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Editorial

Private rights in public spheres

Today the entire world is confronted with a wealth of new opportunities and risks created by an even more profound revolution in human communication. Its effects are already widespread and far reaching, and they are accelerating. Interactive communication is transforming society and changing many aspects of people's lives. It offers powerful and timely access to information and to knowledge. More importantly, it inspires engaged participation that empowers every participant to not just consume, but also to become producers of information. The culmination of the implications of interactive communication leads inescapably to one conclusion: the increasing importance and empowerment of individuals - regardless of location, economic status, or political affiliation. Interactive communication blurs the lines of authority that are normally imposed through controls such as hierarchies, geographic borders or clear jurisdiction. The Internet is rapidly redefining notions of government censorship and personal privacy. At it's most fundamental, the struggle between the Internet censorship and openness at national level revolves around three main means – controlling the conduits, filtering the flows, and punishing the purveyors.

In much of the developed world the tension between censorship and openness has focussed more on finding means to filter Internet content in cooperation with industry, rather than on constricting the conduits and punishing the purveyors. Most of the developed world has concluded that restricting access to the Internet at national level is not viable. Yet Internet activists around the world shuddered in 1999 when the Australian Parliament passed a Bill that allows the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (the nation's equivalent of the American CIA) to secretly alter the files in private computers it spies on. While these powers were granted by government as a means to fight terrorism and organised crime, online activists saw it as something much more ominous – " a total lack of interest by the government in treating personal privacy with due respect, and setting a dangerous precedent for the whole issue of surveillance". It would appear as if online activists concerns are not entirely unfounded. The Paris-based organisation Reporters Without Borders (RSF) reports that there are 45 countries that restrict their citizen's access to the Internet. In countries such as Burma, Libya, North Korea, Syria and the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus Internet access is either banned or subject to tight government control. In the developed world numerous conferences have been held to address questions over appropriate content, most of which have been aimed primarily at classifying content as a navigation aid for filtering software to be installed at the user- end. E-mail represents one of the thorniest free speech issues in cyberspace because of privacy issues related to personal

communication. Experts agree that in future as the world becomes more connected, proxy servers, private networks, even mobile phones will provide ever new trap doors for the information competent. The end result may well be what Richard Greenfield, a consultant to the Soro Foundations' Open Society Institute, calls a "cyber brain drain " where people don't even leave a country, but just conduct their online activities in a different jurisdiction.

Because of pressing new issues of jurisprudence and public policy, communication scientists will have to rapidly cultivate an understanding of the impact of the Communication Age on communication in the public sphere. We must become knowledgeable of the benefits, issues and threats posed by interactive communication and of its social and economic influence. Without this understanding we will be ill equipped to fulfill our responsibilities. While we cannot control the growth of interactive communications, we can guide its development so that consideration is given to the needs of local communities, broad access and education is guaranteed, and the assurance is given that it supports rather than undermines our core values as individuals and as a broader society. Just as interactive communication influences all facets of community life so does it challenge and test the underpinnings of our society: our economic system, social contracts, public policies and laws. As communication policy is debated vigorously in the public sphere in the next few years, it is important that all communication scholars understand the challenges and that all voices are heard in the debate. The ways in which each of us, individually and collectively influence the outcomes will have a profound effect on the quality of our economic, civic and cultural life well into the next century.

Sonja Verwey
Editor

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

ABSTRACT

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

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

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

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

1.   INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.   RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

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

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

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

3.   CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

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

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

4.   DEFINITION OF TERMS

4.1   Public relations

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

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

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

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

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

4.2 Public relations programme or campaign?

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

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

5. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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

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

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

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

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

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

6.   THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING A PR CAMPAIGN

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

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

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

7.   THE STEPS OR PHASES OF A PR CAMPAIGN

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

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

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

7.1   Define the situation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7.2   Set the PR objectives

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

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

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

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

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

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

7.3   Determine the target audience

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

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

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

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

7.4   Create the theme and the messages

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

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

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

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

7.5   Implementation strategy and PR activities

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7.6   Draw up a budget

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

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

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

7.7   Review and evaluate the campaign

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

8.1   Research design

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

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

8.2   The PII evaluation model

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

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

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

outcome during the impact evaluation phase.

Diagram 1 – Stages and levels for evaluating public relations programmes (Cutlip, et al., 2000:437).

PHASE 3: Impact evaluation phase	Social and cultural change
	Number who repeat behaviour
	Number who behave as desired
	Number who change attitudes
	Number who change options
	Number who learn message content
	Number who attend messages and activities
PHASE 2: Implementation evaluation phase	Number who receive messages and activities
	Appropriateness of message and activity content
	Number of messages placed and activities implemented
	Number of messages sent to media and activities designed
PHASE 1: Preparation evaluation phase	Quality of message and activity presentations
	Appropriateness of message and activity content
	Adequacy of background information base for designing programme

Each stage in programme evaluation contributes to increased understanding and adds information for assessing effectiveness. *Preparation evaluation* assesses the quality and adequacy of information and planning. *Implementation evaluation* documents the adequacy of the tactics and effort, and *Impact evaluation* provides feedback on the consequences. No evaluation is complete without addressing the criteria at each level.

It terms of what has been stated when the second step of a typical public relations campaign has been discussed, the setting of the PR objectives, it needs to be pointed out that the PII model is especially valuable because it distinguishes between outcome(s) and impact. In short, it serves as a synopsis of the public relations programme or campaign (Kitchen, 1997:291).

These levels or phases will be discussed in greater detail when reporting back on the findings of M-Net internal assessment of the M-Net Face of Africa campaign.

8.3   Method of data collection

Six in-depth interviews by means of a structured questionnaire were conducted with the three executive members of the M-Net Face of Africa public relations campaign team, i.e. with E. Heyns (the marketing director), L. Mokwena and H. Pretorius (the programme co-ordinators). The discussions were spread over three weeks: one interview per person per week. The purpose of the interviews was to gather as much information as possible on the background of the campaign, and more specifically on the methods or techniques used by M-Net to evaluate the success of the campaign.

The research strategy was of a contextual nature, which implies a focus on the individual case in its specific context of meanings and significance (Mouton, 1996:158).

8.4   Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in the research interviews was constructed from the questions suggested in the PII model (Cutlip, *et al.*, 2000). As also suggested in the PII model, the questionnaire schedule was divided into the three categories of preparation, implementation and impact evaluation.

8.4.1 Preparation evaluation phase
In the preparation phase of the questionnaire, 15 questions were asked, eleven of which were open ended and four closed ended. In this phase of the questionnaire schedule, according to Cutlip, *et al.* (1994:420), evaluation of the programme includes: "a mix of subjective and objective assessments of (1) the adequacy of the background research, (2) the organisation and content of programme materials, and (3) the packaging and presentation of programme materials".

8.4.2 Implementation evaluation phase
The next phase of the questionnaire dealt with how effectively the programme was implemented and communications were disseminated to target publics. Nine questions in this phase were asked to each of the three participants. Six of the nine questions were closed ended, and three were open ended questions.

8.4.3 Impact evaluation phase
The evaluation of the impact of the programme was the last part of the questionnaire. The objective was to measure the extent to which the outcomes spelled out in the objectives for each target public and the overall programme goal were achieved. Eleven

questions were asked, nine of which were closed ended and two were open ended questions.

According to Cutlip, *et al.* (1994:432), "programme evaluation involves a great deal of knowledge beyond familiarity with traditional scientific research techniques". Based on this, Yin (1989) states that in some instances, an in-depth case study in which both qualitative and quantitative data are gathered is the only reasonable approach. Therefore, the principle in practice according to Cutlip, *et al.* (1994:432) is to gather the best available evidence to management and evaluate public relations campaigns.

9. RESEARCH FINDINGS

As previously stated, the in-depth discussions of the PII model are presented here together with the research findings from the personal interviews with the M-Net executive PR team in order to (i) establish the techniques/methods they have used to assess the Face of Africa campaign, and (ii) evaluate the campaign within the three phases presented in the PII evaluation model for PR campaigns.

9.1 Preparation evaluation phase

9.1.1 Discussion of the phase
In the first step of this phase, practitioners may find that important information was missing from the original situation analysis. Done and recorded systematically, this assessment represents an evaluation of the adequacy of the background information used for planning the campaign. Were key publics omitted from the original determination of stakeholder groups? What assumptions about the publics proved to be in error? (Although the terms publics and stakeholders are often used synonymously, Steyn and Puth (2000:5) distinguish between them: *Publics* is normally used by corporate communication practitioners, whereas top management mostly refer to *stakeholders*. For the purposes of the present study, this distinction applies. Did journalists request information that was not available in the background brochures? What last minute crises called for additional research and organisation of information? Had all the key actors in the situation been identified? In effect, this part of the evaluation assesses the adequacy of the information gathering and intelligence steps in the preparation phase of the process.

The second step in the preparation evaluation phase addresses the organisation and appropriateness of the implementation and message strategy and tactics. This is a critical overview of what is said and done, for guidance in future campaigns. Relevant questions at this stage of the evaluation can include the following: Did message content match the problems, objectives and media? Was communication accurate, timely and

appropriate for the intended publics? Were there adverse reactions to messages or actions? Did the events, corrective steps, and other activities support the campaign effort? Did the communication activities capitalise on and complement the action components of the campaign? Were the staff and budget adequate for the task? This phase of the evaluation calls for a review of how well the campaign matched the demands of the situation. The content analyses of materials produced, the speeches and other presentations, press clippings and broadcasts also provide evidence for evaluating how closely the campaign efforts match the plan.

The quality of the message(s) and other campaign element presentations constitutes the final step in the preparation evaluation phase. The awards campaign of many professional societies and groups employ criteria from this step. This step considers the quality of professional performance in view of conventional wisdom and consensus among practitioners as to which are good and bad techniques.

"Clearly, evaluation of the preparation phase of the programme includes a mix of subjective and objective assessments of (1) the adequacy of the background research; (2) the organisation and content of programme materials; and (3) the packaging and presentation of the programme materials" (Cutlip, *et al.*, 1994:442).

9.1.2 Evaluation results
The following findings were established in the formal interviews with the executive members of the M-Net public relations team:
- Very few or none of the target publics were omitted out. This is probably because the preliminary study done by M-Net as part of the situation analysis was of a very high standard, having been outsourced to public relations agencies and internally conducted by M-Net.
- There was insufficient focus on American and European target publics, for example international model agencies. This shortcoming was quickly corrected after the success of the first broadcast of the Face of Africa TV programme outside Africa.
- There were no incorrect assumptions about the target publics that proved to be in error. There were, however, incidents during the PR campaign where journalists requested information that was not available in the press releases, because some journalists wanted to provide their own angle to the story. Although this information was not always supplied in the press releases, the required stories, facts and photographs were always made available on request.

The second level of the evaluation model's preparation phase addresses the appropriateness of the implementation strategies as well as the message strategies and tactics. This was found to be of a high level.
- The message content suited the problem, the objectives and the selected media.

This was clear from the fact that the timing of the PR campaign was very good, especially with regard to a political and business perspective, as well as a global emphasis on the African Renaissance. This can be seen by the success of the winners worldwide, not only in Africa.
- The different forms of communication that were used in this public relations programme were accurate and timely. This was evident in the thorough Internet communications during the programme.
- The gala event and other PR activities supported the objectives of the M-Net Face of Africa PR campaign very well. The communication strategy for the campaign is seen as the best in the country. This resulted from the high and accurate reach of target publics and also the fact that the communication capitalised on and complemented the action components of the programme.

The next level of the evaluation model's planning phase is the measurement of the quality of the messages and other campaign elements. The Face of Africa campaign did not receive any awards – a criterion often used in this step in preparation evaluation. This is probably because the programme is unique and there are no similar competitions.

9.1.3 Research undertaken by M-Net
It is clear from the above discussion that apart from the preliminary research done by M-Net internally prior to the introduction of the Face of Africa competition, as part of the situation analysis, no formal research on the evaluation of the PR campaign was undertaken.

9.2   Implementation evaluation phase

9.2.1 Discussion of the phase
This second phase within the PR evaluation model deals with how effectively the programme is implemented and the communications disseminated to various target publics and stakeholders.

Public relations evaluations are most often undertaken in the implementation phase. This approach typically involves counting the number of publications printed; press releases distributed; stories placed in the media; and readers, viewers or listeners (potential and actual). Whereas records of campaign implementation are essential for campaign evaluation, the measures at this level cannot be substituted for programme impact.

The phase begins with keeping records of distribution, i.e. the number of messages sent. It is the documentation of how many letters, news releases, feature stories, publications, public service announcements and other communication were produced

and distributed. It also includes how many speeches, broadcast appearances, audiovisual presentations and exhibits were used. In other words, this step is the documentation of all the materials and activities produced and distributed. During the programme, such records provide evidence that the programme is being implemented as planned.

Regardless of how much is produced and distributed, the number of messages placed in the media determines whether or not target publics have an opportunity to be exposed to campaign information.

The next step is determining how many of the target publics received the messages, that is, the number of people potentially exposed to programme messages and actually having received the messages. Care must be taken to separate the delivered audience from the effective audience. The delivered audience includes all potential readers, viewers, listeners or those attending the event. The effective audience represents only those who form part of the target public(s). Audience size is seldom a major consideration. Rather, the makeup of the audience is more important to programme evaluation.

The number of people who attend to the message constitutes the next criterion in programme implementation evaluation. Readership and viewership studies measure audience attention to media and messages. Readership studies identify how many read and what they read, how much they read, as well as who read and who did not. Studies of broadcast audiences produce similar findings, and researchers/practitioners are developing similar measures of "hits" and other indicators of attention to messages on the Internet (Cutlip, *et al.*, 2000:442-448).

9.2.2 *Evaluation results*
The results of this phase of the PR evaluation model are as follows:
- This phase begins with recording the number of messages that were distributed during the PR campaign. This step entails the documentation of the number of letters, press releases, publications and other forms of communication that were produced and distributed. This is however not so simple, because there are literally thousands of forms of communication in such a PR campaign. It is thus very difficult to keep a record of the number of communications that are distributed.
- The first level of this phase is the determination of the number of messages that were placed in the media, despite the number of messages that were produced and distributed. According to Mokwena (1999), it is very difficult to estimate this in a programme of this magnitude. The number of messages that were placed and activities implemented in the programme can therefore not be pinpointed exactly.
- Thus, the number of people who received the messages and learnt about the activities cannot be determined either.

● The number of people who paid attention and responded to the messages or activities was estimated at between three and four people per day who responded directly to M-Net employees in Johannesburg. "There were about 60 people who work full time on this project, who each received several responses on a daily basis" (Mokwena, 1999).

9.2.3 Research undertaken by M-Net
According to one member of the executive PR team, no formal assessment of the success of the PR campaign in this phase was undertaken by M-Net. Only rough estimates were used as performance guidelines.

The determination of impact is the next level of programme evaluation according to the PII model.

9.3   Impact evaluation phase

9.3.1 Discussion of the phase
Impact measurement documents the extent to which the outcomes spelled out in the objectives for each target public and for the overall campaign goal were achieved. Formative impact assessments monitor progress towards objectives while the programme is being implemented. Summative impact assessments provide evidence of success or failure in reaching the planned end result.

The number of people who learn message content is clearly the logical follow-up to measure how many attended to the message. Most programmes seek to communicate information to increase knowledge, awareness and understanding among internal and external target publics. Increasing knowledge is often critical to increasing their interest or motivation, a sequence leading to the taking of action.

The key to evaluating what people learned from a programme is to measure the same knowledge, awareness, and understanding variables that were measured before the programme began. To determine change, comparisons must be drawn between at least two comparable measures: by repeating the measures on the same or similar people or by making comparable measures in a control group of similar people not exposed to the programme. This same principle applies to any assessment of programme impact.

The number of people who changed their opinion is the next step of impact evaluation. This step involves the interests shown by the target audiences with regard to the programme. The same surveys used to measure changes in knowledge, awareness and understanding can be used to determine whether the programmes had an impact on audience predisposition. Different questions would, however, be required because

increased knowledge and opinion changes are different outcomes, and one can occur without the other. Similarly, changes in opinions that are specific to a particular issue or situation may or may not reflect changes in more basic underlying attitudes.

The number of people who change their attitudes is a higher-order programme impact. Attitudes represent a broad, cross-situational predisposition. They are less subject to short-term change. They result from a lifetime of reinforcement and experience, so they typically require time and effort to change. What one sees expressed in a situation may or may not represent the underlying attitude.

The number of people who act in the desired fashion – behavioural change – may or may not follow a sequence of knowledge and predisposition changes. Assessments of campaign impact on behaviour include self-reports of behaviour through surveys, direct observation of people's actions, and indirect observation through the examination of official records or other "tracks" left by those engaging or not engaging in the behaviour.

Public relations campaigns are usually designed to increase the number of people who repeat or sustain the desired behaviour. Evaluation must include follow-up measures sometimes continuing for months or even years. Evaluation programme success in changing long-term behaviour calls for an extended period of observation and measurement to document programme impact. At the same point in this series of impact levels, the programme goal is achieved or the problem solved. It should also be clear that evaluation must extend to this level, because it is possible that some or many of the intermediate impact outcomes may occur without the programme goal being achieved.

The ultimate summative evaluation of programmes, and the practice of public relations, is their contribution to positive social and cultural change. This step, being the highest level of the public relations campaign evaluation completes the range of impact assessments.

9.3.2 Evaluation results

According to the model, the final phase of evaluation of the public relations campaign for M-Net Face of Africa is the degree to which the outcomes (spelled out as objectives for every target audience, and for the overall campaign) were achieved. The impact of the messages was estimated very roughly in this phase.
- The first evaluation of impact involves what people have learnt from this programme. This is measured by the number of people who learnt the message content. With the M-Net Face of Africa campaign, the three respondents estimated that roughly 80% – 90% of the audience (incorporating both the illiterates and the sophisticates) had received the messages and understood them.

- Of this audience, a further 50% - 80% showed a response to the messages. These responses were in the form of sponsorships, research articles or a positive feedback in the media (Heyns, 2000).
- According to Mokwena (2000), 70% of the audiences changed their opinion positively on the Face of Africa campaign, especially after the regional finals. (It was not established exactly how these opinion changes manifested themselves.)
- The percentage of viewers who changed their attitude towards M-Net was estimated at between 65% and 70% (Pretorius, 2000).
- The cultural and social changes that took place as a result of this PR campaign are important outcomes: according to all three respondents, many people in the majority of countries in the African continent became more fashion and beauty conscious as a result of the Face of Africa competition.

9.3.3 Research undertaken by M-Net
It is evident from the research findings that no formal research was undertaken by M-Net to evaluate the Face of Africa PR campaign. Again, only rough estimates were used to assess the impact of the campaign.

10.   CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

It is clear that almost no formal and scientific research was undertaken by M-Net, yet the management of M-Net is of the opinion that the M-Net Face of Africa PR campaign has so far proved to be a success and that it was well executed. They base this assumption firstly on the success rate of the campaign and secondly on the success of the winners on international catwalks.

According to M-Net, the planning phase of the campaign was of a high standard. This can be attributed to the fact that thorough preliminary studies and research were undertaken by external consultants, and by M-Net internally. Although no formal research was undertaken in the implementation phase, M-Net management is satisfied that enough was done in this phase. This is gauged from the success of the campaign. The impact of the campaign has been satisfactory in view of the fact that it has had an impact on the social and cultural ideologies of Africa. If the success of the winners of the competition is used as a guideline, it can be concluded that the PR campaign made African models more competitive with regard to the rest of the world.

In the opinion of the M-Net PR team, the M-Net Face of Africa PR campaign was " ... thoroughly executed, and that a lot of money and planning went into it to make it a public relations success".

11.   CLOSING REMARKS

There is no denying the apparent success of the M-Net Face of Africa competition as a PR success story. It is, however, the contention of the present researchers that formal and scientific research should be done on all three phases of the PR evaluation model of Cutlip, *et al.* (2000) to validate the informal research findings, estimates and guesswork.

It was stated in the beginning of this article that the M-Net Face of Africa competition offers an ideal research opportunity for South African Corporate Communication scholars. The researchers of the present study suggest that M-Net use an international evaluation model, as suggested by Cutlip, *et al.* (2000), to evaluate future public relations campaigns around the M-Net Face of Africa competition. A general realisation that research is becoming an increasingly important part of any public relations programme is required. Research must not only be accepted, but in fact be practised as a vitally important function in the public relations process.   It provides the initial information necessary for the planning and execution of the public relations campaign (formative research), as well as the means and guidelines for the later evaluation of the programme (summative research).

The popularity of the M-Net Face of Africa programme is increasing daily, not only in Africa, but also in the rest of the world. If the quality of the public relations programme of the Face of Africa continues, there is no real reason for failure. M-Net can build on the success of this programme to support the concept of the African Renaissance. If this project continues its high standard and success rate, African models can truly make their mark in the new millennium.

"From Kinshasa to Cairo, Abidjan to Zanzibar ... the search continues..."

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The attitude of Gauteng, Cape Town and Durban retailers toward direct mail as a communication medium

ABSTRACT

It has been said that there are three things that are going to drive the world's economic future. Firstly, computers; secondly, communications; and thirdly, direct marketing. There are countries that have reached the stage where direct marketing-oriented retailers have driven out the conventional retailer. The lack of South African retailers' use of direct marketing and their hesitant attitudes towards direct marketing communication media, such as direct mail, is cause for concern. This exploratory study investigates retailers' attitudes towards direct mail in an attempt to gain some insight into retailers' views of this marketing communication medium. The results indicate that retailers' attitudes towards direct mail differ with regard to factors such as the retailers' use of the medium, their age and their perceptions of consumer acceptance of direct mail. The study further identifies a need to communicate the advantages of direct mail to South African retailers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in market conditions and trends often highlight the need for changes in the marketing approaches being used. Current market trends, such as fierce competition, globalisation and increasingly demanding customers, bring into focus the shortcoming of marketing approaches and vehicles developed in the past. The need for innovative ways of reaching customers has never been greater, which forces retailers to re-examine and redefine their marketplace. Some countries have reached the stage where direct marketing-oriented retailers have driven out the conventional retailer. With changing economic conditions and the development of modern technology, some retailers have refocused their marketing functions and efforts in order to compete and survive. The economics of business survival means paying close attention to market conditions and incorporating those realities in daily business operation (Thomas & Kleiner, 1995:4).

The globalisation of markets, shortening of product lifecycles, more demanding customers and increased competition are some of the trends that require the use of advanced technologies in business practice. The capacity for faster and more frequent communication with existing and potential customers, vendors and business partners is of critical importance in today's business environment (Prabhaker, Sheehan & Coppett, 1997:222). Retailers who want to gain a greater market share have to anticipate the changing requirements of the customer's demand for improved services. Meeting growing customer demand for personal attention while maintaining a cost-effective operation is a matter of finding the right balance between traditional methods of customer service and newer technology (Ambrose, 1996:111).

The purpose of this article is to explore retailers' attitudes towards direct mail as part of their marketing communication mix. Retailers' attitudes were measured in terms of their opinions of the role of direct mail in the overall marketing strategy; the effort associated with the execution of a direct mail campaign; and direct mail's ability to increase profitability, its cost-effectiveness, and whether it serves as a tool to increase brand awareness that affects the success of the overall marketing strategy. The article provides a theoretical overview of the development of direct marketing, reasons for the growth in direct marketing and direct mail, and the advantages of direct mail. Thereafter, the research design, analysis and results are presented. Finally, the article provides a discussion on the implications of this research for retailers, and highlights several future research areas. A final recommendation is made that retailers should be educated on the advantages of direct mail since it has a definite role to play in the retail marketing strategy.

2.   DEVELOPMENT OF DIRECT MARKETING

Montgomery-Ward and Sears implemented direct marketing through the use of catalogue sales well over 100 years ago in the United States (Iyer & Hill, 1996:65). Since then, direct marketing has spread to many different parts of the world, including South Africa. Direct marketing did not develop overnight, but today the basic techniques of direct marketing are used successfully by many firms such as American Express and South African Airways' Voyager Miles Programme. In 1923, the great advertising pioneer, Claude Hopkins, called it scientific advertising. Although it has been given other names and nicknames over the years, such as maxi-marketing and dialogue marketing, today it is called direct marketing (Kobs, 1993).

Direct marketing forms part of the marketing mix's promotional mix. The term marketing mix describes the combination of the four elements that are the core of an organisation's marketing system. When product, price, place and promotion are mixed successfully, they form a marketing programme that provides need- or want-satisfying goods and services to an organisation's market. Promotional activities form the separate sub-mix that we call the promotions mix or the communication mix in an organisation's marketing programme (Power, Balderstone & Gyles, 2000: 16). The major elements in the promotional blend are the company's advertising, personal selling effort, sales promotion, publicity, public relations and direct marketing. Direct marketing can be defined as an interactive system of marketing that uses one or more advertising media to effect a measurable response and/or transaction at any location (O'Malley, Patterson & Evans, 1999: 7).

When the lifecycle of South African direct marketing in retailing is compared with other industrialised countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, South Africa is still in an embryonic stage (Evans, O'Malley & Patterson, 1995:18). Although South Africa is not very advanced in the use of all direct communication tools, it has at least started using direct mail and telemarketing. One of the reasons for this is the change in the consumers' shopping patterns. The move from cash transactions to the increased use of credit and debit cards has also facilitated the growth of non-store retailing. Today transactions can take place via mail, telephone or the Internet (Evans *et al*, 1995:18).

The spectacular growth of direct marketing in the last two decades has made these techniques seem revolutionary. Direct marketing has been used as a reliable and effective marketing discipline. Virtually all of direct marketing's special efficiencies derive from the fact that communication is directed at specific individuals and not mass markets via mass media (McDonald, 1998). Direct marketing offers a more personal or individual approach towards serving the customer. But perhaps the most obvious characteristic

of direct marketing is that its advertising message calls for an immediate response. One of the most useful properties of direct marketing is that it clearly shows which marketing efforts were successful and which failed. This measurable characteristic of direct marketing is one of the reasons for this marketing communication medium's increasing popularity.

It is the significant increase in awareness of the generally positive effects of direct marketing and retailers' awakening to its profit-impacting effects that have led to some South African retailers adopting this marketing tool. A few retailers have begun to make use of direct mail, but many remain apprehensive of direct marketing tools. It would however be wise of the retailers to consider direct marketing media and take them into account in devising their marketing strategies, especially in an age when the retailer's brand carries much value.

2.1   Reasons for the growth in direct marketing and direct mail

A number of key issues have changed the structure of the consumer marketplace as well as the behaviour and expectations of consumers. Some of these changes have facilitated the growth of direct marketing. One important development is the fragmentation of consumer markets, which has increased the difficulties of communicating with customers through traditional channels. The cost of reaching mass audiences through television advertising has increased, whereas a shrinkage in television audiences has occurred due to the proliferation of television channels (Forcht & Cochran, 1999:193). This may drive many retailers to communicate with market segments in more individual and focused ways in future (Evans *et al*, 1995:17).

Furthermore, time pressure in households is projected to increase as a consequence of economic and demographic changes, such as a decrease in real income, increasing working hours and more women working outside the home. Add to this a growing perception that retail crowding is psychologically stressful. Shopping has also changed from a social pleasure to a more functional chore (Aylott & Mitchell, 1998:683/5).

Another significant development in the practice of marketing communication is the shift in emphasis from a transaction orientation to a customer relationship management orientation. The need for relationship marketing stems from the changing dynamics of the global marketplace and the expanding requirements for competitive success. Many retailers no longer follow the classical approach of product, price, place and promotion, but rather view the customer as the primary asset. According to Rich (2000:170), this asset should be cultivated and grown in order to reduce the effects of ever-increasing competition and potential pressure on pricing.

Morgenson (1993:107) claimes that a decline in overall US retail sales and an increase in shopping by computer, television, mail and telephone in the late 1980s and early 1990s is an indication of Americans' tiredness of retail shopping hassles, such as fear of crime and parking problems. He argues that if people are convinced they can buy a trusted product, at a competitive price with a guarantee, there is no reason to spend that hour or two in the mall. The ease of comparative shopping for consumers in non-traditional channels was highlighted by McKay (in Rowe, 1989:7) who states that Australian consumers expressed growing dissatisfaction with the problems in traditional retail outlets. South Africa has also seen a spate of armed robberies in major shopping centres over the past couple of years (Schönteich, 2000: 11). Feeling unsafe in a shopping centre can lead to consumers considering shopping alternatives.

There are many technological advancements that have effected the attractiveness of direct mail methods. An example of such an advance is in printing technology, which increased print quality, personalisation of mailings, insertions in magazines, newspapers and mail packages. Computer technology also provides the ability to track the performance of direct mail which, when linked with a database marketing approach, provides accountability of the amount spent in the pursuit of making the sale (Rowe, 1989:6).

Finally, another development progressing direct marketing efforts is the improvement in database technology (Forcht & Cochran, 1999:193). Direct mail is dependent on a list or database of clients and prospects. At the core of direct mail is a database, which can identify the high value or frequent buyers, their profile, credit-worthiness and purchase history. A profile of each customer can be generated from enquiries, recommendations and sales to the retailer (Payne, 1993:36). The value of establishing and maintaining an accurate and up-to-date database will create and sustain a competitive advantage (Gardiner & Quinton, 1998:11). The high relative cost of customer acquisition has shifted the emphasis to building and maintaining long-term customer relationships in order to improve profitability (Ennew & Binks, 1996:226).

2.2   Advantages of direct mail

Direct mail is one of the direct marketing tools most direct marketers experience first. Many marketers eventually come to expand their business through the judicious use of direct response media – but not until they have familiarised themselves with direct mail (Kobs, 1993). Particularly important is the fact that direct mail enables the retailer to build a unique, one-to-one relationship with existing customers and prospects. The retailers' use of direct mail differs according to the retailer's objectives. Some retailers use direct mail as a natural complement to other forms of marketing communication techniques, whereas other retailers use direct mail as their primary

communication tool, such as Readers Digest. Direct mail supports other direct marketing media, just as other direct marketing media support direct mail. It is an integrated approach.

As a result of the growth of direct marketing, the use of direct media, in particular direct mail, increases continually. The increase in the use of direct mail also stems from heavier reliance on the medium, both by previous users and by new users. Direct mail has many advantages over other media. For instance, direct mail can engage in precision targeting to a greater degree than other media. It offers the opportunity to personalise the message and is flexible with regard to formats, timing and testing (Vriens, Van der Scheer, Hoekstra & Bult, 1998: 323). The fact that direct mail can be individualised and personalised helps to overcome the clutter inherent in traditional mass-media communication. Targeting also means that direct mail tends to be more cost-effective than its mass-media counterparts, which has led many smaller organisations to use it as a competitive tool against larger organisations with greater communication budgets (Patterson, 1998:71).

The most significant advantage of direct marketing is surely its measurability. The effects of direct marketing are measurable to a much greater extent than the effects of traditional communication. The utilisation of direct mail makes it possible for marketing to become more accountable. Direct mail has the ability to track an individual's response and therefore to measure the effectiveness of the direct mail action. This means that retailers can count how many customers mailed the coupon or called in an order (Jutkins, 2000: 167). Because direct mail can be personalised and offers the consumer an opportunity to respond, it is extremely useful in persuading some consumers to make further enquiries, to place an order or to make a purchase (Patterson, 1998:71).

Another advantage of direct mail is that retailers can be proactive in building and maintaining relationships with customers. The ultimate goal of the retailer's database is to pursue a market segment of one person. The consumer market can be defined by more diverse product lines and more diverse market segments, making direct mail an ideal selling tool. By getting to know each customer well, the marketer can better serve them and, in turn, make more sales (Forcht & Cochran, 1999:193). Thus, in the face of increasing competition, retailers should pursue objectives of survival, prosperity and competitive advantage by building products and customers through the delivery of direct mail.

Given the growth of direct marketing, a conceptual shift from transactional to relationship marketing, and current marketing trends towards 'loyalty schemes' and 'lifetime customers', it seems timely and appropriate for retailers to consider the use of direct mail in order to enhance brand loyalty (Debling, 1999:252). Customers are

increasingly looking to retailers who add value to their lives. Direct marketers immediately add value by reducing and eliminating the otherwise friction-laden retail experience. Some retailers now appeal directly to consumers with their own catalogues and Internet addresses (Feinberg & Eastlick, 1997:258). Direct mail is therefore a marketing medium that can fulfil the needs of both retailers and consumers.

3.   RESEARCH DESIGN

Increased competition, more demanding customers, changing economic conditions and the development of modern technology have changed market conditions (Thomas & Kleiner, 1995: 6). The capacity for faster and more frequent communication with existing and potential customers has opened up opportunities for retailers to focus on innovative ways of reaching customers (Prabhaker *et al*, 1997: 222). Direct mail is a tool that can serve as a method to communicate with market segments in a more individual and personal way (Evans *et al*, 1995: 20). The proper use and implementation of direct mail by retailers will however depend on the marketing manager or executive's attitude toward direct marketing, and will affect their willingness to use direct mail strategies in the retail environment. Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore the attitudes of South African retailers towards direct mail and whether this has any influence on their use of direct mail as part of their overall marketing strategy.

The target population of the study comprised marketing managers/executives in the South African retailing sector. From this target population, the sampling frame was identified as all retail marketing managers/executives in Gauteng, Cape Town and Durban. A list of all South African retail marketing managers/executives was supplied by List Perfect. As most small independent one-man retailers do not employ marketing managers as such, they were not included in the sample. Service retailers (companies selling a service, such as banks) and goods retailers formed the bulk of the population from which the sample was drawn.

A probability sampling design (simple random sample) was used to draw a sample of 893 marketing managers or executives from the sampling frame. The data was collected by means of a mail questionnaire. The effective response rate of the mail survey sent to marketing managers or executives was 9,6% (86 questionnaires). The questionnaire consisted mainly of five-point descending Likert-type scales. The main body of the questionnaire was in the form of evaluative statements concerning the measurement of attitudes towards direct mail as identified from relevant literature. The questionnaire layout was planned to accommodate the mail collection method used and pre-tested during a pilot study before it was sent to the respondents in the sample.

Factor analysis was used to summarise fifteen "attitude" items into smaller sets of

variables. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the instrument items in the different factors. As all these items are based on a Likert scale, this method of reliability testing can be deemed effective (Malhotra, 1996). After establishing the factor for attitudes towards direct mail, two statistical procedures were used to test the validity of the set hypotheses. The ratings of the criteria of the factor analysis were averaged and compared using the t-test for independent samples to test the validity of H1, H2 and H4, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the validity of H3. The significance criterion to test the hypotheses was set at $p<0.05$, in other words at least 95% confidence.

4.   RESULTS

A principal components factor analysis (varimax rotation) was performed and two independent composite factors were identified. The statements that load onto factor two were all concerned with retailers' attitudes towards direct mail. Seven items load unambiguously on factor two (factor loadings greater than 0.6), and the results are shown in Table 1. Factor one refers to attitudes towards telemarketing, but does not fall within the parameters of this article. The reliability result for factor two (Cronbach's alpha) relating to retailers' attitudes towards direct mail is 0.882, which is above the customary cut-off point set at 0.6 (Malhotra, 1996) and 0.7 (Peterson, 1994). The results of the empirical testing of the hypotheses are listed and discussed below.

Table 1: Results for factor two (attitudes towards direct mail): factor loadings

Item	Factor two
Plays a vital role	0.818875
Increase profits	0.813013
Takes an effort to execute	0.614725
Increase brand awareness	0.74939
Part of a marketing strategy	0.767702
Affects marketing strategy success	0.694919
Leads to greater profitability	0.720122

H1: Retailers who use direct mail as part of their marketing strategy will have a significantly lower mean score than non-users in terms of their overall attitudes towards direct mail.

The findings of the test were significant (p=0.001493), indicating that the attitudes of retailer marketers differ according to their use of direct mail. The result is presented with one-tailed significance because of the directional nature of the hypothesis.

Table 2: Attitude measurement in terms of retailers' use of direct mail

USAGE GROUPS	Attitudes towards direct mail (mean scores)
Users of direct mail	2.493676
Non-users of direct mail	3.087662
p-value (one-tail)	0.001493

The majority of the respondents do not believe that direct mail plays a vital part in their marketing communication strategy. However, most of the respondents agreed that direct mail definitely has an affect on the success of the marketing strategy. It seems that the effort associated with the execution of a direct mail campaign has an influence on the use of this communication tool. A total of 40.7 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that effort had a great deal to do with the use of direct mail, whereas 2.33 per cent felt that the level of effort had nothing to do with the use of direct mail. Direct mail has often been used as an advertising vehicle to build brand awareness and the majority of respondents (79 per cent) felt that direct mail definitely aids in increasing brand awareness.

It is absolutely crucial that retailers realise that they are not just in the business of selling products, but are in fact competing in a redefined marketplace that demands augmented products. These include the basic product and the customer support and service needed to transform the basic product into benefits that meet customer needs (Prabhaker et al, 1997:229). Using direct mail to improve customer service may be a very effective method to create an augmented product and to differentiate the organisation from the competitors. When customers' needs are uncovered and understood, it is easy to recommend additional products or enhanced products. Advances in technology have now made it possible for businesses to serve their customers in more and better ways, resulting in improved customer satisfaction and higher profitability (Levine, 1996:122). This coincides with the results from a study by Mai

and Ness (1999:868), which indicates that direct mail appears to deliver high levels of satisfaction that match or exceed customers' expectations. This leads to a higher proportion of customers who intend to purchase in the future.

H2: There is a meaningful difference between age groups and their attitudes towards direct mail.

The findings of the test were significant (p=0.009101), indicating that attitudes toward direct mail differ according to the retail marketer's age.

Table 3: Attitude measurement of different age groups

AGE	Attitudes towards direct mail (mean scores)
40 years and younger	2.457447
Above 40 years	2.872405
p-value	0.019101

The results indicate higher mean scores among the older age groups who may not have had exposure to direct marketing or direct mail compared to younger marketers, who may have been exposed to direct marketing through the educational system. It is evident from the above that the age of the managers/executives plays a role in the use of direct mail. The higher mean score among the older age group may be the result of a negative stereotype towards direct mail from an employee perspective (Nancarrow & Penn, 1998:19). The process to capture actual purchasing behaviour and to merge several data sources can lead to the more complex use of consumer-specific information. In this respect, direct mail has the capacity to become intrusive (Evans *et al*, 1995:22).

H3: There is a meaningful difference between the respondents' years of marketing experience and their attitudes towards direct mail.

The findings of the test were not significant (p=0.216992), indicating that the respondents' attitudes towards direct mail do not differ according to the years of their marketing experience.

Table 4: Attitude measurement in terms of retailers' marketing experience

MARKETING EXPERIENCE	Attitudes towards direct mail (mean scores)
0-8 years	2.510204
9-16 years	2.547619
Above 16 years	2.846726
p-value	0.216992

One might have found different results if the question had related to direct marketing experience, in particular, instead of marketing experience, in general. Having experience of marketing does not necessarily qualify one as an expert in direct marketing or having any knowledge of the specialised field of direct mail. As mentioned above, South African retailers need to be educated in the use and benefits of direct mail. A retailer who understands these will realise that transactions can take place at any location. Less time is required for each transaction due to the decreased need for travel, and newer technologies enable the retailer to provide a service in the language most comfortable to the customer (Driver & Johnston, 1998). Direct mail can turn the reaching of specific market segments into an organisation's advantage. Unique characteristics of customers need no longer be viewed as "market barriers" to be overcome, but they are in fact sources of competitive advantage if dealt with properly (Prabhaker *et al*, 1997:225).

H4: Respondents who feel that the South African consumer is ready to accept greater involvement in direct mail will have a lower mean score in terms of attitudes towards direct mail than respondents who feel that the South African consumer is not ready to accept greater involvement in direct mail.

The findings of the test were significant (p=0.000001), indicating that respondents who believe that consumers are ready to accept greater involvement in direct mail are more positively inclined towards it. The result is presented with one-tailed significance because of the directional nature of the hypothesis.

Table 5: Attitude measurement in terms of the retailers' perception of consumers' readiness to accept involvement in direct mail

DIFFERENT RETAILERS' PERCEPTIONS	Attitudes towards direct mail (mean scores)
Consumers are ready to accept involvement	2.295918
Consumers are not ready to accept involvement	3.108752
p-value (one-tail)	0.000001

Retailers who believe that consumers are not ready to accept greater involvement in direct mail are most likely not to employ direct mail techniques as they may feel that their customers would not see this as an appropriate communication medium. It is important to realise that not all customers may wish, or like, to interact with service providers by means of modern technology (Bennington, Cummane & Conn, 2000:164). The sooner marketers move to using direct mail in response to customers' requests, rather than cold prospecting, the better it will be for all concerned. Marketers will be able to target customers more accurately and more effectively, and consumers will see a phenomenal reduction in unsolicited direct mail. This will lead to more mutually beneficial relationships between marketer and consumer, and will probably significantly alleviate privacy concerns among consumers and legislators, which will clearly be beneficial for the industry.

Findings from a study by Evans *et al* (1995:6) found that 67 per cent of respondents do not consider that direct communication provides information; 47 per cent consider direct marketing to be an invasion of their privacy; and 76 per cent consider direct mail to be unethical. Although database marketing has proved to be very effective, there are problems, such as annoying solicitations, privacy concerns, misuse of information and inaccurate information. Privacy is an increasingly thorny issue in the modern age when personal information is readily accessed and used by corporations. It is the above- mentioned issues as identified by the study from Evans *et al* (1995: 6) that may decrease consumers' willingness to participate in direct marketing initiatives, causing retailers to be hesitant to adopt these techniques.

Given the potential problems associated with store-based retailing, direct mail represents a shopping alternative that can offer consumers more convenience with fewer problems. Consumers increasingly want more control of the purchasing process, and direct marketing is by definition an empowering process. Consumers prefer to order the desired

products and services from the comfort of their own homes or offices. Unfortunately, retailers who do not understand the importance of empowerment have made direct purchasing as time-consuming as going to the store. Long delays for product delivery and employees who do not suggest and explain the product offering serve to lead retailers in the wrong direction (Feinberg & Eastlick, 1997:260).

5.   IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

It is always exciting to try to predict the future of business, especially in a dynamic field such as retailing. Successful retailing is defined by change. Only those who are able to change to meet constantly changing consumer demands will survive. Retailers who add direct mail to their marketing communication strategy will have quicker and easier access to consumers (they do not have to wait for the consumer to visit them, but can visit the consumer). It is important that the benefits of direct mail should be communicated to retailers. Technology will facilitate direct marketing to individual customers, and both store-based and direct marketers will be competing for this direct link to the consumer. Technology will permit any retailer to provide empowering and individualised, mass-market products and services at competitive prices. The question is whether retailers will be able to adopt these changes and opportunities proactively (Feinberg & Eastlick, 1997:258).

This study has explored basic retailer attitudes towards direct mail. The empirical results indicate that retailers who responded with a "no" to using direct marketing in their marketing strategies are those who have higher rankings to the statements on the Likert scales. Perhaps this indicates the core purpose of this study. Retailers who have a negative attitude towards direct marketing are those who do not make use of direct marketing or implement direct mail. What many companies apparently fail to realise is that they have been using direct marketing techniques to some extent in the past, but have just given the process another name. For example, sending out an account accompanied by an advert is a direct marketing technique. Direct mail as a communication vehicle within direct marketing has been in existence for longer than organisations seem to realise. The difference today, though, is technology. Technology has changed the way in which direct marketing media are used, making direct mail more attractive to both consumers and retailers. Retailers can, for example, target customers more effectively through more accurate segmentation options provided by enhanced database technology (Marketing Mix, 1999:10).

The present study has certain shortcomings that need to be kept in mind. The low response rate is a limitation. Although various measures were adopted to ensure a higher response rate, the result was still unsatisfactory. The number of usable questionnaires was however sufficient for statistical analysis and the drawing of useful

conclusions. The exploratory nature of the research reflects only surface level attitudes and perceptions of retailers. Further in-depth attitudes and perception measurements are thus needed for a clearer understanding. In spite of its limitations, the study at least serves as a useful basis for recommending future research. Direct marketing is growing at unprecedented rates, yet relatively little is known about customer satisfaction with this method of service delivery. The questions that need to be addressed include the level of customer satisfaction with direct mail as a mode of interacting with a retailer, attributes that are appreciated by customers and characteristics that customers find irritating (Bennington *et al*, 2000:165).

For future research on this subject, it is recommended that the study should focus more on industry-specific matters, as there could be differences in the attitudes towards direct mail and the use of direct mail according to different retail sectors. The ease of customer access is fast emerging as a critical element of a global marketing strategy. In the not-too-distant future, customers may want to deal preferentially with those companies that are deemed to be the most accessible (Anton, 2000:123). Another point of focus could be the diverse cultures within South Africa. This is a topic that could also be examined to see whether there is a difference in the level of acceptance of direct mail, or direct marketing in general, according to different cultural groups. This study could be done in both the consumer market and the business-to-business market. Finally, advances in technology have brought forth new forms of direct marketing, such as e-mail and direct marketing over the Internet. This is an area in urgent need of research.

6.   CONCLUSION

Marketing to customers has become an increasingly complex task. Today's consumer has less leisure time for shopping, is more educated, more sceptical of advertising and less brand loyal than ever before. Retailers should therefore consider adapting their approach to reach consumers directly. Mass advertising has lost its dominance, as the media becomes more cluttered and differentiation among product offerings becomes less clear. Notwithstanding the limitations identified and some recommendations for further research, the present study has indicated that there are different attitudes among retailers towards direct mail as a communication medium, thereby influencing the use thereof. Direct marketing, and more specifically direct mail, has a definite role to play in the retail marketing strategy, and retailers should be educated on the advantages that direct mail can hold for them and their customers alike.

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Humour effects in South African advertising: "Not so funny"

ABSTRACT

This paper develops the idea of humour as a multidimensional construct and attempts to examine its effects when used as a strategy of advertising. A conceptualisation of humour based on previous research is presented. The humour taxonomy is used to categorise a sample of advertisements appearing on South African television between 1994 and 1996. The content analysis is measured for its advertising effects by correlating the types with the noting and liking scores of South African audiences. The results confirm that different types of humour generate different advertising effects. The implications for practitioners and for researchers are explored.

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1.   INTRODUCTION

The use of humour in advertising is not a new area of research. Numerous efforts have been made to determine the effects humour might have on an advertisement's overall effectiveness. The findings, with regard to the effectiveness of humour used in advertising, are inconclusive in most cases. Based on the suggestions and findings of Speck (1987, 1991), this paper proposes that one of the reasons for the disagreement in research findings is the way in which humour has been defined and conceptualised in the research. Humour is most often treated as a unidimensional construct, such that findings about one humorous advertisement are thought to apply to all other humorous advertisements.

Generalisations can however be dangerous as the question of different types of humour is posed and their effects on an advertisement's level of effectiveness are questioned. Speck (1987) was the first to suggest and test this idea. His research not only identified different types of humour, but also noted that these different types of humour were associated with different effects when used in advertising. The implications of these findings are that researchers cannot gain true insight into the effective use of humour without accounting for the different types of humour. More significantly, without taking into consideration the fact that there may be different types of humour, advertisers could well be using humour incorrectly.

This paper proposes that there are different types of humour, and that the different humour types will have different effects when used in advertising.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The objectives of this research were to address the issue of different humour types and investigate their effects in advertising. The research was conducted in two stages. In order to test for differences in humour type effects, the different humour types had to be identified. The first stage of the research therefore involved the development and testing of a taxonomy of humour. Once developed, this humour taxonomy was used to separate humorous advertisements into categories based on the humour types they represented. The advertisements used comprised a sample of actual television advertisements flighted in South Africa. The second stage of the research involved the search for, and analysis of, differences in the effects of humour types. Measures of effectiveness comprised the well-accepted scores of noting and liking provided by Impact Information (Pty) Ltd.

The primary objective of the research was therefore to test the proposition that different types of humour will have different effects when used in advertising. A secondary
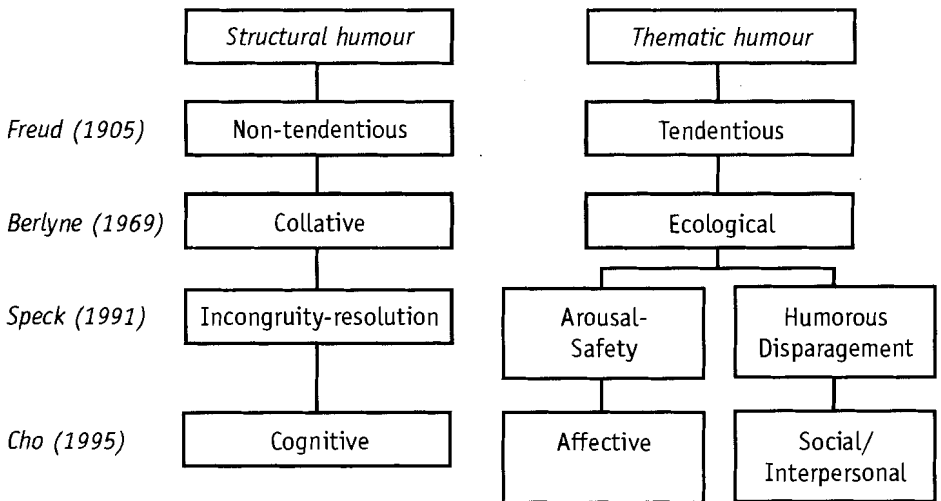
objective was to make suggestions about which types of humour might be most effective when used in advertising. As the research attempts theory development and testing, no initial hypotheses were made about the effectiveness of individual humour types.

3. HUMOUR TYPES

Most research efforts thus far have treated humour as a unidimensional construct. Speck (1991) argues, however that humour is in fact multidimensional. It was in 1987 that Speck first suggested and tested the idea that there were different humour types and that they might have different effects in an advertising message. Having conducted a review of the research on humour, Weinberger and Gulas (1992) recommended that research be undertaken to determine the effects of humour types on communication goals. A general understanding of humour might lead one to formulate a taxonomy of humour based on the techniques that may be associated with humour, such as slapstick, satire, and puns. These (slapstick, satire, etc) may however be described more accurately as expressions of humour rather than types. Moreover, while it may intuitively be appealing to focus on these expressions, research conducted by Cho (1995) identified 32 different "executional types", making the development of such a taxonomy of expressions difficult and cumbersome. In addition, these "executional types" are too narrow in definition to be of practical use. A more useful definition would be to focus on the underlying mechanisms that create humour. A useful way of conceptualising the difference would be to consider "executional types" as the things we laugh at, whereas "mechanisms" are the underlying processes that make what we laugh at funny. This research thus defines "types" as the mechanisms that the advertisement uses to create humour.

A large amount of research has been undertaken to develop some sort of defining scheme of humour. Some of these efforts have been presented as taxonomies. Early researchers such as Freud (1902) and Berlyne (1969) identified humour as comprising two types. These were essentially the cognitive type and the affective type. The dimensions employed by previous authors are best depicted in Figure1.

Figure 1: Humour schemes from previous research

	Structural humour	Thematic humour	
Freud (1905)	Non-tendentious	Tendentious	
Berlyne (1969)	Collative	Ecological	
Speck (1991)	Incongruity-resolution	Arousal-Safety	Humorous Disparagement
Cho (1995)	Cognitive	Affective	Social/ Interpersonal

Note: The vertical lines demonstrate the same type of humour used by different titles.

Based on the knowledge to date, three underlying mechanisms of humour may be identified. They are: the cognitive, the affective and the disparagement mechanisms.

3.1   The cognitive mechanism

The cognitive type of humour focuses on cognitive processing. Literature points to the use of incongruous stimuli to create the humour. This mechanism stems from the structural type, which explains humour as resulting from the presentation of various levels of contrasts so that an event or situation is perceived to be funny because it is incongruent or different to the normal expectation (Nerhardt, 1976). The development of the theory suggests that the presentation of discrepant or incongruous stimuli may be a necessary but not sufficient condition to elicit a humourous response. This idea was advanced independently by Jones (1970), Schultz (1972) and Suls (1972). The situation may require the resolution of the incongruity. This can happen with what one confronts in a cartoon or a punchline, for example. These may in themselves not be funny but become so when the recipient makes some sense of them by connecting them to some earlier information. As Suls (1972) suggests, the individual must be able to find the "rule" that makes the incongruous element fit in with the rest to make it funny. While there is no conclusion from previous research on the necessity of the resolution, there seems to be general agreement among authors that some form of incongruity, unexpectedness or surprise is important in creating humour.

3.2   The affective mechanism

The affective mechanism uses emotion to create humour. This has been explained by three theories. The first is the Release Theory that explains that laughter is a way of release from tension (Freud,1905 and Zillman,1983). The second theory that explains this mechanism is Berlyne's Arousal Theory (1969, 1972). Increased arousal from a stimulus is associated with increased pleasure. If the humorous element in the message increases arousal, the pleasure associated with the response will be greater. The third theory explaining the use of emotion is called the Salience Theory of humour. Goldstien, Suls and Anthony (1972) suggest that the salience or relevance of a particular theme is important in eliciting a humorous response. This type of humour generally represents some everyday little victory or mishap in a humorous way. It is commonly referred to in practice as the use of a "slice of life". Literature points to three important themes associated with the affective mechanism. They are sexual, aggression and anxiety. This research therefore uses these themes to develop sub- categories of the affective type for this research.

3.3   The disparagement mechanism

Disparagement refers to the presentation of a message, which belittles, demeans, humiliates or victimises others. This type uses the affective mechanism as it relies on emotion. It is however treated as a separate type in literature because it is proposed that disparagement could have negative effects in advertising. Several theories have been advanced to explain why much humour is focused on the debasing of others. The more prominent theories are: the Superiority Theory (Hobbes, 1968) which indicates that the infirmities of others constitute the principal source of laughter and mirth. This happens through the favourable comparison of oneself to others. Dispositional Theories of humour (Wolff *et al.*, 1934, La Fave 1961, 1972; Zillman & Cantor, 1972) suggest that the success of the message in eliciting humour depends on the disposition of the viewer to the "victim". Thus, misfortunes and infirmities are seen to be funnier when they are associated with people who are disliked than with those who are liked. The Freudian Theory of Disparagement humour (Freud, 1905) classed this type of humour as allowing for the release of hostile or aggressive impulses. The disparagement type is further divided into two categories: Disparagement/Negative humour and Disparagement/Neutral humour.

4. HUMOUR TAXONOMY

The mechanisms identified from previous research are operationalised in a taxonomy for this study. While the cognitive mechanism can work on its own to produce a humorous response, the affective and disparagement mechanisms can only work with the appropriate cognitive processes. Wicker *et al.* (1981) point this out in their study. The taxonomy developed for this study therefore comprises:
● cognitive only humour
● cognitive affective
● cognitive disparagement

Moreover, it is possible that all three mechanisms can operate together to create humour. Speck (1991) noted this, and this taxonomy accommodates the combination as a fourth type of humour, namely:
● cognitive/affective/disparagement

Research thus uses four categories of humour as presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The main humour types

H1	**Cognitive humour**
	This is humour that is created solely by the cognitive mechanism. It is recognised by the use of incongruity, surprise, and the discrepancy of stimuli in the ad.

H2	**Cognitive/Affective humour**
	This is humour that is created by emotional themes. This mechanism must act with the cognitive mechanism for humour to result.

H3	**Cognitive/Disparagement humour**
	This is humour that is created by disparaging persons or things. Here too the disparagement mechanism must act together with the cognitive mechanism for humour to result.

H4	**Cognitive/Affective/Disparagement humour**
	This is humour that is created by all three mechanisms. The ad will therefore have the necessary structural elements of incongruity, as

Note: The abbreviation H1 refers to Humour Type 1. H1-H4 will be used throughout the paper when discussing the four main humour categories.

Three of the main humour types may further be divided into sub-categories. Nine possible categories into which humorous advertisements can be placed are defined as presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Humour types and sub-categories

Main humour types	Sub-category abbreviations	Sub-category definitions
Cognitive	C	Humour based on the cognitive mechanism.
Cognitive Affective	C/A/M	Cognitive/Affective humour that uses motivational themes such as sex and anxiety.
	C/A/S	Cognitive/Affective humour that uses slice-of-life themes to create humour.
Cognitive Disparagement	C/D/Ng	Cognitive/Disparagement humour that is based on negative disparagement.
	C/D/Ne	Cognitive/Disparagement humour that is based on neutral disparagement.
Cognitive Affective Disparagement	C/M/Ng	Cognitive/Affective/Disparagement humour that uses motivational themes and negative disparagement.
	C/S/Ng	Cognitive/Affective/Disparagement humour that uses slice-of-life themes and negative disparagement.

As discussed above, the purpose of developing a taxonomy of humour was to test the proposition that humour must be treated as a multidimensional construct when examining its effects in advertising.

5.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in two stages. The first part comprised the identification of different types of humour. This involved the categorisation of the advertisements into the taxonomy through content analysis. The second stage involved the search for differences based on differences in the advertisement's liking and noting scores.

5.1   Data collection: Sampling and content analysis

The identification of these humour types was based on the humorous taxonomy developed above. The adverts that were classified came from a stratified random sample of television advertisements that appeared on South African television in the period from April 1994 to July 1996, obtained from Impact Information. Impact Information rates all new advertisements for their noting and liking within three weeks of the flighting of the advertisements. From a sample of approximately 2000 advertisements, all the advertisements that appeared to have humorous intent were identified, creating a population sample of 274 advertisements. Humorous intent was identified by using the procedure undertaken by Weinberger & Spotts in their 1989 study. In this way, the subjectivity involved in the perception of humour was eliminated. A random sample of 120 advertisements (20 pre-test advertisements and 100 for the study) was drawn from the 274 for the study. A content analysis of the 100 advertisements was undertaken to place them in categories representing different humour types. The procedure for content analysis recommended by Kolbe and Burnett (1991) was followed. The content analysis was undertaken by one of the authors and one other independent judge. Time and cost constraints prevented the authors from employing independent judges for the analysis. Interjudge reliability could however be assessed. The pilot study produced an unacceptable 57% level of agreement =.70 on the reliability index of Perrault and Leigh (1988). The disagreement revealed definitional problems.   These were modified for the final coding. A reliability score of 87% = .91 was achieved.

5.2   Effectiveness of humour types

To compare humour types, a measurement of each advertisement's effectiveness was needed. A large amount of previous research has been conducted on the various measures of effectiveness (see Wienberger & Gulas, 1992 for a review of the research). For the purposes of this research, the effectiveness of the sample of advertisements was determined by their noting and liking scores provided by Impact Information. The noting scores represent the percentage of people (of those interviewed) who could correctly describe an advertisement once prompted. The liking score is a scale measurement from one to ten; with higher scores reflecting greater likeability. The liking scores are a composite score of all those who could describe the advertisement.

The data is collected through telephonic interviews with a random sample of individuals within three weeks of the launch of an advertisement. The advantage of using these scores is that they were obtained in the market.

Of the 120 advertisements selected for the study, Impact Information could provide liking and noting scores for 71 of them. These 71 advertisements comprised the sample population of this study. Once each advertisement had been placed into a humour category, the categories could be compared on their liking and noting scores. Mean liking and noting scores served as the basis for comparison. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) were employed. Significant differences were subjected to the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test. The results are presented below.

6.   RESULTS

Of the total population of 2 000 advertisements obtained from Impact International, 274 comprised advertisements with a humorous intention. This represents nearly 14% of the advertisements in the period. While this research is not intended to measure the incidence of humour in advertising, the score of nearly 14% seems to be within the range of the quoted figures. Research conducted in the United States claims the use of between 10 and 25% of advertisements. South Africa thus seems no different in the use of humour as a technique in advertising.

6.1   Category frequencies

An analysis of the frequencies of the different types of humour allows some comment. It appears that the cognitive (alone) type is the least used type of humour in South African advertising. The frequencies of use of the other three types are very similar. Upon examination of the sub-categories, it appears that the Cognitive/Affective/ Motivational seems to be in most frequent use. This is understandable since the use of emotion serves as an appropriate vehicle for the use of humour in real life. Table 1 reflects the frequencies.

Table 1: Category frequencies

Categories				
	H1 Cog	H2 Cog/Aff	H3 Cog/Disp	H4 Cog/Aff/Disp
Sample size	11	23	19	18
% of total	16	32	27	25
Sub-categories							
	Cog	C/A/M	C/A/S	C/D/Ng	C/D/Ne	C/M/N	C/S/Ng
Sample size	11	17	6	14	5	5	13
% of total	16	24	08	20	07	07	18
% of category	100	74	26	74	26	28	72

N=71 advertisements

6.2   Liking and noting scores

Within the sample, the highest score achieved for liking (8.6) was for the "Cremora Fedora" advertisement. The "most noted" advertisement was for Kentucky Fried Chicken. Advertisements that scored well on both noting and liking were: KFC, Pampers, KFC Max Rounder and Edgars.

The highest mean liking scores were achieved for H4 (7.1), which is the Cognitive/ Affective/Disparagement type of humour. This type refers to the combination of the use of incongruity, emotion and disparagement of the characters in the advertisement. Lowest scores were attained for H2, the use of Cognitive/Affective humour. The results also show that advertisements from the Cognitive/Disparagement type are less-liked (6.7) than when they (the disparagement) are combined with emotion.

Interestingly though, 25% of the sample noted (that is, could remember the advertisement once prompted) H3 advertisements. This type refers to Cognitive/ Disparagement humour. The least noted (15%) of the humorous advertisements were of type H1, that is those that employed the cognitive mechanism alone.

6.3   Differences in humour types

Four separate ANOVAs were conducted. First, ANOVAs for the liking and noting means of the four main categories were conducted to gain an overall view of the humour type differences. To gain further insight, ANOVAs for the liking and noting means of the 7 sub-categories were conducted.

6.3.1 Liking Results

Table 2 illustrates the results of the various ANOVAs conducted. The ANOVA for the means of the liking scores showed that significant differences did exist ($F = 2.690$, 3/ 67 d.f, $p < 0.1$). To determine the exact nature of these differences, a Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was undertaken. H4 (that is the combination type) was found to be significantly greater than both H1 and H2. H3 was not significantly different to any of the other categories. Thus, from the evidence presented, it may be concluded that humour that is created by all three mechanisms produces significantly greater liking scores compared to advertisements containing humour that is created by either the cognitive mechanism or the affective mechanism alone. This is presented in Figure 4, in which the arrows reflect the types for which there are significant differences.

Table 2: Summary of ANOVA results - Four groups

Groups	F ratio	df	Probability
4 groups (liking)	2.690	3/67	0.05*
4 groups (noting)	1.031	3/67	0.3845 ns

* Difference in means is significant at 90% confidence level.
ns: no significant difference in means

Figure 4: Liking mean scores and ANOVA results (4 categories)
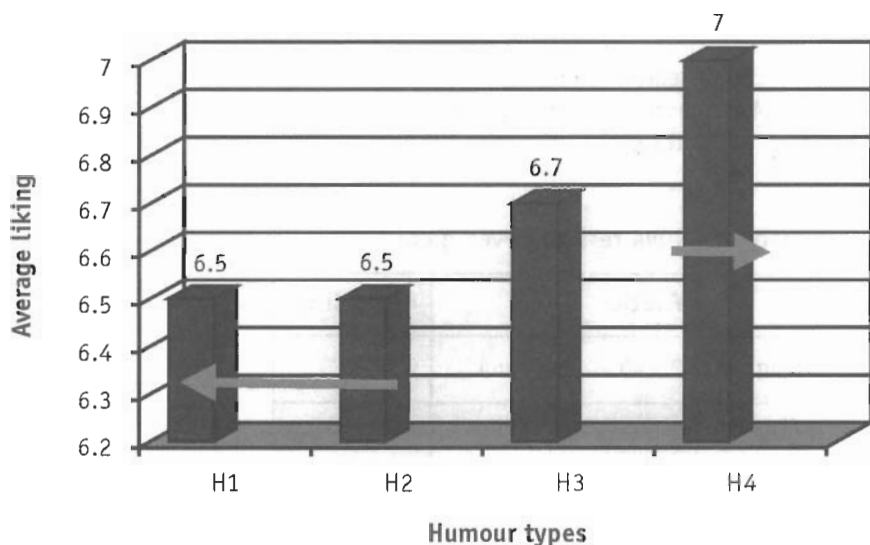
6.3.2 *Noting Results*
No significant difference was found between humour types based on the means of their noting scores (F = 1.031, 3/67 d.f, p > 0.1).

The initial conclusion, at least for liking scores, is that there are differences in effect for different humour types. It would appear then that not all humour is created equally. To provide further insight, the sub-categories of humour are examined for differences in their means.

6.4 Differences in humour sub-categories

Liking and noting scores are used to ascertain whether differences exist in the sub-categories of humour. Table 3 below shows the summary statistics of the liking and noting scores for the 7 humour categories. The mean liking and noting scores, and the results of the ANOVAs are illustrated graphically in Figures 5 and 6.

6.4.1 *Liking Results*
As Table 3 shows, significant differences were found to exist in the mean liking scores (F = 2.140, 6/64 d.f., p < 0.1). The LSD test revealed that C/D/Ne (cognitive disparagement based on neutral disparagement) and C/S/Ng (cognitive/affective disparagement using slice-of-life with negative disparagement) were found to be
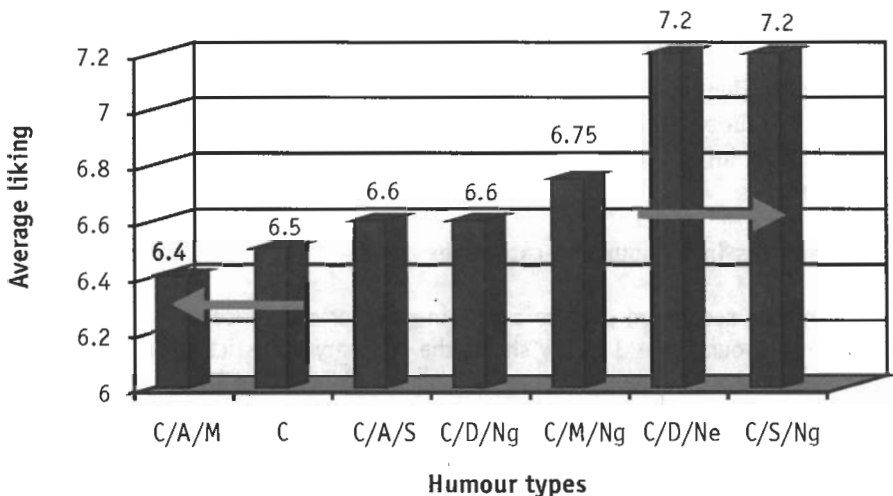
significantly greater than C/A/M (cognitive/affective that uses motivational themes) and C (cognitive alone). This indicates that neutral disparagement and slice-of-life themes used with negative disparagement performed significantly better than cognitive humour and affective themes. (Sample advertisements in these categories included: Cremora, Jordan Magic Toothbrush; Milky Lane, Liqui Fruit; Visa and Yellow Pages). The arrows in Figure 5 illustrate this. None of the other categories were found to be significantly different.

Table 3: Summary of ANOVA results: Seven groups

Groups	F ratio	df	Probability
7 groups (liking)	2.140	6/64	0.0606*
7 groups (noting)	2.003	6/64	0.792*

 * Difference in means is significant at 90% confidence level.

**Figure 5: Liking mean scores and ANOVA results (7 categories)**

6.4.2 *Noting Results*
Here again significant differences were found (F = 2.003, 6/64 d.f., p < 0.1). The LSD test revealed that C/S/Ng (cognitive/affective disparagement using slice-of-life with

negative disparagement) again, C/D/Ne (cognitive disparagement based on neutral disparagement), and C/A/S (cognitive/affective that uses slice-of-life themes) are significantly greater than C/M/Ng, C and C/A/M (cognitive/affective that uses motivational themes). Interestingly, here we see that slice-of-life themes perform better than motivational themes in terms of noting. Again neutral disparagement scores significantly higher than other categories of humour. This is illustrated in Figure 6 by the arrows. Again C/D/Ng is not significantly different to either subset of mean scores.

Figure 6: Noting mean scores and ANOVA results (7 categories)
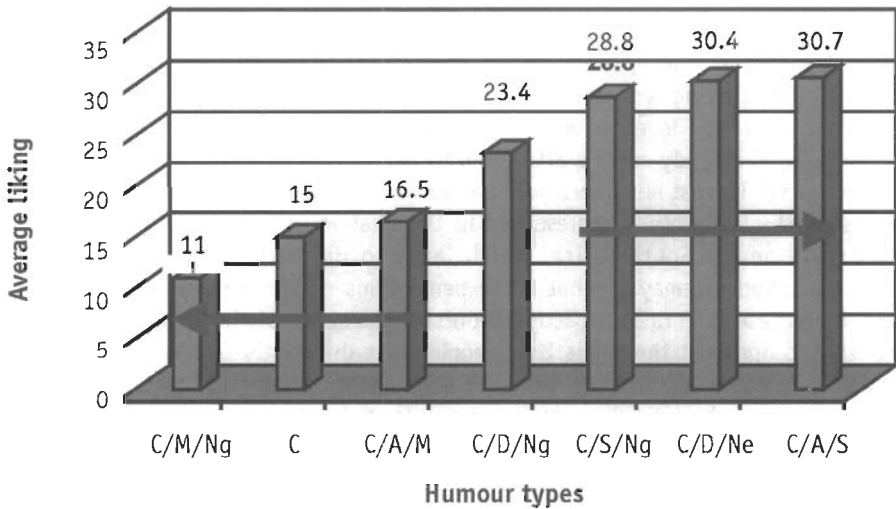
From the results presented above, it may be concluded that different humour types will have different effects in advertising. This means of course that practice and research based on a general unidimensional construct of humour will be limited in its usefulness. Advertisers must be aware that humour is multidimensional and care must be taken with the type of humour used. The findings of this study add support to Speck's (1987, 1991) suggestion that researchers and advertisers must treat humour as a multidimensional construct. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Cho (1995) found that cognitive humour had a substantial positive impact on the advertisement's level of perceived humour. We note though that, in this paper, cognitive humour scored significantly lower than other types of humour on both liking and noting scores. One may speculate that South African consumers do not enjoy serious humour that requires cognitive processing.

7.   IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The tests conducted on the humour type categories identified those humour types that performed particularly well in terms of both noting and liking. While this is an exploratory study, of a type not previously examined in South Africa, the results provide some insight into the use of humour in advertising. The findings have consequences for the practice of advertising. The implications of the findings for each category are discussed below.

7.1   Cognitive humour (H1)

Cognitive humour was found to perform poorly on both liking and noting. In this category, the highest noting levels were achieved for Schweppes (28%) with a liking score of 6.4. This finding is somewhat surprising, given the fact that cognitive humour is associated with high levels of perceived humour in the United States (Cho, 1995). The findings of this study may be attributed to two factors, the first of which may be audience related. It must be understood that South African audiences are characterised by diversity. This diversity is represented in the relative importance of the oral and written traditions in South Africa, which leads to different perceptions of what constitutes humour. It may be that these perceptions of humour are the product of culture. How these orientations occur fall outside the scope of the suggestion of this study. What is apparent though is that people react differently to different types of humour. It is therefore possible that the respondents from whom the noting and liking scores were obtained were of the group that does not appreciate the use of cognitive humour. The second factor is one that is well documented in literature on consumer behaviour, and that is of the medium of television being a low involvement medium. This suggests passive viewing on the part of the consumer. Passive viewing will not correlate with the requirement of cognitive processing of the advertisement. Thus, audiences who are exposed to cognitive humour in advertisements may not make the effort to process the advertisement. This would result in the low noting and liking scores. Bearing these factors in mind, advertisers may want to examine the audience profile before employing cognitive humour. Such use of humour focused on a carefully defined segment of the market may prove successful. In such cases, the use of a generalised measure of effectiveness will not work. If this is not done, advertisers are advised to avoid using the cognitive mechanism of humour. Perhaps South African advertisers know this intuitively as this category (H1) was represented in only 16% of the total advertisements of the sample used for this study.

7.2   Cognitive Affective humour (H2)

The affective mechanism utilised two distinct types of themes to create humour. They

were motivational themes and slice-of-life themes. Motivational themes (those that use sex or anxiety, for example) were found to perform poorly on both noting and liking. (Sample advertisements here included Status and Just Juice). These findings indicate that the use of sexual or anxiety-inducing themes should be avoided. Slice-of-life themes performed much better than motivational themes. (Sample advertisements included Illovo and Permanent Bank). These themes performed very well on their noting scores. On liking, the results were average in that they were neither significantly greater nor worse than any other humour type. The implication for practice is to use slice-of-life themes if humour is going to be thematic. The reason/s for the better performance of the slice-of-life themes is not certain. One suggestion is that slice-of-life themes are more liked and remembered because of their familiarity with viewers. It may also be that because motivational humour often deals with anxiety, it is more likely to score lower on both liking and noting. This type of humour needs the careful attention of creative practitioners since on examining the category frequencies, it becomes apparent that this type (H2) is the most frequently used. Moreover, the C/A/M (cognitive/affective/motivational) is surprisingly the most frequently used type in its category. This type of humour with its effects is a topic that could benefit from further research.

7.3   Disparagement humour (H3)

On the surface it appears that neutral disparagement is the best for generating both noting and liking. While this is intuitively appealing, given the inoffensive nature of this type of humour, two items for consideration are cautioned. First, that neutral disparagement was not found to be significantly greater than negative disparagement. The second consideration is that the neutral disparagement category was represented by only 5 sample advertisements, and one of these had a noting score of 80. If this very popular advertisement (the KFC advertisement) with the noting score of 80 is excluded, then the mean noting score for neutral disparagement humour is only 18. All that can be said conclusively with regard to neutral disparagement is that it significantly outperformed cognitive and cognitive/affective humour in generating liking. Negative disparagement was found to be an average performer in that the scores were not significantly higher or lower than for any other humour type. Cho's findings (1995) were that disparagement has a negative impact on perceived humour. The liking and noting scores for disparagement do not seem to be affected in the same way in South Africa. Although it was not the highest scoring humour category, it certainly did not have a negative effect. Thus, disparagement may be used quite safely but perhaps more effectively when it is in a combined theme. Here too, South African practitioners need to pay attention, as this is the second-most used type of humour (27% of the sample advertisements).

7.4 Cognitive/Affective/Disparagement humour (H4)

When looking at this type of humour again, slice-of-life themes perform better than motivational themes. (Sample advertisements here include Caltex and TV Bar). Conclusions are a little more difficult to make for this category, given the fact that one is unable to determine how much of the liking or noting score is attributable to each humour mechanism. However, the fact that the cognitive mechanism performed poorly and that the negative disparagement mechanism was only an average performer seems to indicate that the results in this humour category are related to the type of affective theme employed. Motivational themes again performed poorly on noting and only average on liking, while slice-of-life themes performed very well in creating both noting and liking.

The recurring positive finding for the slice-of-life theme was further tested. All advertisements with motivational themes were compared to all advertisements with slice-of-life themes. The 19 advertisements with slice-of-life themes significantly outperformed the 22 advertisements on both the noting (p=0.029) and the liking (p=0.0006) scores. It is again postulated that this result is due to the salience of this theme.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

This research indicates that different types of humour can be recognised. The typology developed in this study was an eclectic one based on previous research. The original division of nine categories was refined into seven workable categories. The typology could be subjected to further refinement. Furthermore, research needs to be undertaken to develop a procedure of categorisation.

Another area of research interest would be to determine the types of humour most often used by South African advertisers. This study indicates that 47% of the advertisements used humour types that performed poorly in creating noting and liking. This would be of obvious interest to practitioners of advertising.

The overriding finding of this research is that humour is a multidimensional construct with different types of humour generating different advertising effects. While this was an exploratory study, the results confirm that the different types of humour employed in a sample of South African advertising resulted in different scores of noting and liking when these are used as criteria for advertising effectiveness. It is important for this research to be replicated on a larger scale in order to make generalisations about the results. Researchers should ideally use actual advertisements as was done in this study, instead of laboratory advertisements as is commonly reported in literature.

Further testing that includes other measures of advertising effectiveness needs to be undertaken. This study only tested two measures, that of noting and liking. It may be that while slice-of-life humour is good at increasing the liking and noting of an advertisement, it is not very effective at persuading viewers to purchase a product. While there is a large body of research investigating effectiveness (see Weinberger & Gulas, 1992) different humour types should be correlated with the different effects.

It may also be interesting to examine the results of different types of humour based on the brand managers' definition of the objectives of the advertising campaign. It may, for example, be that the brand manager is aware of the different effects and decides that a particular advertising campaign should be aimed at generating awareness only. The results of the different types in generating awareness will then become important.

Another area that needs to be examined is the level of humour that the different humour types represent. Most studies that focus on humour test only one humour manipulation and determine if the advertisement should be used based on its level of perceived humour. It may be that the level of perceived humour is not as important as the type of humour being used. Cho (1995) found that cognitive humour was positively related to the level of perceived humour, while the findings of this research suggest that it is the worst humour type to use to create liking and noting. A good follow-up study to this one would be to classify a sample of actual television advertisements into humour types, measure the advertisement's perceived humour, and then to test the relationship of humour type, perceived humour and communication effect.

Perhaps the most important consequence of this study and a suggestion for further research is to incorporate audience-related factors into the measurement of humour types. It is intuitively suggested that people respond differently to different types of humour. Demographic and/or psychographic factors may be used to determine an "orientation to humour", which may then be correlated with communication effects. Previous research in this regard (Madden and Weinberger 1982; 1984; Alden *et al.* 1993) used humour as a unidimensional construct.

Furthermore, programming context needs assessment. Does the programming content dictate which humour types will be more effective? The programming research focused on general humour.

The number of suggestions for further research proves the inadequacy of our knowledge and the risks involved in using humour unadvisedly as a technique in advertising. The contingencies affecting the processing and final effects could do with even more research.

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Appendix 1
Sample Advertisements

Sample No	Advertisement Name	Ad Type
2	Disprin (dog)	C/A/M
3	Milky Lane	C/D/Ng
11	Liqui Fruit	C/D/Ng
13	Cremora Fedora	C/D/Ne
17	Jordan Magic Toothbrush	C/S/Ne
20	TV Bar	C/S/Ng
21	MTN	C/D/Ng
23	Toyota Camry	C/D/Ng
28	Caltex	C/M/Ng
29	Auto Page Budget Plan	C
32	Tixylix	C/S/Ng
34	Vita Plus	C/A/M
35	Disprin	C/S/Ng
45	Amstel	C
51	Jumping Jack Popcorn	C/A/M
60	BMW convertible	C/A/M
61	Status	C/A/M
62	Just Juice	C/A/M
65	Old Mutual	C/M/Ng
67	Wispeco	C/A/M
70	Colgate Plax	C/D/Ng
71	Airoma	C/M/Ng
72	Illovo	C/A/S
75	Sprite	C/D/Ng
78	Comair	C/D/Ng

Sample No	Advertisement Name	Ad Type
79	Ultramel Yoghurt	C/D/Ng
81	Fuji Film	C
85	Napolina	C/S/Ng
93	Standard Bank Auto	C/S/Ng
99	Duracell	C
105	Cadbury Crunchie	C/D/Ne
112	Eno	C
115	Sea Harvest	C/S/Ng
122	Maggie 2 minute Noodles	C/A/S
124	Tub Noodles	C/D/Ng
131	Shoprite Checkers	C/S/Ng
132	Visa	C/A/M
140	Permanent bank	C/A/S
147	Eveready Power Plus	C/M/Ng
148	Yellow Pages	C/A/M
158	KFC	C/D/Ne
161	Pampers	C/A/S
164	IBM	C
165	Sanlam Savings Plan	C/S/Ne
167	Finesse	C/A/M
170	Loving Touch	C
174	Canola	C/D/Ng
176	Prestasi Challenge	C/D/Ne
178	Benson and Hedges	C/A/M
180	Defy	C/S/Ng
181	Tanga	C/A/M
183	Ford Bantam	C
185	Hi Tech	C/D/Ng
187	Beepa	C/D/Ng
189	Steers	C/A/M
190	Old Mutual	C/A/S
192	Bisto	C/D/Ng
193	Eno	C/D/Ne

Sample No	Advertisement Name	Ad Type
202	Castle Lite	C/A/M
205	Schweppes	C
216	Eskom Electroserve	C
225	Bells	C/D/Ng
226	KFC	C/S/Ng
239	Commercial Union	C/A/S
243	KFC Max Rounder	C/S/Ng
249	Ithuba	C/A/M
254	Musica	C/M/Ng
256	Visa Master Card	C/S/Ng
258	Edgars	C/A/M
262	SABC Showmbizo	C/A/M
273	Fresca	C

The Last Word

C. Durand

Game, set and message:
The growing prominence of sport
as a communication product

Sport is just not cricket any more. Seems like just yesterday the only way we Johannesburg folk could follow a nail-biting international rugby test happening at Newlands in Cape Town was by listening to Gerhard Viviers' commentary on Afrikaans radio. I remember my grandfather sitting on the stoep, a map of the playing field drawn on a large sheet of paper on his lap, plotting team moves, attacks, defences and scores, as Gerhard's staccato commentary poured through the speakers of an old Grundig medium wave receiver next to him; definitely a case of what Marshall Mcluhan would call 'a very cool medium'.

In the days before mass media, the sports message sent to those absent from the action on the field contained little else of fact other than a score, and a winner, and the message reached the receiver a day, a week or a month later. Messages then gradually expanded to include match details and perhaps a grainy photograph or two as newspapers started reporting on sport. Radio revolutionised sport in that it provided the impetus for the massification of sport as teams and individuals developed followings, and the concept of 'the fan' was born. Radio truly took sports matches beyond the stadium gates for the first time.

Charl Durand heads up information and research at the South African Sports Commission, an organisation providing training, development, and information services to the sporting community.

Since then the development of electronic communication technologies has changed the way in which sport is experienced in our modern, information-savvy world. Sport's unique mix of factual information, visual drama and story-telling possibilities provides an ideal content for today's plethora of high speed, high density communication media. You can watch sport on TV, listen to it on the radio, play the game on Playstation, and research and interact with the players on the Internet. You can even BECOME a player in this fantasy, give yourself custom capabilities, and pick your team mates to compete in a fantasy world. Here the distinction between live sport with flesh and blood participants, and that generated by our imagination and personified in an electronic medium is becoming increasingly blurred.

In modern day telecommunications, sport is one of the major content topics, not only in itself, but also as a major generator of conversation around games and personalities. During large sporting events, such as the Olympics and major soccer internationals, tens of thousands of SMS messages are sent during intervals and straight after the match finish. Cell service providers regularly ship in extra hardware to areas where sporting events are taking place, such as the Comrades marathon, to avoid carrier bottlenecks.

The width, breadth and speed of the sports message increased gradually as sport moved from a singular, fixed time-space event to a process increasingly freed from the constraints of time and geographical location. Today the sports message stretches from horizon to horizon, penetrating sectors of life as diverse as fashion, international politics and medicine. Moreover, it reaches everywhere in the blink of an eye as events are transmitted live to billions of viewers in every corner of the globe.

The growth and pervasiveness of sports communication is manifesting itself in various ways that will have a detrimental effect in the way we experience sport in future.

The birth and phenomenal growth of sport-as-electronic-message has resulted in stadiums that remain empty while couch potatoes stay at home to watch the match on television. Others congregate in the more comfortable and often enhanced ambience of sports bars where they can probably sit closer to the action taking place on large format television screens than they would in a stadium that holds 60 000 spectators. Imagine how much you can drink before you have spent a R250 rugby match ticket.

Furthermore, you are fed added value — instant replays, expert commentary by ex-players and on-screen statistics. In future, viewers will be able to select their own camera angles, instant replays and many other customisable features. The electronic message content has a density and malleability with which no live sports experience can compete. And in an information-frenzied society heading increasingly for what

sociologist Manuel Castells refers to as real virtuality, meaning the anywhere-anytime experience, only purists are prepared to brave queues, bad weather and foul junk food to watch an in-the-flesh match.

It is therefore also the added value attached to sports communication that makes it popular and has caused sporting event audiences to drop. This value expresses itself both as a social reward, that is, selecting where you want to watch or experience sport and with whom. Further value is added through the additional amount of information that the medium can carry. Live sport therefore becomes a niche market for die-hard fans or people without access to rich channels such as television and the Internet.

It is the sponsors in particular who are predicting that sporting events will in future change dramatically because of this trend. Huge sports stadiums are no longer being built (except to house large events like the Olympic Games), and where this is taking place, they have built-in features such as VIP lounges, large televised screens, and games and play rooms that extend the experience of watching the game on the field.

In future, we can expect more and more made-for-TV sporting events such as the MTN Gladiators show, where the rationale behind the event is not to attract flesh and blood audiences but to provide maximum 'televisable' content that will attract television viewers. To maximise the popularity of sport in this sense, this may even mean the bending of game rules. The tie-breaker in tennis was invented specifically for this reason, to avoid drawn-out tennis sets, but rather bring them to a climatic finish without losing the attention of the viewers.

It may also lead to the invention of totally new types of sport suited to the visual requirements of 'good television'. Gladiators is also an example of the internationalisation of sport for TV, where international concepts are taken, syndicated and adapted for local television audiences. The same is happening in other areas of television, such as the local version of the UK-based Big Brother reality TV show on M-Net.

Sport is a profession today. The professionalising of sportsmanship and the conversion of sport from a just-for-fun activity into a highly competitive business has had a major effect on how sport is transmitted and received. Let's look at a prime example of this – the Olympic Games.

The Olympic Games personify, in one single event, the metamorphosis of sport from a physical activity among friends and communities to a golden egg-laying media goose. The Games started off during the peak of the Greek Empire as a religious festival, very much in keeping with the spirit of those times. When it was resurrected around the turn of the century, it was as a friendship-building exercise between nations, in other

words, a communication tool without the bells and whistles of telecommunications. The first broadcast of the Games took place in the thirties, but it was still an amateur event without much of a media profile until the early seventies. A conscious decision by the International Olympic Committee to commercialise the event was taken during that time, resulting in skyrocketing sponsorship income for the Games, particularly from television rights. The 1996 Olympics in Atlanta generated $3.5 billion for the IOC, proof of the trust that advertisers and media owners have that sport can provide a return on investment for them.

It is the prices of the media rights of an event, in particular that have increased, with the major American television networks forking out billions of dollars for the right to screen large events such as the Soccer World Cup. Without television, many of these events, in particular the Olympic Games, would probably be a shadow of their popular, modern-day version.

As mentioned before, sport has become internationalised, both on and off the field. It is primarily through advances in communication that international tournaments in sport have become as common as a friendly soccer match between two neighbourhoods. Fans are no longer geographically bound to one area. For instance, British soccer club Manchester United's familiar red colours are now flown in many cities outside their home town, thanks to their games becoming ubiquitous on television screens in pubs around the world. Soccer has, in particular, become a universal language shared by diverse cultures.

And if you are tired of being a spectator and fancy yourself as an international star, why not become a participant in the Olympic Games? Virtual communication technologies being developed now will enable you to compete in an Olympic Games where you can participate from the top of your own treadmill or gym bike, placed wherever you prefer in the world. Electronic monitors will record your performance and send it to a central system where it is integrated with data from your fellow competitors. You can then watch yourself on a television screen as you participate in a virtual arena. You will be able to monitor your own vital statistics against the other player during the race. You will hear the crowd roar as you head home in front of the pack.

These kinds of virtual experiences are already in place in other industries, as is the case in online stock trading. From anywhere in the world, it is possible to participate in stock trading on any of the world share markets, twenty four hours a day, in real time. Stock market simulations to help novices get used to the real thing are abundant. It is only a matter of time before these possibilities become available for a myriad of other experiences, including sport.

It is clear therefore that modern-day sport has largely become a tradeable communication product. The fact that Manchester United is listed on the London stock market, and that local soccer clubs such as Kaizer Chiefs are owned by listed companies points almost exclusively to their potential as television content and marketing impact. As the number of people with access to electronic communication in its myriad of forms expands, one can expect the trend to grow with sport being packaged in many forms, either as a consumer product, or as a vehicle for high- powered international financial deals. Expect flashier athletes, more popular and super rich teams, and sponsorship carpet bombing.

Not only has the game of sport become a message, but players themselves have become carriers of information content, messengers. Logos on caps, sleeves, shoes and socks mean that they have become (sometimes very expensive) purveyors of brand awareness, something that has become synonymous with their status as top athletes. Their earnings from endorsements and sponsorships reach astronomical figures and sometimes outstrip their play income. One can therefore say they are paid as much to communicate as for their abilities as star performers.

Today a sport and the players who participate in it are often reliant more on the peripheral information that can be generated through their appearances than the actual results or performances they render. Tennis star Anna Kournikova is yet to win a grand slam, but she is one of the most photographed tennis stars on the circuit, appearing in advertisements for exclusive articles such as watches and fashion ware, and generating many column centimetres on the celebrity pages of mass-circulation newspapers. Often, the difference between players becoming a legend and being remembered as merely a champion lies in the omniscience and impact of their media presence. This is particularly true in high profile, media-intensive sports such as soccer and tennis. This is why we remember someone as colourful as John Mcenroe, while most other Wimbledon winners are largely invisible.

The growth of sport as communication content packaged into tradeable products is part of a broader trend in society, namely the growing prominence of leisure in industrialised countries, and the commercialisation of that part of our lives. This prominence is fired by a number of factors, including the development of sophisticated electronic information networks that deliver interactive, customisable entertainment, on demand. Another factor is the major adaptation in the way we work. We work less hours and flex our work schedules, and when we down tools for the day, our free time is likely to include some form of entertainment in which we either participate or watch. Leisure has accordingly become one of the last frontiers of commercialisation in an age of declining manufacturing, a theme well described by author Jeremy Rifkin in his books The End of Work and The Age of Access. Therefore, the development path

that sport has been taking in the past two decades can be seen as a mirror of larger societal changes.

It is not only communication between sports players and their fans, mediated by an increasingly sophisticated mass media, that has changed sport. Within sports participation itself, there are major shifts taking place that even Danie Craven could never have foreseen.

The very practice of sport is being increasingly influenced by communication in the never-ending quest for records. On and off the field, the ability of an athlete to tap into a communication network that monitors and fine-tunes their actions and conditions is playing a growing role in the performance of sportspeople.

Training routines are becoming more sophisticated as wireless technologies allow trainers to have on-the-spot access to the vital statistics of athletes while they train. With more and more instantaneous parameter data at their disposal, the performance of an athlete can be experimented with and adapted to distil the ideal mix that will ensure a winning time, score or distance.

Enjoying the benefit of the innovations in communication available to both athletes and spectators implies that one has access to these technological means of communication, and the know-how to apply them. In terms of competitive international sport, one may well ask questions about fairness and a 'level playing field' between an athlete training within the most advanced scientific surrounds of an ivy league American university, and an athlete from a developing nation with little more than wits and good advice to go on.

In this sense sport is an accurate reflection of the growing shift in inequality in the world, which is taking place at present. Whereas the divide was previously mostly in terms of goods and products, the so-called haves and have-nots, it is becoming a digital divide, which is in essence the lack of access to networks driven by technology that provides both communication and access to information.

The debate also extends to communication within the sporting game itself. For instance, the role of the referees has changed in subtle yet dramatic terms with the introduction of large screen replays that help them make decisions in cases where there is doubt. There is also the discussion that asks whether athletes in certain sports should be allowed to wear earpieces to receive instructions from their coaches. In future, the inclusiveness of communication loops in sport will become more of an issue as technology advances and more potential implementations become apparent.

At the edge of science fiction, it is clear, there is the very real possibility of the convergence of the classic communication process of sender, channel and receiver. If you are able to compete in a sporting event from the comfort of your living room, using a channel that is an immersive experience, with an instantaneous feedback loop, where in this process do you end up? Where does the balance lie between knowing/not knowing, being there/being absent, watching/participating, and how much do we need to know to enhance our performances before it goes into a huge farcical tailspin? We have hardly begun to examine the philosophical impact of many of these questions. My prediction is that we may well in future see a totally different kind of Olympics with rules that would today have been totally inapplicable, but that became necessary because of the changes in the essence of human communication. New sports will be invented to fit in with the changes in communications technologies and behaviours. Rugby may in twenty years' time seem as archaic as jukskei today.

Sports performance has been transformed irrevocably by the advent of the information age that introduced communication possibilities that have changed the way we experience it. And there is no turning back. Once a record has been set, or a champion made, the challenge ratchets up a notch that will almost certainly only be reached by the introduction of more sophisticated technology, which includes improved communication of information vital to enhanced performance. And besides, our thirst for excitement and entertainment driven by access to stimulation demands this.

Sport is just not cricket any more, whether for the players or the spectators. It should be clearly now that sport, is mostly dictated by how sport is communicated and the changes that take place in the modes and technologies of communication. It is a trend that is irreversible, and one that will follow the further unfolding of the information age as we have come to know it.

Research forum

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

ARNOLDI-VAN DER WALT, S.E 2000. The evaluation of Ubuntu as an Afrocentric management (and) communication approach.

Ph.D. (Communication Management)
Promotor: Dr Gustav Puth
Co-promotor: Prof Ronél Rensburg

This study endeavours to formulate a basis for theory development by comparing Western, Japanese and African management theories and philosophies, enabling the researcher to juxtapose these with the core value system, Ubuntu. These theories and philosophies are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, but rather interrelated. Categories therefore support or compete with one another. In general, the comparative analysis was roughly grouped into dimensions based on macro-, socio-structural processes and those based on interpersonal processes. Although this dichotomy is a simplification of a range of views, it provided a parsimonious way to begin discussing issues of management communication. The broad aim of the study was to take the first steps in constructing a model that will, with further research, eventually result in a measurement instrument. The initial and perhaps most important contribution of the framework was to create an awareness among management of the differences (and similarities), that may exist in organisations found in a multicultural society.

This study, which starts from the premise that communication is a basis for human organising and thus a management function, has maintained throughout that the organisation has elements interacting to form constantly changing meanings constructed through communication.

The core elements of Ubuntu are respect, dignity, acceptance and care, need elements that proved to be universal, and therefore not exclusive to Ubuntu. Rather it is indicative of the need toward a softer approach to management, incorporating greater understanding of communalism and individualism in the South African organisation. It is recommended that care has to be taken not to use exclusive (Africanisation and Afrocentricity) concepts, but rather inclusive (South Africanisation), concepts. Both traditionallly Western and African mechanisms of communication have to be integrated, and shows that empowerment is a global phenomenon, but the way it is dealt with

between cultures differ. Secondary research questions show that the continent's business environment is not homogeneous; that the problems experienced in South African organisations differ from the rest of Africa; values that are characteristically African are transcending African boundaries; and that these values are relevant to economic development, business management and to management communication in particular.

VAN DER AHEE, L. 2000. The correlation between employee satisfaction, vertical and horizontal communication.

MCom (Communication Management)
Supervisor: Prof Ronél Rensburg

The aim of the research Is to provide a description of how participants experienced horizontal and vertical communication at ATC (Pty) Ltd. (a copper and fibre optic cable manufacturer), and to determine if there is a significant positive correlation between both horizontal and vertical communication, and employee satisfaction.

The research problem presented in this script is that most organisations either have not yet acknowledged the benefits of good communication, while others still do not know the key ingredients of effective communication. These organisations often inundate employees with ineffective communication, that influence employee satisfaction negatively, and subsequently, productivity. The paper also briefly discusses the relationship of communication and employee satisfaction with the organisational climate and leadership, due to these aspects' interactive relationships.

A non-experimental survey design, quantitative approach and descriptive strategy is followed. A pilot study was conducted with five selected employees at ATC (Pty) Ltd., while face validity measures were used, and the internal consistency reliability coefficient of variables determined. A hundred and four employees participated in the study. The whole population was targeted, and participants participated out of free will. This resulted in a relatively low response rate, and although ten percent of the workforce participated, the results can not be generalised to the population.

Both horizontal and vertical communication items, and the employee satisfaction items were rated high average, while, as expected, significant positive correlations were found between both vertical and horizontal communication and employee satisfaction. Although speculating, as no concrete evidence was produced from this research, it is very likely that a third variable such as organisational climate or leadership may impact on the correlational relationship between employee satisfaction and communication. A positive organisational climate may impact on productivity levels, and influence the

communication climate and employee satisfaction. Results from this research suggest that ATC (Pty) Ltd. is currently focusing on effective communication and acknowledges that effective communication can produce satisfied and productive employees.

SCHOEMAN, A. 2000. Identifying and understanding the key elements of strategic communication management in an attempt to demystify this concept for practical application.

MCom (Communication Management)
Supervisor: Ursula Ströh

The overarching challenge for public relations agencies that emerges in the pursuit of providing a more strategic service is to define strategic communication management. A *clear understanding* of strategic communication management is imperative and a simple definition will not suffice, therefore a process of unpacking the key elements of strategic communication management should be eminent when embarking on pursuing a clear understanding.

These elements can be used as a guideline by all public relations consultants and even in-house public relations managers, on how to be and become more strategic in providing their services to a client. But more importantly, it will make a major contribution in clarifying the concept of strategic communication management that up to now has been very nebulous and confusing in many people's minds.

By unpacking the elements of strategic communication management in a meaningful and scientific way, a better understanding of what it really means can be shared. The five factors of strategic communication management identified through research namely (a) research, (b) planning, (c) implementation, (d) strategic thinking and (e) account management (referring specifically to the agency environment) provide a "checklist" for the strategic communication manager.

Furthermore, these elements and the items that constitutes these elements, can be used to manage and measure clients' expectations with regard to providing a strategic communication management service. One of the elements that will need specific attention in the future is research. The case for more formal research has been argued extensively in both the literature review and research findings of this study.

DE JAGER, I.M. 2000. The technical and the strategic role of communication managers and the organisational constraints that influence these roles.

MA (Communication Management)
Supervisor: Ursula Ströh

The role of the communicator can be divided into two main roles namely the technical and the strategic role. These two roles are interdependent of each other and work in close relationship with each other

Different organisational variables/constraints as identified in the study can influence these roles and prevent the communication manager from fulfilling either one of these roles or both. The literature study identified the following organisational variables and, if not applied correctly, constraints that might have an influence on the role of the communicator. The five organisational constraints that were identified in the literature study are:

● Placement of communicators within the organisational hierarchy;
● Reporting relationship to management;
● Size and budget of organisations and communication departments;
● The influence of organisational culture, and
● The influence of organisational expectations.

The aim of this study was to determine the influence of organisational constraints on the technical and strategic roles of the communication manager in the organisation. In-depth interviews were held with seven respondents (communication managers) of different industries to determine the influence of these organisational variables/constraints on the role of the communication/public relations manager.

All the above-mentioned organisational constraints identified in this study may have an influence, to a greater or lesser extent, on the technical and strategic role of the public relations manager. It is easier to overcome and determine their influence when these constraints are identified and evaluated. The number of constraints does not determine whether a public relations manager fulfils a strategic or technical role, but the extent of the influences determines the role-playing effect.

One constraint can also lead to another constraint which may have an influence on the roles to be played. The study identified certain trends which can be used as guidelines by communication managers in the industry. It must be borne in mind that these are only guidelines and not the norm, and that that they can assist the communicator in identifying his or her organisational variables. The variables will, in turn, enable them

to understand their situation in the organisation and how to overcome certain constraints to fulfill the different roles identified in the study effectively.

DE BEER, E. 2001. The perception of top communicators of senior management's expectations of excellent communication in South African organisations.

MA (Communication Management)
Supervisor: Ursula Ströh

Communication departments may have the core knowledge to practise excellent communication, but senior management must also share a common understanding of the function of communication and the role of the communication manager in an organisation for communication to be excellent.

The top communicator in the South African organisation is often not at the table when strategic decisions are made. Yet, public relations specialists often have expertise that can contribute to organisational decision-making. They can, amongst others, facilitate dialogue between key publics and members of senior management in order to enhance understanding of the vision and goals of the organisation and of the needs of the organisation's clients and stakeholders.

One of the objectives of this study was to establish whether the top communicator in the South African organisation contributes to excellence in the organisation by being involved in the strategic management process. For top communicators to be part of this process, a positive relationship must exist between themselves and senior managers. This relationship was investigated by questioning top communicators on the three components of the sphere of shared expectations, as identified in the *Excellence Study* (the largest and most intensive investigation ever conducted of public relations and communication management) namely departmental power, the demand-delivery loop (including the practise of the four public relations models, namely the press agentry model, the public information model, the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model) and the organisational role played by the top communicator.

The empirical study was undertaken amongst top communicators in South African organisations to determine their perceptions with regard to the expectations of senior management of communication excellence in the organisation. Hypotheses have been developed and the testing thereof attempts to provide a contribution to the scientific knowledge of communication excellence in the South African organisation.

The following assumptions can, amongst others, be made about the findings of this

study:

- It is the perception of top communicators in South African organisations that senior management expects them to predominantly play the public relations manager role in order to make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making.
- It is their perception that senior management believes and expects that the top communicator will make a bigger strategic contribution to organisational decision-making when using the two-way public relations models for communication activities and organisational decision-making.
- It is the perception of top communicators that senior management believes and expects that the top communicator playing the public relations technician role uses one-way models (press-agentry and public information) in communication activities and organisational decision-making.
- It is their perception that senior management believes and expects that the top communicator playing the public relations manager role will predominantly use two-way models (two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models) in communication activities and organisational decision-making.
- Top communicators do not perceive reporting lines to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) (or to any other manager) or senior management (or middle management) to be very good indicators of their strategic contribution to decision-making. These findings support the communication theory that reporting relationships are necessary, but hardly sufficient for making a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making. The critical factor is not who you report to, but rather whether you have access to any of the (corporate) officers at will.

The top communicator predominantly playing the public relations manager role, and using two-way public relations models, can therefore make a strategic contribution to organisational decision-making. This can lead to excellent communication and can contribute to the top communicator being valued and supported by senior management.

MOILOA, J. 2000. Obstacles underlying public relations practitioners' contribution to management — A study of public and private organisations in Gauteng Province.

MA (Communication Management)
Supervisor: Neels van Heerden

Public relations as a management function has evolved through time but has still not gained the recognition it deserves. On the government level and in private companies, the trend is that public relations still is not part of top management. Its practitioners' capacity to solve problems on the top level is not in high demand. The impact on the managerial level is that public relations procedures are carried out unsystematically.

The trends and challenges facing public relations practitioners' contribution to management are enormous and are aggravated by the extent in which it loses its key components to other functional areas such as marketing and human resource, and also becomes more vulnerable to being subordinated entirely by these functions.

This study assesses the trends and challenges faced by public relations practitioners, investigate perceptions associated with the profession, and examine possible ways by which public relations practitioners can earn their rightful status in the business hierarchy.

> **JORDAAN, L.L.T. 2000. Internal communication media selection in the University of Pretoria with the emphasis on computer-mediated communication media**
>
> **MA (Communication Management)**
> Supervisor: Prof Ronél Rensburg

The selection of one medium of communication above another may appear to be a matter of personal choice, and of little research consequence. Yet, insight into media preference when it comes to receiving internal communication messages may mean the difference between effective communication and lack of communication within an organisation.

For the purpose of this study, the Media Richness Theory (MRT) and the Symbolic Interactionism Theory (SIT) were used to explore media selection at the University of Pretoria (UP). The MRT is concerned with identifying the most appropriate medium in terms of "medium richness" for communication situations characterised by equivocality and uncertainty. The SIT concurs with the MRT, but goes further and predicts that situational determinants such as distance and time and the symbolic cues provided by a medium, also influence media choice.

Research findings indicate that:
- employees at UP tend to select face-to-face media for highly equivocal messages and written media for clear, objective messages;
- where situational constraints such as distance and time pressure are present, people tend to choose "leaner" media, such as telephone and computer-mediated communication media, irrespective of the contents of the message. When symbolic meaning is intended, however, such as a desire for teamwork and trust, a "rich" medium is preferred;
- organisational culture in UP plays a more significant role than the communicator or recipient where media choice is concerned;

The results indicate the existence of a significant relationship between message contents, situational factors and media choice. Thus, effective internal communication may mean selecting the right medium to fit message contents and the situation in order to achieve mutual understanding and success.

CILLIERS, C.P. 2001. Producing media releases – A proactive strategy to obtain effective publicity.

MA (Communication Management)
Surpervisor: Prof Ronél Rensburg

The view of many corporate communication professionals is that organisations ought to be open with the media whenever possible and that there should never be an attempt to manipulate or deceive. The greatest fear is that management will be ill advised and their typically cautious message will be "no comment".
Media relations is important not just because it is a core activity in any corporate communication function, but because the media acts as a conduit to those other audiences that are so important to an organisation. This is also the reason for media relations having a bearing on many other aspects of the corporate communications activity.

The aim of this study was first; to study how a working relationship of mutual respect between the media and the corporate communicator can be established and maintained. A secondary aim was to determine to what degree and in which way the media uses media releases. Interviews were held (survey research) with 10 media editors to establish what they want from media releases. A third aim was to establish how to produce a publishable media release, how to use the media to achieve publicity, getting past gatekeepers, effective media relations and managing the media.

The corporate communicator needs to understand the role of publicity – in corporate communication and in marketing our society. S/he should know the importance of giving the media what it wants. S/He should know how to find and generate news. A corporate communicator needs to be aware of the legal pitfalls that are ever present and must know how to plan a publicity campaign. The ability to evaluate the results is also important.

This research was done by integrating publicity as part of and as a function of, corporate communication.