about their organisations (or client organisations) through blogs and other social media.	1	2	3	4	5
9.2	And/or analyse content of what's being communicated about their organisations (or their clients) in blogs and other social media.	1	2	3	4	5
9.3	The impact information disseminated about their organisations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.	1	2	3	4	5
9.4	The impact information disseminated about their organisations (or their clients) through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour.	1	2	3	4	5

Q10.   To the best of your knowledge, has your organisation (or a client organisation) ever measured . . .

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
10.1	The amount of communication that is being disseminated about it through blogs and other social media.	1	2	3	4	5
10.2.2	Or analysed the content of what's being communicated about it in blogs and other social media.	1	2	3	4	5
10.3	The impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on influentials, opinion leaders and members of other strategic audiences.	1	2	3	4	5

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
10.1	The amount of communication that is being disseminated about it through blogs and other social media.	1	2	3	4	5
10.4	The impact information disseminated about it through blogs and other social media has on the formation, change and reinforcement of attitudes, opinions and behaviour.	1	2	3	4	5

Q11.   On the average, approximately what percentage of your time working in public relations and communications is spent with blogs and other social media?

None	1
1 – 10%	2
11 - 25%	3
26 – 50%	4
More than 50 %	5

Q12.   Are you aware of any situation in which an organisation's legal function impacted how the organisation managed any aspects of blog or social media communication?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / not sure	3

Q13. Please describe and/or comment about the impact legal (or any other organisational function) has had on managing blogs and social media within an organisation.

The next part of the questionnaire is for administrative purposes. Please fill this section out as well.

Q14.   In which country do you work do you work? Indicate in the block below.

South Africa	1
I live in another country, not in South Africa	2

Q15. What kind of organisation do you work for?

Corporation	1
Government	2
Health Care or Hospital	3
Large Agency	4
Small agency or consultancy	5
Research provider	6
Educational institution	7

Q16.   Please indicate your gender.

Male	1
Female	2

Q17.   Please indicate your age.

Under 21	1
21- 60	2
61 or more	3

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY.
YOUR INSIGHTS ARE APPRECIATED**