A STUDY ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH AS A PUBLIC RELATIONS FUNCTION: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

BY

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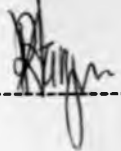
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

NOVEMBER 2010

DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and to the best of my knowledge has not been presented for the award of any degree in any University.

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This Research Project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the university supervisor:

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To the growing Magango family

ACKNOWLEGDEMENT

ABSTRACT

This paper proposes to understand the degree / level of significance / importance that organizations place on research as a function of public relations. It shows how PR as a means of creating understanding, applies to all organizations whether commercial or non commercial, in the public or private sector, and is key among its activities is research.

The paper first and foremost gives a background to research and its significance to PR – showing the connection between the two. The objectives, hypotheses, justification and scope of the study are outlined.

Using UON as a case study, the paper goes on to give a brief historical background of the university and demonstrates how an organization which places utmost importance in academic excellence and indeed academic research may or may not be placing high levels of significance to applied and practical research as related to PR.

The paper presents the concepts of research and PR and emphasizes the utility of research as a PR function. It then gives a theoretical framework of the study and proposes to utilize functionalism theory to highlight in particular how research is an integral function of research, and how it can go a long way in achieving an organization's mission, vision and business goals. The paper draws a lot from secondary literature - previous studies, academic books and papers, journals among other forms of written information in a bid to fill the knowledge gap as regards the topic of study.

The paper then proposes the intended methodology of data collection. It outlines a three thronged approach – desk research, qualitative, and quantitative methods to be utilized in achieving the objectives of the study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study aims to find out the significance that organizations put on research for PR purposes.

1.0 BACKGROUND

In order to create lasting respect and understanding whether with internal, external or trade publics, public relations policy should be based on effective and thorough research. Frank Lang.

According to James Koten the Vice- President for Corporate Communications at Illinois Bell:

"To be influential, you have to be at the decision table and be part of corporate governance. You can be there if the things you are doing are supported by facts. That is where the public relations person has generally been weak and why, in most organisations, public relations functions at a lower level. The idea is to be where the decisions are made in order to impact the future of the company. To do so, you have to be like the lawyer or financial officer, the personnel officer or operations person. You have to have hard data."

Public relations is today slowly emerging from its cocoon of lack of importance as there is a new consciousness in business today that the prosperity and survival of an organization depends on the feelings of many different people.

A business needs the cooperation of its workers, the goodwill of its customers, the confidence of its stockholders – to mention just a few of the groups concerned. But above all it must be favourably regarded by that nebulous conglomeration called the public at large whose representatives in the government determine the political and economic climate in which the business has to live. To maximize the goodwill of all these publics is the underlying aim of all public relations.

In order to be successful in this endeavour, a public relations programme must be adjusted to the group of people to whom it is directed. The importance of defining and evaluating these groups cannot be stressed too strongly. It is very important for advertisers to place high priority on careful research in finding out whom an organization wants to reach before actually undertaking a marketing or advertising campaign. Similarly in a public relations effort, research plays a vital part in the determination and classification of the specific groups to which the programme is directed. A public relations effort increases in effectiveness in proportion to the specificity with which it is directed to a group.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

PR has evolved from a little-known and unappreciated field to one which many organizations today feel determines their very existence and core.

However, organizations world over have in the past not paid much attention to research as a PR function. In developed markets it is only in this decade that organizations are appreciating and utilizing public relations research and indeed; that it has an integral role to play in strategic decision-making which subsequently leads to effective and efficient management of an organization.

Many organizations in the developing world and in Kenya still prefer to rely on intuition or 'gut feeling' to solve their operational and planning problems rather than using data / hard facts that derive from research.

Public universities have in the recent pas been associated with strikes by both students and lecturers over varying issues. This has disrupted learning, as universities are normally forced to close after such incidences.

A review of the admissions requirements over the past few years indicates that the cut off points for undergraduate students has gone up consistently. A large number of form four

leavers are not admitted and they are forced to access university education through the parallel programme or join private universities.

These issues combined with others that are reported on the media impact on stakeholders' perception towards universities. Perceptions that are formed range from image, quality of education, cost, facilities, and relevance of courses offered, etc. Perceptions are usually a reflection of how various stakeholders view an organization and are expressed by their words and actions. Depending on their perception they may support or recommend the institution to others.

Academic research on the other hand has evolved and matured greatly with time. Today there are thousands of scholars churning out research papers year after year. The fact that academic research in Kenya takes precedence over immediately applicable research is indeed ironical hence the reason for the researcher's choice of a case study of the UON, an institution responsible for so many research papers, but what about stakeholder – employee, customer, supplier, evaluation research? The key publics of the university who expect utmost quality from the institution include:

General public -- Members who may have an opinion about the University and may be potential customers / students of the university.

Suppliers –Supply services/products to UoN

Companies which have employed UoN graduates - Private and Public

Government as policy makers – Ministry of Higher Learning

Alumni – Former students of the UoN

Industry – Key persons in the education sector

Media – Representatives from the main media houses in the Media industry

Donors and Sponsors –These are organisations with special interest on higher education – National Commission for UNESCO, USAID.

Neighbouring Community – Representatives from families which live in the University neighbourhood.

Generally, as economies grow and businesses / industries thrive in developing markets, organizations are yet to overwhelmingly pay attention to PR research and this goes a long way to affecting their output.

1.3 THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

The University of Nairobi, is the largest university in Kenya and is a body corporate established by an Act of Parliament Cap 210 of the Laws of Kenya. It is the pioneer institution of university education in Kenya and the region.

The only institution of higher learning in Kenya for a long time, the University of Nairobi responded to the national regional and Africa's high level manpower training needs by developing and evolving strong, diversified academic programmes and specializations in sciences, applied sciences, technology, humanities, social sciences and the arts. To date, the range of programmes offered number approximately two hundred.

1.3.1 A brief history of the university

The University of Nairobi owes its origin to several developments in higher education within the country and the region. The idea of an institution for higher learning in Kenya goes back to 1947 when the Kenya Government drew up a plan for the establishment of a technical and commercial institute in Nairobi. By 1949, this plan had grown into an East African concept aimed at providing higher technical education for the region. In September 1951, a Royal Charter was issued to the Royal Technical College of East Africa and the foundation stone of the college was laid in April 1952.

During the same period, the Asian Community of East Africa was also planning to build a College for Arts, Science and Commerce as a living memorial to Mahatma Gandhi. To

avoid duplication of efforts, Gandhi Memorial Academy Society agreed to merge interests with those of the East African Governments. Thus, the Gandhi Memorial Academy was incorporated into the Royal Technical College of East Africa in April 1954, and the college proceeded to open its doors to the first intake of students in April 1956.

Soon after the arrival of students at the college, the pattern of higher education in East Africa came under scrutiny. Through the recommendation of a working party formed in 1958, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London, Sir John Lockwood, the Royal Technical College of East Africa was transformed. On 25th June .1961, the College became the second University College in East Africa, under the name "Royal College Nairobi."

The Royal College Nairobi was renamed "University College, Nairobi" on 20th May 1964. On the attainment of "University College" status, the institution prepared students for bachelor's degrees awarded by the University of London, while also continuing to offer college diploma programmes. The University College Nairobi, provided educational opportunities in this capacity until 1966 when it began preparing students exclusively for degrees of the University of East Africa, with the exception of the Department of Domestic Science.

With effect from 1st July 1970, the University of East Africa was dissolved and the three East African countries set up their national Universities. This development saw the birth of the University of Nairobi set up by an Act of Parliament.

Since 1970, the University of Nairobi has seen many innovations, which have contributed to its development and that of the nation. It has grown from a faculty based university serving a student population of 2,768 (2,584 undergraduate and 184 post graduate students), to a college focused university serving 22,000 students in the 2001/02 Academic Year (about 17,200 undergraduate and 4,800 postgraduate students). To attain

this level of educational progress has been no small feat. Recent years have witnessed the following:

- Mushrooming of academic programmes in the 1970s;
- Establishment of Campus Colleges in 1985:
- First double intake in 1986;
- Property acquisition resulting in Lower Kabete and Parklands Campuses in 1988; and the
- Intake of the first students undertaking the University component of
- the 8-4-4 educational system in 1990. Introduction of Module II and part-time programmes.

Truly, the University's development has been as broad as its current scope is wide. From a humble beginning as a technical college to the status of a major international teaching and research institution. the University of Nairobi has produced more trained human resources than any other' institution of higher learning in Kenya, with over 40,000 graduates to its credit.

UON Mission

The mission of the UoN is to be a centre for learning and scholarship; preparing students for academic pursuits, professional development, enhanced personal lives, and responsible global citizenship; extending the frontiers of knowledge through research, creative works, and scholarship; fostering an intellectual culture that bridges theory with practice; contributing to social, economic, and cultural development; and through intellectual products, enhances the quality of life of the people of Kenya and all humanity.

UON Vision

The vision of the UoN is to be world-class University and a community of scholars committed to the promotion of academic achievement and excellence in research as an embodiment of the aspirations of the Kenyan people and the global community.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the level of significance that organizations attach to research as a public relations function.

Research questions:

What are the specific research issues that organizations / PR practitioners research on?

What priority do they pace on these issues?

How effective is research as a PR function?

What challenges do organizations face in implementing research for PR?

Specifically, the study will seek to:

- Explore the research issues organizations focus on.
- Gain insight into the priority they place on research issues.
- Assess the effectiveness of research for PR.
- Explore the challenges faced in conducting and implementing research for PR.

1.5 HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- Stakeholder research is the main focus of organizations / PR practitioners.
- Organizations place high priority on stakeholder research.
- Research for PR is effective in management and strategic decision making.
- Lack of knowledge, expertise and understanding of research is a major hindrance to its conduction and implementation.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- The study will be geographically limited to Kenya and in particular Nairobi .
- The organization to be studied is the University of Nairobi.
- Students of the university, PR and research experts will be interviewed for this study.

1.7 JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY

The University of Nairobi has the largest concentration of scholars and researchers in the country and is the centre for intellectual life, a locus of research activity extending the boundaries of knowledge, a resource for professional development and a key player in the growing global network of scholarship. The university strives to discover practical uses for theoretical knowledge and to speed up the transmission of information to the Kenyan nation and the world. In fostering research and its practical application, the University will continue to be a catalyst for positive intellectual, social, cultural and technological change.

Without a doubt, the university is contributing to national progress through its numerous research activities which lead to new products for example from scientific research, as well as new systems and processes, ways of solving problems, arising from social science research.

The university operates in a society where there is increasing demand for higher education and thus the proliferation of private institutions of higher learning to meet this demand. There is therefore a need for the university to ensure that it continues to maintain its prestige and reputation of being a world class university, and to attract the attention of potential students while maintaining the current ones, retain its staff of formidable professors, lecturers, assistant tutors, administrative staff and generally each and every member of staff as they all do play a role in ensuring that academic excellence is achieved.

There are also other stakeholders who matter very much to the university such as suppliers of various goods and services, parents of students, sponsors (organizations and individuals), among many others. Ensuring that these stakeholders are satisfied with the quality of service and relationships they have with the university requires good public relations practice on the part of the university. And when the university embarks on PR mechanisms, there has to be a way of checking if the PR campaigns or programmes are working. This can be done through research; and not academic research but less theoretical, applied and practical research whose results can be utilized immediately.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers a review of existing works on the subject. The chapter begins by defining public relations and research as the main concepts of the study, highlighting how important and beneficial research for PR is for effective and efficient management of organizations. The crux of this chapter is the theoretical framework which focuses on the theory of functionalism, emphasizing the function of research in PR for the success of an organization.

2.1 PUBLIC RELATIONS DEFINED

PR has been defined variously. According to Frank Jefkins it consists of all forms of planned communication outwards and inwards, between an organization and its publics for the purpose of achieving specific objectives concerning mutual understanding.

PR practice is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting fair consequences, counseling of leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which serve both the organization's and the public's interest. (American definition, 1978).

PR is also defined as the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its day publics. (British Institute of Public Relations).

PR is the planned effort to establish and improve the degree of mutual understanding between an organization or individual with a primary object of assisting that organization or individual to deserve, acquire and maintain a good reputation". (A new definition from the British Institute of Public Relations)

PR is in short a form of communication that seeks to achieve certain goals for an organization. Harold Laswell's famous quote 'who says what to whom in what channel with what effect is clearly applicable to the PR function. Organizations communicate to publics through various media with intended or unintended effects on the publics.

PR is a strategic function meaning that it is a framework developed to provide direction. This enables and organization to test all activities performed and problems that have been solved accordingly to the framework provided.

PR is a management function that creates, develops, and carries out policies and programs to influence public opinion or public reaction about an idea, a product, or an organization. The field of public relations has become an important part of the economic, social, and political pattern of life in many nations. That field includes advertising, publicity, promotional activities, and press contact. PR also coexists in business with marketing and merchandising to create the climate in which all selling functions occur.

> Promotion of favorable image: the practice or profession of establishing, maintaining, or improving a favorable relationship between an institution or person and the public

> Public image: the relationship between an institution or person and the public, with respect to whether that institution or person is seen in a positive or negative light.

> Department managing public relations: the department in an organization that is responsible for public relations.

The successful public relations practitioner is a specialist in communication arts and persuasion. The work involves various functions including the following:

(1) Programming—that is, analyzing problems and opportunities, defining goals, determining the public to be reached, and recommending and planning activities;

(2) Writing and editing materials such as press releases, speeches, stockholder reports, product information, and employee publications;

(3) Placing information in the most advantageous way;

(4) Organizing special events such as press functions, award programs, exhibits, and displays;

(5) Setting up face-to-face communication, including the preparation and delivery of speeches;

(6) Providing research and evaluation using interviews, reference materials, and various survey techniques; and

(7) Managing resources by planning, budgeting, and recruiting and training staff to attain these objectives. Specialized skills are required to handle public opinion research, media relations, direct mail activities, institutional advertising, publications, film and video production, and special events.

Significance of PR in organizations

The purpose of public relations is to establish and maintain mutual understanding – ensuring that the organization is understood by others. The organization also seeks to understand its publics hence a mutual understanding.

PR seeks to achieve specific objectives such as solving communication problems i.e. converting negative attitudes to positive attitudes, thereby effecting change. In seeking to achieve specific objectives, it is possible to measure results against objectives making PR tangible. For example, research techniques can be used to measure the effectiveness of a PR campaign.

Public relations analyses trends by use of research – investigation of opinions, attitudes, preferences and motives that ultimately enable management to make strategic decisions that impact on the overall goals of the organization.

2.2 RESEARCH DEFINED

Research like PR has been variously defined. In simple terms, it is a systematic means of solving a problem.

It is the process in which observable, verifiable data is systematically collected in order to describe, design or predict events.

Research is a systematic, objective, scientific investigation of phenomenon targeting specific aspects for the purpose of discovering, interpreting facts, principles and theories.

It is the search for knowledge through objective, systematic methods of generalization and theory formulation.

Significance of research in organizations

Research inculcates scientific and inductive thinking and it promotes the development of logical habits of thinking and organization.

"All progress is born of inquiry. Doubt is better than overconfidence for it leads to inquiry and inquiry leads to invention" Hudson. This statement goes a long to way show how significant research is in order for progress to be achieved.

Research has special significance in solving various operational and planning problems of business and industry. Market, operational and motivational research are crucial in providing basis for business decisions. It is critical as a management function – as management are involved in making strategic decisions that impact greatly on all stakeholders of the business. Decision-making may not be part of research but research certainly facilitates the decisions of management.

Market research is the investigation of the structure and development of a market for the purpose of formulating efficient policies for purchasing, production and sales.

Market research involves researching the environment. To have effective PR, it's crucially important to understand the economic, political, legal, regulatory, public opinion, social, cultural, technological, marketing, and financial components in which the organization operates.

It is interesting to note that a 1994 study by the International Public Relations Association showed that 76% of American public relations practitioners recognized that "evaluation" research of the market environment is necessary; but only 16% said that they frequently undertake research aimed at such evaluation.

Many organizations may be "talking the talk" about evaluating clients' and prospects' business environment, but are not "walking the walk" by actually budgeting for and conducting the necessary research.

Operational research refers to the application of mathematical, logical and analytical techniques to the solution of business problems of cost minimization or profit maximization or what can be termed as optimization problems.

Motivational research involves determining why people behave the way the do as mainly concerned with market characteristics. It is concerned with determination of motivations underlying the consumer (market behaviour). Another aspect of motivational research besides studying the consumer is focusing on other stakeholders of the business for example employees, suppliers, board members, among other stakeholders who are critical to the success of the organization.

2.3 EVOLUTION OF PR RESEARCH

A historical perspective

In 1983, James Grunig concluded that a key contributor to the image problem of public relations was the lack of objective, research methodology for evaluating PR programs.

Grunig said: "Although considerable lip service is paid to the importance of program evaluation in public relations, the rhetorical line is much more enthusiastic than actual utilisation".

Grunig added: "I have begun to feel more and more like a fundamentalist minister railing against sin; the difference being that I have railed for evaluation in public relations practice.

Just as everyone is against sin, so most public relations people I talk to are for evaluation. People keep on sinning ... and PR people continue not to do evaluation research".

A study by Dr Lloyd Kirban in 1983 among Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) members in the Chicago chapter found that more than half the practitioners expressed a "fear of being measured".

In *Managing Public Relations* (1984), James Grunig and Todd Hunt, commented:
"The majority of practitioners ... still prefer to 'fly by the seat of their pants' and use intuition rather than intellectual procedures to solve public relations problems."

A Syracuse University study conducted by public relations educator, Judy Van Slyke, compared public relations to Jerome Ravetz's 'model of an immature and ineffective science' and concluded that public relations fits the model.

Professor James Bissland found in a 1986 study of public relations that while the amount of evaluation had increased, the quality of research has been slow to improve.

In his book on PR research, *Public Relations – What Research Tell Us*, John Pavlik commented in 1987 that "measuring the effectiveness of PR has proved almost as elusive as finding the Holy Grail".

Changing attitudes towards PR research

A landmark 1988 study developed by Dr Walter Lindenmann of Ketchum Public Relations *(Ketchum Nationwide Survey on Public Relations Research, Measurement and Evaluation)* surveyed 945 practitioners in the US and concluded that "most public relations research was casual and informal, rather than scientific and precise" and that "most public relations research today is done by individuals trained in public relations rather than by individuals trained as researchers".

However, the Ketchum study also found that 54 per cent of the 253 respondents to the survey strongly agreed that PR research for evaluation and measurement would grow during the 1990s, and nine out of ten practitioners surveyed felt that PR research needed to become more sophisticated.

A study by Smythe, Dorward and Lambert in the UK in 1991 found 83 per cent of practitioners agreed with the statement: "There is a growing emphasis on planning and measuring the effectiveness of communications activity".

In a 1992 survey by the Counselors Academy of the Public Relations Society of America, 70 per cent of its 1,000 plus members identified "demand for measured accountability" as one of the leading industry challenges.

In 1993, Gael Walker from the University of Technology Sydney replicated the Lindenmann survey in Australia and found 90 per cent of practitioners expressed a belief that "research is now widely accepted as a necessary and integral part of the planning, program development, and evaluation process".

The International Public Relations Association (IPRA) used a section of Lindenmann's survey in an international poll of public relations practitioners in 1994 and confirmed wide recognition of the importance of research for evaluation and measurement.

In the same year, a Delphi study undertaken by Gae Synott from Edith Cowan University in Western Australia found that, of an extensive list of issues identified as important to public relations, evaluation ranked as number one.

The Delphi study panel (of experts) in five continents covering top academics, leading practitioners and the CEOs of PR industry bodies discussed the Priorities of Public Relations Research. After three rounds of intensive email debate, the Top Ten PR research topics they came up with were:

1) Public relations' role in contributing to strategic decision-making, strategy development and realization, and organizational functioning.
2) The value that public relations creates for organizations through building social capital, managing key relationships and realizing organizational advantage.
3) The measurement and evaluation of public relations, both offline and online.
4) Public relations as a fundamental management function.
5) Professional skills in public relations; analysis of the industry's need for education.
6) Research into standards of performance among PR professionals; the licensing of practitioners.
7) Management of corporate reputation; measurement of reputation
8) Integration of public relations with other communication functions; the scope of public relations practice; discipline boundaries.
9) Management of relationships
10) Evaluation has become one of the hottest topics at public relations conferences and seminars in most developed markets during the past decade.

PR research in developing markets - Kenya
Public relations research in developed markets has come a long way to slowly accepting and indeed realizing the importance of research in PR. Now more appreciated, PR research is being conducted consistently in the developed world.

As noted from extensive secondary research, most of the literature and empirical evidence found on the field of PR and research originate from developed countries with well established systems.

According to Pratt (1985:10), PR practitioners from developed and developing countries fulfill different roles. He states that practitioners from the industrialized West are generally socially responsible but in the developing markets PR practices are designed to be consistent with political ideologies, levels of development, and socio-political controls. It is critical for PR to reflect the enterprise (societal role) regardless of the size or sector of the economy which is stakeholder orientated, as well as corporate strategies (the portfolio of businesses that the organization is competing in, which is financially orientated).

The implication of Pratt's statement of motivations of PR practice in developing markets is that politics being the super-structure leads to organizations not focusing on what is important – their stakeholders and corporate strategies as well as the financial gain. Although there could be some truth in this implication, developing markets are evolving and placing much more importance on business and industry to the extent that politics is slowly losing its place as the super-structure and being replaced with industry. And where this shift of paradigm is yet to take effect, politics and industry are at the same level, in a symbiotic relationship where circumstances of one affect the other, and none can exist without the other.

With this background, developing markets like Kenya where both research (in a practical and immediately applicable sense rather than academic), and PR are relatively new, some organizations are placing importance on PR but this practice is not widespread and there remain numerous challenges such as budgetary constraints, understanding research for PR, among others.

2.4 UTILITY OF RESEARCH FOR PR

The excellent reasons for undertaking research, and including it in any public relations strategic process, include that:

- ⬇ It generates information to create the best possible communications strategy,
- ⬇ It helps determine appropriate benchmarks against which communication activity can be measured.
- ⬇ It uncovers a range of issues that can be leveraged in PR programs, and
- ⬇ It strengthens the strategic management / leadership of an organization

Best communications strategy

In order to produce material of the highest quality the 'producer' needs to have information that will educate him or her as to what direction that material should go in and/or what shape it should take. This certainly applies to producing a business communication strategy.

There are three categories of information that are of great utility. They include organizational stakeholders':

- Knowledge
- Perceptions
- Behaviour

This can be knowledge, perceptions and behaviour in regard to an organization or its products or services. The principles remain the same regardless of whether the communication strategy is a holistic organizational one or a strategy for a product or service.

Complementary areas that PR research should delve into include:

1. Who or what are the influencers on stakeholder knowledge/views/behaviour?
2. What are the issues which influence views/behaviour of stakeholder knowledge/views/behaviour?

Identifying stakeholder influencers can prompt an organization to develop stronger relationships and/or form strategic alliances with them.

Identifying salient issues might influence the way an organization operates and cause it to modify its approach to certain non-communication related, business processes.

In the area of communication conduits or mechanisms, the research should uncover what communication mechanisms stakeholders rely most on to get information that influences their knowledge/views/behaviour (e.g. media, industry associations, websites, conferences, social media – note that the more specific, rather than generic, the information is the greater its utility).

Setting communication strategy benchmarks

The core areas of information identified as knowledge, perceptions and behaviour are what are needed to form the best possible communication strategy. It is these areas which will often, similarly, form the substance of strategy benchmarks (or objectives). This will be determined by the needs and wants of an organization (i.e. its vision, business, and marketing strategy).

The core area of greatest relevance, clearly, is behaviour. Whether that behaviour involves buying a product, voting a certain way, catching a bus rather than driving, not taking drugs or many more behavioral manifestations, it is this area where an organization should see traction more than any other.

The best thing about setting benchmarks is that they can be measured over extended periods of time. This allows an organization to gauge the impact of its communication and stakeholder engagement.

Information collated over time should influence the nature of the organization's communication strategy to allow it to achieve these benchmarks.

Uncovering a range of issues that can be leveraged in PR programs

The ability of the market research to uncover information and to deliver statistics that can be used in proactive stakeholder communication more often than not, ignored.

There are two dimensions where market research can help organizations come up with one of professional communication's holy grails – producing content for communication activity:

- Identifying salient issues that can be integrated into thought leadership platforms
- Producing statistics.

Thought leadership platforms and the use of statistics to highlight certain issues can be used across a diversity of communication mechanisms (e.g. speaking engagements, website, direct mail and more). According to James Coten, '*To be influential, you have to be at the decision table… you have to have hard data*'.

PR research as an integral management function

While debate continues over whether public relations fits within marketing or corporate management or both, there is broad agreement that modern public relations practice needs to function as a management discipline within an organization's total management team.

Grunig 1992:329 conceptualized four theoretical roles or activities of the practice of PR namely:

- the expert prescriber,
- communication facilitator,
- problem solving process facilitator, and
- technician role

These steps are closely linked to the four compulsory steps of the PR process under functionalism theory.

Grunig, Crable, Vibbert and others point to public relations evolving from a communication *technician* role focused on producing and distributing information (the first three roles espoused by Grunig), to a communication *manager* role (the last role as

espoused by Grunig) focused on building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders.

The extent to which public relations can realize this transition from technician to manager, depends on practitioners adopting the standards and meeting the requirements of modern professional management. So what are those standards and requirements, and how well is PR meeting these prerequisites?

The management environment in both the private and public sector has undergone a major transformation in the past 20 years, and in the past decade in particular. Along with technological change, one of the major revolutions has been the demand for and growing acceptance of accountability. Over the past decade or two, management has adopted various systems and tools to monitor and measure processes and results including:

- Management by Objectives (MBO);
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
- Total Quality Management (TQM);
- Quality Assurance (QA);
- Quality Accreditation (ISO 9000);
- Benchmarking;
- World's Best Practice;
- Customer Satisfaction ratings;
- Balanced Score Card

As part of these management strategies, companies, organizations and government agencies are increasingly using informal and formal research to evaluate key areas of their operations.

2.5 STAKEHOLDER RESEARCH AS A KEY PR FUNCTION

The term 'stakeholder research' is used to refer to the critical investigation of the experiences and views of sets of people who have vested interests in the products and services delivered by an organization.

The sets of people viewed as stakeholders are:

- Owners – shareholders and elected representatives;
- Clients – end-users of the services provided by the organization, typically segmented into different clusters based on the nature of their interactions and interests;
- Staff – employees of the organization who participate in work programs to deliver services to clients;
- Internal customers – employees of the organization who rely on internally provided services (e.g. IT support) to do their job;
- Strategic partners – the key contractors, suppliers or collaborators whose long-term support is critical to the sustainable delivery of services;
- Special-interest groups – groups who represent the specific interests of their constituents or members based on professional, industry, regulatory or community issues.

At the broadest level, stakeholder research aims to provide an organization with answers to questions such as:

> ➤ How well do the types and quality of services we deliver match stakeholder needs and expectations?
> ➤ Are these services able to be delivered in a safe and productive work environment?
> ➤ Are our current claims about intended organizational performance credible to stakeholders?
> ➤ Is our organizational performance viewed by stakeholders as sustainable?
> ➤ What suggestions do stakeholders have for performance improvements?
> ➤ What are the gaps in our knowledge and understanding of stakeholder's views and requirements?

Investigating such questions requires a conceptual framework to represent 'organizational performance', sometimes stated explicitly and sometimes implicit. A range of such conceptual frameworks are used based on specific performance attributes such as outputs/outcomes.

Applying stakeholder research to evaluating organizational performance potentially involves gathering feedback from different sets of stakeholders across these different areas of organizational performance.

This perspective contrasts with the most common approach to stakeholder research which simply measures customer satisfaction with product and service quality.

Stakeholder research provides one important set of measures of organizational performance. It encompasses the experiences and perceptions of groups of people who have vested interests in the services delivered by the organization. 'Stakeholder satisfaction' is often used to represent the views of these groups, and a common approach to its measurement is to focus on the concept of 'satisfaction' either as an exogenous variable or as a construct based on various attributes of satisfaction.

The design of stakeholder research should be built upon a sound framework of organizational performance, should focus on the claims embedded in the key corporate statements of aspiration, and should be based on a strategic analysis of issues and risks. Indeed, for many agencies in the public sector, where the focus is on policy development or regulation in a contested environment, the satisfaction of stakeholders may not be a primary objective.

In contrast, it has been found that senior managers are usually quick to appreciate and act on issues presented as feedback from stakeholders on specific strategic aspects of organizational performance.

2.5.1 Designing stakeholder research

While the design of stakeholder studies should always be guided by the purpose and scope of the research, there are also general guidelines that can be drawn.

The first is to start with an explicit conceptual framework for 'organizational performance' which can be used to articulate the key evaluation questions that are under

investigation. The framework can also be used to show how stakeholder feedback fits with other sources of data in investigating performance.

The second guideline is that questions for stakeholders should reflect attributes of intended performance, which are often stated in documents such as corporate plans and codes of practice. When stakeholder questions address the organization's claims about its performance, there is an unambiguous link between the feedback from stakeholders and the areas of organizational performance under investigation. An unintended consequence of this approach in some organizations is the emergence of desires to make clearer statements or to have more realistic aspirations.

Thirdly, the research design needs to be based on an analysis of which issues and questions are most strategically important, which segments of stakeholder are most relevant to these, and what other information is needed to contextualize the feedback in the broader environment.

The final guideline is to report the feedback in ways which allow managers to identify problem areas and to act on them. Regardless of whether stakeholder perceptions are consistent or inconsistent with other performance data (such as outputs and outcome measures), direct and specific feedback on the organization's claims about intended performance stimulates managers to act – whether to address shortcomings, change stakeholder expectations or improve communication.

This approach encourages more sophisticated judgments about organizational performance than a limited set of indicators of satisfaction. In the language of evaluation, the guidelines translate to initially developing a framework for the evaluation based on the 'program theory', stating the evaluative criteria and drawing out the attributes to be examined, considering multiple data sources and methods, using evaluative arguments to reach conclusions, and retaining a strong focus on utilization.

2.5.2 The utility of stakeholder research

Stakeholder research can provide useful and relevant data for answering key evaluation questions about organizational performance. Organizations should use the measures on a regular basis, making refinements each time to capture new directions and to address emerging issues. If these organizations use only measures of 'satisfaction', changing circumstances would lead to qualifications of the results, rather than being seen as opportunities to explore the new issues in the context of past performance.

This approach can make a significant practical contribution to evaluating an organization's performance.

2.6 A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Theories are fundamentally products of human endeavor, therefore theory construction is not a dispassionate and objective process, but an involved and subjective or inter-subjective undertaking.

As theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1991) stated: "Every theory, as the word itself suggests, is a program of perception, but that is all the more true of theories about the social world". Theories have as starting points series of meta-theoretical assumptions about the existence of the world and the functioning of society that remain, in most cases, undisclosed and not debated, as they are inherently considered by those who employ them "the truth." In the field of public relations, that is deeply rooted in economic and political activities, theoretical developments are more connected to practices and more related to measurements for success in the "real" life than in speculative fields.

2.6.1 FUNCTIONALISM

Major tenets

➤ Functionalists are very positive about society and always see the good in everything.

- They look at society on a macro scale (large scale). They want to generalize their ideas to the whole of society. For example they look at what education does for society as a whole not just certain people in society.
- Functionalists also believe that society is based on consensus, this means agreement, i.e. we are all socialized / brought up to agree on how to behave (known as norms) and what is right and wrong (known as values).
- Functionalists believe that each part of society has a function (a job to do) to make sure that society runs smoothly and everything stays in harmony. For example education has a function to make sure people are educated to be good at the job they will get after school.

This paper places emphasis on the last tenet which indicates that each part of society has a function to make sure that society is always in a state of equilibrium. In relation to PR, it does have a very crucial role to play in any organization that intends to succeed in the achievement of its goals, vision and mission, and in the same vein, research is critical for successful PR efforts.

2.6.2 Functionalism and PR

According to functionalist theory the world is stable and organized rationally, and that researchers have the task of measuring data, of processing information, and of proposing the most suitable solution wherever they identify a problem, as there is only one universally acknowledged and accepted best solution to any problem.

Public relations is closely associated with management (Nager and Allen, 1984; Broom and Dozier 1990; Dozier, Grunig, and Grunig, 1995; Austin and Pinkleton, 2001), as both domains attempt to draw the principles and practices of effective organizations, of excellence in prediction and control, of operational roles in transmission of information.

According to this logic, the public relations process is presented as being organized in compulsory steps to be followed:

- Step one – *defining public relations problems*;
- Step two - *planning and programming*;
- Step three – *taking action and communicating*;
- Step four – *evaluating the program* (Cutlip, Center, and Broom, 2000).

Each of these steps can be depicted as a series of compulsory stages:

- Problem identification or research consists of interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and surveys;

- Planning is formed of setting objectives, defining the audience, execution and assessment;

- Communication takes into account source credibility, context of the message, writing and feedback;

- Evaluation measures production, distribution and message exposure (Wilcox, Ault, and Agee, 1989).

This paper proposes to place emphasis on the first stage which involves research in PR as a key management function that if conducted appropriately, ultimately brings about intended outcomes which in the case of PR is to establish and maintain goodwill with the key publics of any organization.

Many public relations books and articles discuss the techniques employed by public communicators in order to successfully persuade the target groups (Kendall, 1996; Matera and Artigue, 2000), and the standards utilized by public relations specialists in order to reliably measure the expected outcomes (Holloway, 1992; Lindenmann, 1993).

The public is treated either as a uniform and undifferentiated body, or as a set of two large groups opposing to each other: print and electronic audiences, consumers and

investors, domestic and international audiences, according to Seitel (2003); primary and secondary publics, internal and external publics, domestic and international publics, according to Guth and Marsh (2003). The audience is represented as passive, not active, as influenced, not influential, as an object to be researched, not as groups of subjects constituting communities. Demographics and psychographics are employed as scientific tools for finding the best way to transmit information to people, to convince people to think in a certain way or adopt a certain course of action.

As Margaret E. Duffy (2000) observes, functionalist public relations handbooks try to gain legitimacy by claiming that PR practices originated in ancient times, and were exercised in notable situations, for example the spread of Christianity, the preaching of Peter and Paul.

Functionalist PR books also try to get justification by describing the history of public relations throughout the 20th century as a continuously evolving one, beginning with the model of the press agentry (represented by P.T. Barnum), and continuing with the public information model (embodied by Ivy Lee), by the two way asymmetric model (represented by Edward Bernays), and finally with the harmonious two-way symmetric model (see Cutlip, 1995; Ewen, 1997; Pitcher, 2003).

However, the two-way symmetric model is not as open to dialogism and mutual understanding as it pretends to be, as it still preserves the centrality of the institution, and the primacy of the corporate interests. Moreover, such a linear presentation of public relations ignores or hides unsuccessful or doubtful events, periods of hesitations and conflicts, interests and ideologies involved in the history of the field.

Within the functionalist paradigm, public relations is considered a neutral body of knowledge and skills, one that does not raise ethical issues, or one that only involves ethical issues that are unproblematic and are easily kept under control through the settlement of regulatory entities, of specific standards and codes, of checks and balances (Barney and Black, 1994; Baker, 1999). There seems to be no tension between the public

relations' professional obligation to concomitantly serve client organizations and the public interest, and there appears to be harmony in society (see Duffy, 2001; Cooper and Kelleher, 2001).

2.7 BARRIERS / CHALLENGES TO USING PR RESEARCH

Given the wide disparity between supportive attitudes towards evaluation among PR practitioners and actual application, an exploration began in 1993 to examine the barriers that stood in the way of greater use of research in public relations.

Practitioners most commonly cited lack of budget and lack of time as the main reasons for not undertaking research. However, an examination of PR practices and programs suggests that these factors may not be the main obstacles to applying objective evaluation. It was concluded that even if adequate budget and time were available, many practitioners would still not be able to undertaken either evaluative or formative research. An examination of a wide selection of public relations plans and proposals revealed six key barriers or challenges to developing and using effective evaluation research:

1. *Understanding Research*

The first is that public relations executives need to acquire far greater understanding of research to be able to function in the organizational environment of the late 1990s and in the new millennium.

At a pure or basic research level public relations needs to build its body of theory and knowledge. There are, at the core of public relations, fundamental questions over the nature of PR and what it does in society. The Edward Bernays paradigm outlined in his influential 1920s book, *Crystallising Public Opinion* and expanded in his classic 1955 PR text, *The Engineering of Consent*, on which most modern public relations thinking is based, is under challenge from new approaches such as Co-orientation Theory and the Two-Way Symmetric Model of public relations developed by Grunig.

The Bernays paradigm defines public relations as a form of *persuasive* communication which bends public thinking to that of an organization - a concept that some, such as Marvin Olasky, say has destructive practical applications, and continued use of which will speed up "PR's descent into disrepute". There is a strong argument that the whole theoretical basis of public relations needs to be questioned and reviewed with further pure or basic research.

Most PR practitioners have only a basic understanding of Otto Lerbinger's four basic types of PR research:
- Environmental monitoring (or scanning),
- Public relations audits,
- Communications audits,
- Social audits.

Many use the terms interchangeably and incorrectly and have little knowledge of survey design, questionnaire construction, sampling, or basic statistics and are, therefore, hamstrung in their ability to plan and manage research functions. Marston provided the RACE formula for public relations which identified four stages: *research, action, communication* and *evaluation*. Cutlip and Center provided their own formula based on this which they expressed as *fact-finding, planning, communication* and *evaluation*.

Borrowing from systems theory, Richard Carter coined the term 'behavioural molecule' for a model that describes how people make decisions about what to do. The segments of a behavioural molecule continue endlessly in a chain reaction. In the context of a 'behavioural molecule', Grunig describes the elements of public relations as *detect, construct, define, select, confirm, behave, detect*. The process of detecting, constructing, defining, selecting, confirming, behaving (which, in systems language, means producing outputs) and detecting, continues ad infinitum.

Craig Aronoff and Otis Baskin echo this same view in their text on public relations research. They say: "... evaluation is not the final stage of the public relations process.

In actual practice, evaluation is frequently the beginning of a new effort. The research function overlaps the planning, action and evaluation functions. It is an interdependent process that, once set in motion, has no beginning or end."

The view that evaluation should not be carried out at the end of a communication process, but from the beginning is further amplified in the Macro Model of Evaluation and the notion that evaluative research is different to strategic formative research will be challenged. The distinction between the two blurs when evaluation is conducted in a continuous, beginning to end way and the 'looking back' paradigm of evaluation shifts to a new strategic, forward-planning role.

2. *Setting Objectives*

The second major barrier to be overcome in order to evaluate public relations programs is to set **clear, specific, measurable objectives**. This sounds obvious. But many public relations plans and proposals examined have broad, vague, imprecise, and often immeasurable objectives. PR programs too frequently have stated objectives such as:

- To create greater awareness of XYZ policy or program;
- To successfully launch a product or service;
- To improve employee morale;
- To increase sales of ABC Corporation's solutions / services

These objectives are open to wide interpretation. What level of awareness currently exists? Within what target audience is greater awareness required – e g. within a specific group, or within the community generally? What comprises a successful launch – and, therefore, what should be measured? What is known about employee morale currently? What does management want staff to feel good about? What level of increase in sales of solutions is the public relations activity aiming to achieve?

Clearly, if the current level of awareness of a policy or program is not known, it is impossible to measure any improvement. Also, if management expects 75 per cent

31

awareness as a result of a PR campaign. and 40 per cent is achieved. there will not be agreement on achievement of objectives.

Without specific, unambiguous objectives, evaluation of a public relations program is impossible. Specific objectives usually require numbers – e g. increase awareness from 10 per cent to 30 per cent – and they should specify a time frame such as within the next 12 months.

Some times sub-objectives may be required to gain the specificity needed for measurement. For example, if an overall corporate PR objective is to create community awareness of a company as a good corporate citizen, specific measurable sub-objectives may be to:

(1) Gain favourable media coverage in local media to a nominated level;
(2) Negotiate a sponsorship of an important local activity;
(3) Hold a company open day and attract a minimum of 1,000 people; etc.

While some of these sub-objectives relate to outputs rather than outcomes, a series of micro-objectives is acceptable and even necessary provided they contribute to the overall objective. Sub-objectives provide a series of steps that can be measured without too much difficulty, time or cost.

Leading academics point to lack of clear objectives as one of the major stumbling blocks to evaluation of public relations. Grunig refers to "the typical set of ill-defined, unreasonable, and unmeasurable communication effects that public relations people generally state as their objectives".

Pavlik comments: "PR campaigns, unlike their advertising counterparts, have been plagued by vague, ambiguous objectives".

With vague or overly broad objectives, it may be impossible to evaluate the effects of PR activity, irrespective of the amount of time and money available. This point is also closely related to the next barrier to measuring results of public relations.

3. *Understanding Communication Theory*

To set realistic, achievable objectives and deliver public relations advice and programs that are effective, public relations practitioners need to have at least a rudimentary understanding of communication theory. Assumptions about what communication can achieve lead to misguided and overly optimistic claims in some public relations plans which make evaluation risky and problematic.

Pavlik makes the sobering comment: "... much of what PR efforts traditionally have been designed to achieve may be unrealistic".

Communication theory has evolved from the early, simplistic **Information Processing Model** which identified: *source, message, channel* and *receiver*. As Flay and a number of others point out, the Information Processing Model assumes that changes in knowledge will automatically lead to changes in attitudes, which will automatically lead to changes in behaviour.

This line of thinking was reflected in the evolution of the **Domino Model** of communication and the **Hierarchy of Effects** model which saw *awareness, comprehension, conviction* and *action* as a series of steps of communication where one logically led to the next. Another variation of the Hierarchy of Effects model that has been used extensively in advertising for many years termed the steps *awareness, interest, desire* and *action*. These theories assumed a simple progression from *cognitive* (thinking or becoming aware) to *affective* (evaluating or forming an attitude) to *conative* (acting).

However, a growing amount of research questions these basic assumptions and models. The influential work of social psychologist, Dr Leon Festinger, in the late 1950s challenged the Information Processing Model and the Domino Model of communication

effects. Festinger's **Theory of Cognitive Dissonance** stated that attitudes could be changed if they were juxtaposed with a dissonant attitude but, importantly, dissonance theory held that receivers accepted only messages that were consonant with their attitudes and actively resisted messages that were dissonant.

The view of communication as all powerful was also challenged by broadcaster, Joseph Klapper, whose mass media research in 1960 led to his **"law of minimal consequences"** and turned traditional thinking about the 'power of the Press' and communication effects on its head.

Festinger's Theory of Cognitive Dissonance and Klapper's seminal work contributed to a significant change from a view of communication as all-powerful to a minimal effects view of communication. This has been built on by more recent research such as **Hedging and Wedging Theory**, developed by Professors Keith Stamm and James Grunig, which has major implications for public relations.

Public relations programs too frequently propose to change negative attitudes to positive attitudes. But, according to Hedging and Wedging Theory, when a person with a firmly held (wedged) view is faced with a contrary view, he or she will, at best, hedge. Hedging is defined by Stamm and Grunig as a cognitive strategy in which a person holds two or more conflicting views at the same time. Thus, it may be improbable or impossible for attitudes to be changed diametrically from negative to positive - or vice versa. Attitudes can be moved from wedging to hedging, or hedging to wedging, but not wedging to wedging. Yet, public relations programs frequently propose to do this.

A significant recent contribution to public relations theory is Grunig's **Situational Theory** of communication. In contrast to the simplistic Domino Theory, Situational Theory of communication holds that the relationship between knowledge (awareness), attitudes and behaviour is contingent on a number of situational factors. Grunig lists four key situational factors:
(1) The level of problem recognition;

(2) The level of constraint recognition (does the person see the issue or problem as within their control or ability to do something);

(3) The presence of a referent criterion (a prior experience or prior knowledge); and

(4) Level of involvement.

Results of communication will not always be behavioural. The outcomes of communication may be cognitive (simply getting people to think about something), attitudinal (form an opinion), or behavioural.

Public relations executives should note that results are less likely the further one moves out along the axis from cognition to behaviour. If overly optimistic objectives are set, evaluation of public relations will be a difficult and frequently disappointing experience.

An understanding of Grunig's **Four Models of Public Relations** which describe the evolving types of PR practice from Press Agentry through Public Information to Two-Way Asymmetric and Two-Way Symmetric communication is also important to a study of evaluation, as different objectives pertain to each model and, therefore, different evaluation strategies are required for each.

GRUNIG'S FOUR MODELS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Models	Press agentry	Public information	Two-way asymmetric	Two-way symmetric
Purpose	Propaganda	Dissemination of information	Scientific persuasion	Mutual understanding
Nature of communication	One-way, truth not essential	One-way, truth important	Two-way, imbalanced	Two-way, balanced
Research	Little, press clippings only, usually	Little, readability tests possibly, readership surveys sometimes	Feedback, formative research, evaluation of attitudes	Formative research Evaluation of understanding

Historical figures	P.T Barnum	Ivy Lee	Edward Bernays	Bernays, Educators
Where practiced	Sports, theatre, production promotion	Government, non-profit organizations, structured companies	Competitive business	Regulated business and modern flat structured companies
% of market	15%	50%	20%	15%

In particular, modern Two-Way Asymmetric and Symmetric models of public relations seek to achieve persuasion and understanding rather than simply dissemination of information and, therefore, rely on feedback and evaluative research to gauge results.

The issues raised do not mean to imply that communication has no effect. But they do indicate that it is dangerous to make assumptions about communication outcomes, and suggest that a greater understanding of communication theory is desirable among PR practitioners.

4. *The Multi-Disciplined Nature of PR*

Another of the major challenges in evaluating public relations is the multi-disciplined nature of the practice. Public relations, and its various relatives such as public affairs, corporate relations, etc, are comprised of a number of sub-sets such as media relations, employee relations, community relations, government relations, shareholder relations, and so on.

Also, the practice utilizes a wide range of communication tools or channels including publicity, publications, audio-visual and video programs, events, web sites, sponsorships, etc, to communicate with target audiences. The extensive range of communication activities that can comprise public relations is illustrated in the Macro Communication Model shown below.

Figure 1.

MACRO COMMUNICATION MODEL

Corporate Image

Telephone Reception

Customer Service

On-line services

Multimedia

Sponsorships

Community Relations

Events

Internal Communication

Government Relations

Newsletters, Bulletins

Annual Reports

Video & AV

Brochures, Booklets

The Client

Advertising

Direct Marketing

Sales Promotion

Publicity
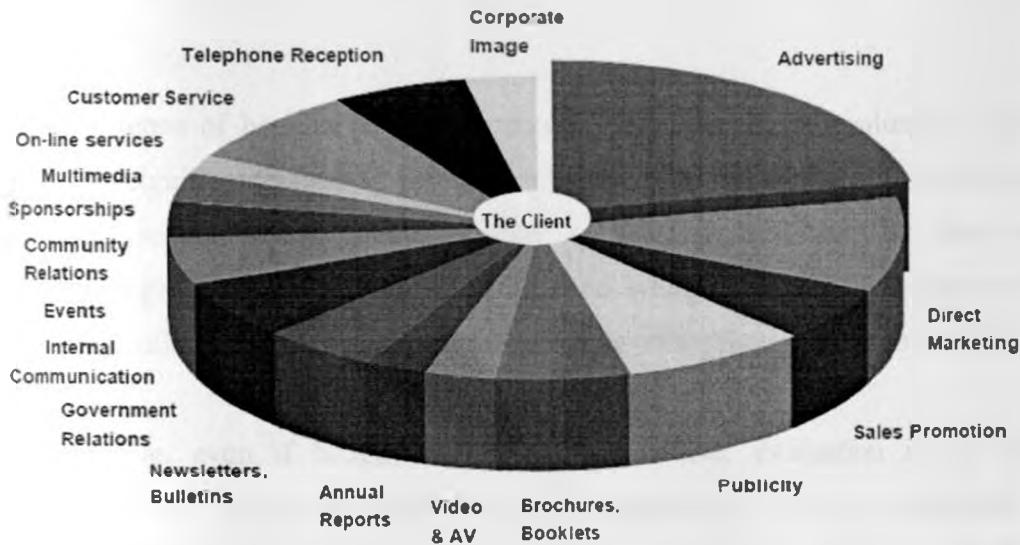
©*Jim R. Macnamara, 1988*

The search for a single method of evaluation for public relations such as an equivalent of a PR Index, is therefore unlikely to be fruitful, if not impossible. Public relations evaluation has to evaluate a wide range of communications and relationships.

5. *The Multi-Step Communication Process*

A major breakthrough in moving towards practical methods for evaluation and measurement of public relations was recognition of the practice of communicating in terms of three stages.

Cutlip, Center and Broom in their widely used text, *Effective Public Relations,* present a model for evaluation with three levels or steps which they term "preparation, implementation and impact".

"Evaluation: The Archilles Heel of the Public Relations Profession", an MA thesis extract published in International Public Relations Review in 1992 32 and the 1994

International Public Relations Association (IPRA) Gold Paper (No. 11) advocated recognition of communication projects and programs in terms of *inputs*, *outputs* and *outcomes* and advocated that each stage should be evaluated.

6. *Cost*

Cost, in terms of both money and time, can pose a barrier to evaluation. But it is not nearly as significant as most practitioners believe. The model for evaluation presented in the next section shows that a number of low-cost and even no cost evaluation methodologies and techniques are available and, while none on its own provides a total solution, collectively they equip PR practitioners with effective tools to evaluate.

Furthermore, even if budget and time are available, evaluation is not possible if objectives are vague and imprecise or if practitioners do not understand research methodologies available. And it is doomed to be a disappointing exercise if a PR plan has over-promised and attempted the impossible.

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and explains the various research methods utilized by the researcher in carrying out this study.

Research methods are all techniques that are used for conduction of research. Research methods or techniques therefore refer to the methods researchers use in performing research operations. In other words, all those methods which are used by the researcher during the course of studying a research problem are termed as research methods.

Since the object of research, particularly applied research, is to arrive at a solution for a given problem, the available data and the unknown aspects of the problem have to be related to each other to make a solution possible. Keeping this in view, this paper proposes a trio thronged approach which will include desk research, quantitative and qualitative research.

3.1 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

For research to be carried out effectively certain series of steps or actions are necessary and these constitute the research process. This study will follow the following steps:

1. *Formulation of the research problem.*
    This involves the formulation of a general topic into a specific research problem whereby the researcher has to understand the problem thoroughly and rephrase it into some meaningful terms form an analytic point of view. The research problem of this study is to find out "The significance of research in PR".

    To make this problem easily analyzable, the researcher will carry out a case study of an organization which as many others requires good public relations - the University of Nairobi. The researcher will then break down the significance or research in PR

into three major areas which constitute the objectives and hypothesis of study. These are:

- Explore the research issues organizations focus on.
- Gain insight into the priority they place on research issues.
- Assess the effectiveness of research for PR.
- Explore the challenges faced in conducting and implementing research for PR.

These factors are the statement of objective and will determine the data that will be collected, the characteristics of the data which are relevant, relations which are to be explored, the choice of techniques to be used in these explorations and the form of the final report. Pertinent terms such as 'public relations', 'research' and others are also clearly defined along with formulation of the problem.

2. Literature review

The researcher has to undertake an extensive literature survey connected with the problem of study. The researcher will utilize journals, magazines, media reports and books among other sources in a bid to examine public relations, research generally and public relations research in particular, the history of PR research, among other topics, as well as to determine what knowledge gaps need to be filled by this study.

3. Development of hypotheses

Working hypotheses are tentative assumptions made in order to draw out and test their logical or empirical consequences. The researcher has to clearly state working hypotheses of the study. These will guide the researcher by delimiting the area of research.

4. Preparing the research design

This refers to the conceptual structure within which the research will be carried out. The preparation of such a design would enable the researcher to be as efficient as possible in yielding maximal information. The purpose of the research design is to provide for the collection of relevant evidence with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money. This depends on the research purpose.

5. Determining sample design

All items under consideration in any field of inquiry constitute a 'universe' or 'population'. A complete enumeration of all items in the 'population' is known as a census inquiry. Common practice is to select only few items from the 'population' or 'universe' for study purposes. The items so selected constitute a sample. The researcher will mainly utilize purposive and random sampling as will be explained further in this chapter.

6. Collection of data

In selecting the methods of collecting data the researcher will take into consideration the nature of the study, its objective and scope, budget, time and desired degree of accuracy.

The researcher will collect data using in-depth interviews, and self-administered questionnaires for the various categories of respondents.

7. Execution of the project

The manner in which the project is executed determines whether the data collected is adequate and dependable. For the in-depth interviews, the researcher will make appointments with experts in the research and PR industries. For these in-depth interviews a discussion guide will be used, and for the self-administered interviews, questionnaires will be prepared and piloted before the actual fieldwork and once the researcher is satisfied that the instrument qualifies in deriving data in line with the objectives, the questionnaires will then be administered.

8. Analysis of data

After collecting the data, the researcher will have the task of analyzing it. Data analysis requires a number of closely related operations such as establishment of categories, the application of these categories to raw data through coding, tabulation and then the drawing of statistical inferences. The unwieldy data emanating mostly from open-ended questions will be condensed into few manageable groups and tables for further analysis. At this stage, the researcher will use:

a) Coding: To transform categories of data into symbols that can be tabulated and counted.

b) Editing: To improve the quality of data for coding.

c) Tabulation: To put classified data in the form of tables. This will be done with the help of SPSS.

9. Generalizations and Interpretation

Once the researcher has tested the hypotheses, it will be possible for to arrive at generalizations. The real value of research lies in its ability to arrive at generalizations. The researcher will also seek to explain his findings on the basis of theory, which in this case is the functionalist theory of communication. This is interpretation.

10. Preparation of the report or thesis

The researcher will prepare a report of what has been done. It will entail an introduction, summary of findings, main report, and conclusion.

3.2 DESK RESEARCH

This tool allows for collection of evidence by way of reviewing already existing documents and records of the matter. In this particular case, it will entail reviewing existing information on research and public relations, communication theories, among other themes related to the topic of study. Some of the materials include:

Gael Walker, **'Public relations practitioners' use of research, measurement and evaluation'** in Australian Journal of Communication, Vol. 24 (2), 1997, Queensland University of Technology.

Nastasia, Sorin. **"Three Metatheoretical Approaches to Public Relations: the Functionalist, Interpretivist and Critical Paradigms"** *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Sheraton New York, New York City, NY.*

'**Public Relations Evaluation: Professional Accountability**', International Public Relations Association (IPRA) Gold Paper.

3.3 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

This type of research involves collecting data that is quantifiable in order to generalise findings among a defined universe for which the research is been conducted.

In this case, it involves a drawing a sample from students of UON from whom information will be collected and this will be used to generalise findings.

Self completion questionnaires - Ideally this study would have been conducted using face-to-face interviews but this study proposes to use self completion questionnaires especially because of limited resources in terms of time and money. In the case of self-completion all that would be required is for the researcher to administer the questionnaires to the students and give them about 20-15 minutes to fill then collect them. Interviewer administered questionnaires would require for the researcher to hire research assistants to ask the questions as they fill in the questionnaire. This would require a lot of time and money which are not available to the researcher.

The total student sample is 66, a small but manageable size especially due to time and funds restrictions. However since the sample will be spread out across Module I and II and to cover both under and post graduate programs, the results will be replicable across the university and thus representative. The data from 66 questionnaires will also be easily analysable for the researcher.

Quantitative target respondents – Students of UON

Level of Study	Number of students per category						Totals
	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	5th Year	6th year	
Undergraduate Module I	8	6	2	2	2	2	22
Undergraduate Module II	8	6	2	2	2	2	22
Post Graduate Masters	4	4	2	0	0	0	10
Post Graduate PHD	4	4	2	2	0	0	12
Total Student Sample							66

3.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

This is an exploratory tool which allows for respondents to give insights into often subconscious motivations and perceptions.

In-depth Interviews

This study proposes to conduct In Depth Interviews (IDIs) with various experts in research and public relations in order to gain further insight of current practice in organizations in Kenya and ideal best practice. This will be ideal for this study as IDIs enable the respondents to express themselves openly and honestly. With qualitative research the emphasis is on the quality of data and on the value added to the study as opposed to quantifiable data.

In-depth Interviews	Totals
Public Relations Experts	2
Research Experts	2
UON Head of PR Department	1
Total IDIs	5

Why in-depth interviews?

The target respondents in question will be difficult to convene at one venue for a focus group discussion – most would like a meeting at their convenience. For the category of PR and research experts, 2 IDIs will be adequate to derive the desired information. Having any more than 2 would be redundant as they would most likely give the same information.

Informal Focus Group discussion

This paper proposes to use another qualitative method to back up data / information received from the quantitative phase; in form of an informal focus group discussion (FGD) with students who are major stakeholders of the UON. A focus group discussion is a forum for exploring a topic in detail with a group of people led by a moderator. The group is selected from a broader population and is homogeneous i.e. share a common experience or area of interest and are often of the same age or gender.

Why an informal Focus Group Discussion?

Due to financial constraints the researcher will have an informal FGD with students in the university wherever there is a group of them gathered and proceed with a discussion on the topic of study, rather than make appointments with them and have them gather at a formal venue for the discussion. Insights gathered from this discussion will greatly go a long way in reinforcing information received from the quantitative phase.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

1. Discussion guides for In-depth Interviews and Focus Group Discussion

   This involves the presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and reply in terms of oral-verbal responses. The researcher will conduct expert interviews with researchers and PR professionals.

   The method of interviewing that will be used by the researcher for both the IDIs and FGD will be *unstructured interviews* which allow a flexibility of approach to questioning. The researcher will not follow a system of pre-determined questions and standardized techniques of recording information.

Because this is an exploratory study, through an informal focus group discussion with students, the interviewer will have more freedom to ask supplementary questions if need be or at times may omit certain questions, or even change the sequence of the questions. The researcher will have greater freedom while recording the responses to include some aspects and exclude others.

2. Questionnaires

A questionnaire consists of a number of questions printed or typed in a definite order on a form or set of forms. The questionnaire will be designed in such a way that it covers the areas of focus of the study, namely – public relations and research i.e. whether the students, staffers have been participated in any customer satisfaction / employee satisfaction survey, what impact it has / could have to the UON environment, etc. The questions will be both open (allowing respondents to explain using their own words) and closed (with fixed alternative answers).

3.6 SITE DESCRIPTION

The focus of this study on the "Significance of Research as a Public Relations Function" is the Universtiy of Nairobi".

The selection of the University of Nairobi for the purpose of this study is because it is an academic institution that is responsible for the many academic research papers that are churned out of it every year but surprisingly there is less of PR research which would go a long way in making the institution a much better organization than it already is. The big question is - can the university broaden its scope of research to include practical and applied research to provide immediate solutions and to build further its profile as a world class university?

3.7 SAMPLE DESIGN AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

A sample design is a definite plan for obtaining a sample from a given population. It refers to the technique or the procedure the researcher would adopt in selecting items for the sample. Sample design may as well lay down the number of items to be included in the sample i.e. the size of the sample. Sample design is determined before data is collected. The researcher must select a sample design that is reliable and appropriate for his/her study.

While developing a sample design the researcher will focus on certain key points in relation to his topic of study:

      I)   Type of universe – This is the clearly defined set of objects.

      II)   Sampling unit –The sampling unit in this study is the UON.

      III)   Source list – A list of experts in the PR and research fields.

      IV)   Size of the sample – Quantitative – 83 students, Qualitative 5 IDIs.

      V)   Parameters of interest – Students of UON and PR, research experts.

      VI)   Budgetary constraints – Self-completion questionnaire, informal FGD.

      VII)   Sampling procedure – Probability and non-probability sampling.

3.7.1 Qualitative IDIs - Non-probability Sampling

This refers to that sampling procedure which does not afford any basis for estimating the probability that each item in the population has of being included in the sample. Non-probability sampling is also known as deliberate, purposive or judgmental sampling.

The *experts* who will provide insight through in-depth interviews will be deliberately selected owing to their experience in the sectors and their select knowledge on the topic of study. Some of them will be people with whom the researcher has had contact with and where the researcher is not able to reach any of them, snowball method will be used whereby the researcher will ask one of the experts to refer her to someone they know in the same field of expertise.

3.7.2 Quantitative self administered Queationnaire - Simple Random Sampling

In this kind of sampling, every item of the universe has equal chance of inclusion in the sample. It is by lottery method that individual units are picked up from the whole group not deliberately. It is blind chance alone that determines whether one item or the other is selected.

Simple random sampling will be used to select *students in the university from different departments.* Here, the researcher will decide on the number of students per level – under graduate or post graduate, module I or module II. Given more time and funds, the researcher would have been able to sample across all departments of the university. The researcher will simply go to Module I and module II classes, undergraduate and post graduate while in session and either derive a list from the class representative or where there is none, get the students to write their names on a piece of paper and use the oldest method of random selection – place the papers in a basket, shuffle them and select a given number of names. Those selected will then be given questionnaires to fill in.

3.8 PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Processing of data implies editing, coding, classification, and tabulation of data so that it is amenable to analysis.

Analysis refers to the computation of certain measures along with searching for patterns of relationship that exist among data groups. The relationships or differences supporting or conflicting with original or new hypotheses should be subjected to statistical tests of significance to determine with what validity data can be said to indicate any conclusions.

In this study, the processing operations that will be used include:

1. Editing – This will involve examining the collected raw data to detect errors and omissions and to correct them where possible. The researcher will carefully scrutinize the completed questionnaires. This will ensure that the data collected is accurate, consistent with other facts gathered, and well arranged to facilitate coding and tabulation. The researcher will edit the questionnaires at two stages.

The first will be field editing whereby she will review the questionnaires to complete what respondents may have written in abbreviation or illegible form. This the researcher will do immediately after conducting the interviews. As a method of quality control, the researcher will request the respondents to provide their telephone contacts in case she may need to clarify some responses, but will encourage them to write them as legibly as possible. Providing the telephone contacts will not be compulsory.

The next stage of editing will be central editing which will take place after all the questionnaires have been completed and gathered. The researcher will go through the questionnaires thoroughly to correct obvious errors such as entries in the wrong place and the like. The researcher will also have to strike out inappropriate answers.

2. Coding

This is the process of assigning numerals or other symbols to answers so that responses can be put into a limited number of categories or classes. The classes should be appropriate to the research problem.

The researcher will reduce several replies into a small number of classes which contain the critical information required for the analysis. The researcher will use manual coding whereby each questionnaire will be assigned a number and placed in rows, and the question numbers will be placed in columns. Then the coded answers will be entered to correspond with the code sheet and question number.

3. Classification

This is the reduction of data into homogeneous groups in order to get meaningful relationships. Data having common characteristics will be placed in one class and in this way all data will be divided into a number of groups or classes. The researcher will use two types of classification.

The first is classification according to attributes. The data will be divided into classes according to the factors they seek to explore. For example, all data on those who have participated in a CSI or ESS and their programme of study for students or years of service for staff, their levels of satisfaction with the UONs service delivery, etc will be grouped together.

Secondly, the researcher will use classification according to class intervals. Here quantitative phenomenon such as age, year of study, etc. Each group or class interval will have an upper limit as well as a lower limit. For example, age will be classified as: 17 – 20, 21 – 24, 25 – 28, 29 – 32, 33-36 and 37 and above.

4. Tabulation

This involves the logical arrangement of data. It is the process of summarizing raw data and displaying it in compact form for further analysis.

For this, the researcher will use a computer programme – SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). All that will be required of the researcher in this case will be to enter the data that has been coded into columns of variables against question numbers and this data will be compressed for tabular display.

As far as analysis of data is concerned, the researcher will employ a measure of both descriptive analysis and inferential analysis.

3.9 CONCLUSION

Once the researcher has gone through all these stages, the findings will be ready for interpretation and generalizations, conclusions and recommendations will be made with regard to the scientific method.

CHAPTER 4: SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

4.0 Field Report

Quantitative fieldwork was conducted from the 29th – 31st of October.

4.0.1 Pilot of field instrument - Questionnaire

A pilot was conducted by the researcher to test the questionnaire – level of complexity of questions and approximate length of time it would take to fill it in. The researcher piloted 5 questionnaires with UON students. In order to gauge the understanding of respondents the researcher administered the interview by asking the questions as respondents answered. These questionnaires were filled in by the researcher.

Using this methodology the interview took 20 minutes to administer and provided an opportunity for the researcher to explain or provide clarification where necessary. Feedback on the questionnaire was that it was short, but the open-ended questions required for them to engage their brains and think yet they were tired – either from class or revision and did not want to be involved in an activity that engaged their minds. The however found the questions very relevant.

On the questions in particular, what emerged from the pilot was that the students were confused about the issue of the university having a PR department; they did not have any idea as to whether the university has a PR department and asked the researcher to inform them further. However, since research seeks to establish respondents' opinions without bias, the researcher could not guide their responses and requested that they fill in the questionnaires based on their current knowledge. Despite this, the pilot questionnaires were successfully completed and were then maintained as part of the sample to be achieved.

Qualitative field report – In-depth interviews

Below is a table of the target versus achieved IDIs:

In-depth Interviews	Target	Achieved
Public Relations Experts	2	0
Research Experts	2	2
UON Head of PR Department	1	1
Total IDIs	5	3

Informal focus group discussion

The researcher conducted an informal FGD with BA students from the department of Sociology on the 30th of October. The group was of mixed gender a total of 8 students – 3 males 5 females. The FGD was conducted at the UON grounds – the researcher met the students as they were revising in a group.

4.1 Limitations of the study – Quantitative

Limited time: Due to work commitment the researcher was unable to dedicate much time in terms of fieldwork days to the study and therefore unable to have a face-to-face interaction with respondents save for introducing herself, explaining briefly about the study and handing them the questionnaires. The researcher dealt with this by remaining in

proximity of the students as they filled the questionnaires in case the required clarification.

Difficulty of meeting quotas - PHD students: The researcher experienced difficulty reaching PHD students in the 3 days of fieldwork. Undergraduate and Masters students were readily available as they entered or exited their classes and the researcher was informed that some PHD students were members of staff at the university. The researcher tried to locate some students with the aim of snowballing (contacting one who would then lead the researcher to others) but this was not effective as most of them would be available past the fieldwork dates of the study. Lack of a PHD quota led the researcher to split the 12 targeted interviews between undergraduate and Master's programmes so as to not have a shortfall in the overall sample.

Reluctance of respondents: Students were hesitant to fill in the questionnaires thinking that the researcher was a member of staff at the university (even after identifying herself) and that whatever responses they gave in the questionnaires would be directly linked to them with consequences for 'unfavourable' responses. The researcher however assured them of her identity as a student and of the anonymity of their identities and responses.

Confusion and lack of awareness of UON PR department: Students were confused by the question on awareness of the university's PR department and kept asking the researcher to clarify. Some students identified the PR department as the reception help desk.

Missing entries – open ended questions: Students found filling in the open-ends bothersome as they had no prior notice of the study and were in the process of going about other business when intercepted by the researcher / research assistants. The researcher attempted to forestall this problem by explaining to them how important it was that they fill in all questions upon introducing the questionnaire. Even so, it was difficult to keep track of each filled questionnaire and request respondents to fill in unanswered questions. Furthermore, questionnaires that were handed to students as a group were

returned in bulk, making it difficult for the researcher to trace the students who filled those particular questionnaires.

4.2 Limitations of the study – Qualitative

Busy respondents: Achieving in-depth interviews was a difficult task for the researcher as most of the experts contacted were busy during the time within which the study was being carried out. The researcher relied on personal contacts especially for research experts and those she attempted to get a hold of between 26th to 29th October were too busy. As regards PR experts, the researcher relied on referrals and snowball method and managed to get an interview scheduled for after the intended fieldwork dates. The researcher was able to meet the UON PR manager and discuss briefly the details of the project and even get responses to some of the questions in the discussion guide.

4.3 Data Analysis and Interpretation

4 Demographics

4.4 Age

Almost 3 in every 5 students (64%) sampled were aged between 20 to 29 years; the typical university-going age for undergraduate and increasingly post-graduate students. Those aged between 30-34 years followed with 23% and few others aged 35 and above. The indication is that the university student population in mostly young / youthful.

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-19	1	1.4	1.9	1.9
	20-24	18	25.7	34.0	35.8
	25-29	18	25.7	34.0	69.8
	30-34	12	17.1	22.6	92.5
	35+	4	5.7	7.5	100.0
	Total	53	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	17	24.3		
Total		70	100.0		

4.5 Gender

There were no quotas for gender as this was expected to fall naturally. Male students were more (58%) with females at 41%.

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	22	31.4	41.5	41.5
	Male	31	44.3	58.5	100.0
	Total	53	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	17	24.3		
Total		70	100.0		

4.6 Level of Education

Almost a third of all students sampled were undergraduates (62%) whereas the post-graduate students were 38%. This quota fell naturally and could be representative of the university as most courses offered are undergraduate.

Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Graduate	33	47.1	62.3	62.3
	Post-graduate	20	28.6	37.7	100.0
	Total	53	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	17	24.3		
Total		70	100.0		

4.7 Education / Year of Study

Of the post-graduate students sampled 60% are in the second year of their studies, while 54% of undergraduates are seniors in their third and fourth years. A mere 3% of undergraduates are in their fifth year – this is from the department of medicine whose undergraduate studies take 6 years.

Education * Year Crosstabulation

			Year					Total
			First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	First
on	Post-graduate	Count	4	12	3	1	0	20
		% within Education	20.0%	60.0%	15.0%	5.0%	.0%	100.0%
		% within Year	36.4%	63.2%	25.0%	10.0%	.0%	37.7%
	Under graduate	Count	7	7	9	9	1	33
		% within Education	21.2%	21.2%	27.3%	27.3%	3.0%	100.0%
		% within Year	63.6%	36.8%	75.0%	90.0%	100.0%	62.3%
		Count	11	19	12	10	1	53
		% within Education	20.8%	35.8%	22.6%	18.9%	1.9%	100.0%
		% within Year	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

4.8 Course of Study

There were also no quotas for course of study as this was expected to fall naturally. Commerce and Sociology students were the most sampled (23%) for both respectively, followed by Journalism (17%), then Education (15%).

Course

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Commerce	12	17.1	22.6	22.6
	Sociology	12	17.1	22.6	45.3
	Journalism	9	12.9	17.0	62.3
	Counselling	6	8.6	11.3	73.6
	Statistics	5	7.1	9.4	83.0
	Education	8	11.4	15.1	98.1
	Medicine	1	1.4	1.9	100.0
	Total	53	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	17	24.3		
Total		70	100.0		

4.9 Admission

There was almost an even balance between students admitted by the joint admissions board (51%) and those in the parallel program (49%).

Admission

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Joint Admissions Board	27	38.6	50.9	50.9
	Parallel Programme	26	37.1	49.1	100.0
	Total	53	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	17	24.3		
Total		70	100.0		

The University of Nairobi – Opinions, attitudes

4.10 Ideal University

The University of Nairobi emerged as the ideal university with 66%, followed by USIU (16%), Strathmore (14%), and finally CUEA (3%).

Ideal

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	UON	24	34.3	66.7	66.7
	USIU	6	8.6	16.7	83.3
	Strathmore	5	7.1	13.9	97.2
	CUEA	1	1.4	2.8	100.0
	Total	36	51.4	100.0	
Missing	System	34	48.6		
Total		70	100.0		

4.10.1 Reasons for choice of UON as ideal university

Responses fro the students as to why the UON is the ideal university as are:

- Has students from different cultures and communities
- Well organized and structured system
- Many academic disciplines /courses offered at various campuses
- Well-stocked library
- Competent lecturers – leading professors and lecturers in the country
- Best university In East Africa
- Best facilities
- Quality education
- Competitive curriculum
- Conducive learning environment

4.11 UON Reputation as World Class University

There seems to be a thin line between students who agree (51%) that the UON is living up to its reputation as a world class university and those who disagree (49%), with a difference of only 2% between the two categories.

Reputation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	26	37.1	49.1	49.1
	No	27	38.6	50.9	100.0
	Total	53	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	17	24.3		
Total		70	100.0		

4.12 UON rating on service delivery –education

Of the students sampled 37% were of the view that the university is doing well as far as service delivery in terms of education is concerned – these are those who rated excellent (13%) and good (34%). A further 38% feel that service delivery is neither good nor bad.

Delivery

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Poor	1	1.4	1.9	1.9
	Bad	7	10.0	13.2	15.1
	Neither good nor bad	20	28.6	37.7	52.8
	Good	18	25.7	34.0	86.8
	Excellent	7	10.0	13.2	100.0
	Total	53	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	17	24.3		
Total		70	100.0		

University of Nairobi PR Department

4.13 Student Satisfaction Survey

Majority of students (96%) have not take part in a student satisfaction survey carried out in the university. Only 4% indicated that they have participated in such a survey.

CSS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	2	2.9	3.8	3.8
	No	51	72.9	96.2	100.0
	Total	53	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	17	24.3		
Total		70	100.0		

4.14 Awareness of PR Department

Awareness of the UON's PR department is at 40%. A significant 60% of UON students are not aware that the university has a PR department.

Awareness

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	21	30.0	39.6	39.6
	No	32	45.7	60.4	100.0
	Total	53	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	17	24.3		
Total		70	100.0		

4.15 Firsthand Experience with UON PR department

Of the students who are aware that the university has a PR department, only 19% have had firsthand interaction / experience with the department.

4.15.1 Level of interaction with UON PR department

Students who have had direct interaction with the UON PR department indicate that they have done so in the following capacities:

- Enquiries
- Change of registered course / department
- Initial registration to join the university
- Admission
- Enrollment to join the UON

4.15.2 Perceived role of the UON PR department

Students were asked what they think is the role of the PR department. These are their opinions:

- Organizing and planning events
- Student relations
- Guide students
- Protect university image
- Handle media relations
- Enhance public relations between UON and the public art large
- Better the image of UON nationally and internationally
- Act as an interface between the public and the university
- Inform the public about the university
- Keep students informed about the on-goings in the university
- Cater to student needs
- Market, advertise the university
- Offer customer care training to staff
- Advise parents and students

4.16 Communication of programmes before implementation

About a third of the students are of the view that the university does not communicate developments, changes affecting them before these are implemented. The university proceeds and implements / actions changes without prior communication to the students.

Communication

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	18	25.7	34.6	34.6
	No	34	48.6	65.4	100.0
	Total	52	74.3	100.0	
Missing	System	18	25.7		
Total		70	100.0		

4.17 Student communication of programmes before implementation & mode of communication

Almost four in every five students (77%) who indicated that the university does communicate, feel that the method in which the university communicates developments in the university, new programmes, courses, changes is through notice boards.

Communication * Mode Crosstabulation

			Mode		
			Notice Boards	Public Announcement	Total
Communication	Yes	% within Communication	76.5%	23.5%	100.0%
		% within Mode	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total		% within Communication	76.5%	23.5%	100.0%
		% within Mode	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

4.18 UON seeking student opinions

A significant majority of students of UON feel that the university does not bother to seek their opinions on matters that affect / impact student life.

Opinion

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	3	4.3	5.7	5.7
	No	50	71.4	94.3	100.0
	Total	53	75.7	100.0	
Missing	System	17	24.3		
Total		70	100.0		

4.19 UON seeking student feedback

Further, majority of students also feel that other than not seeking their opinions / views, the university does not elicit their feedback on programmes, projects, initiatives that it implements. There is no evaluation to gauge / measure the feasibility or results of initiatives.

Feedback

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	3	4.3	5.8	5.8
	No	49	70.0	94.2	100.0
	Total	52	74.3	100.0	
Missing	System	18	25.7		
Total		70	100.0		

4.19.1 Impact of seeking students' opinions and feedback

All students who indicated that the university does not seek their opinions / feedback indicated that they would like for it to do so as certain goals would be achieved that would be beneficial to either the students or the university:

- Balance between students and the administration
- Students will be involved in decision-making on matters that affect them

- The university would come up with better initiatives that actually work for the students
- There would be an environment of creativity / improvement
- No student unrest
- Sense of identity and involvement for students
- Better strategy and decision-making for the university

4.20 Issues for UON to engage students

Students feel that issues upon which the university should involve / engage them are:
- Academic developments
- Student policy
- Extra curricular activities
- Fees structure
- Accommodation
- Syllabus / course content
- Meals
- Selection of lecturers

4.21 Means of student engagement

Students of UON would like the university to engage them (seek their opinions and feedback) by the following means:

- Departmental forums (students meetings departmentally but with representation at a larger scale)
- Administering questionnaires – allowing for anonymity of students in order to protect them from victimization
- Suggestion boxes – that are checked often and suggestions taken into consideration
- E- surveys – allowing for students to fill them in and submit online

4.22 Barriers to conducting / implementing research

Some of the challenges faced by the university in conducting and implementing research according the UON students include:

- Lack of interest
- Fear of student reactions to research results
- Research will create high expectations from students
- Lack of personnel to conduct research
- Lack of funding fro research
- Corruption
- Poor execution process
- Poor implementation, difficulty of implementing change
- Reluctant staff
- Lack of new ideas

4.23 Rating of UON student relations

On university-student relations, 46% of students feel that relations are bad, 40% say they are neither good nor bad, and a mere 10% feel that relations between students and the university are good.

Rating

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Poor	2	2.9	4.0	4.0
	Bad	23	32.9	46.0	50.0
	Neither good nor bad	20	28.6	40.0	90.0
	Good	5	7.1	10.0	100.0
	Total	50	71.4	100.0	
Missing	System	20	28.6		
Total		70	100.0		

4.23.1 Reasons for rating

Half of the students (poor 4% & bad 46%) feel that UON-student relations are unsatisfactory for the following reasons:

65

- Some students have not experienced any university-student relations
- UON does not care to maintain good image with students once they join the university
- Lack of positive and welcoming attitude
- Poor redress of issues voiced out loud by students
- Unfriendly staff
- Poor service delivery to students
- Tribal university-student relations
- Failure to bridge gap between regular and parallel students
- Academic relations only

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 UON Image

Three out of every five students the UON as their ideal university stating that it has competent staff, is the best university in East Africa and among the best in Africa, has diverse programmes / course of study, is a reputable university, among other positive statements. The implication of this is that the image of the university among students both at undergraduate and post-graduate levels is positive and it is a university they are proud to be associated with.

This is good news for the UON PR department as there is already a good foundation – in terms of positive association. What is required is for standards to be maintained and improved, and for the general public as well to have a positive image which would then influence potential university students to join the university whether admitted through the joint admissions board or through parallel programmes.

In terms of business, it would beneficial for the university to attract many parallel students as it faces stiff competition from the many mushrooming private universities. The UON has the advantage of a strong name associated positive terms when it comes to education so the PR department just need to continually build its image.

5.1 Awareness and role of UON PR department:

Is low and many students are surprised at the question of whether they are aware of its existence. Further those who think they are aware identify it as the help desk, the reception, guards who guide and give directions. When asked about the role the PR department should play, many students have no idea.

The implication of this is two-fold:

First that awareness of public relations and what it entails is low. The students who indicated that they were aware of its existence associated it with more of administrative functions such as enquiries and giving directions other than more managerial functions such as:

(1) Programming—analyzing problems and opportunities, defining goals, determining the public to be reached, and recommending and planning activities.

(2) Writing and editing materials such as press releases, speeches, stockholder reports, product information, and employee publications;

(3) Placing information in the most advantageous way;

(4) Organizing special events such as press functions, award programs, exhibits, and displays;

(5) Setting up face-to-face communication, including the preparation and delivery of speeches;

(6) Providing research and evaluation using interviews, reference materials, and various survey techniques; and

(7) Managing resources by planning, budgeting, and recruiting and training staff to attain these objectives. Specialized skills are required to handle public opinion research, media relations, direct mail activities, institutional advertising, publications, film and video production, and special events

Students hardly seemed to be aware of any of these functions or how integral the PR department is to the university. This is of great concern for PR as a discipline of study and a professional practice. If today's scholars are not fully aware of what it entails, what is the future of PR in Kenya?

The **second implication is that the university's PR department is not actively engaging students** by seeking their opinions and feedback through opinion polls, student satisfaction surveys, or directing communication to them that originates from the department. Students want to be engaged by the university besides just attending lectures. They expect to be consulted and have their views and opinions listened to. The best department to initiate this kind of relationship is the PR department.

5.2 Participation in student satisfaction survey:

Most of the students sampled have not participated in a student satisfaction survey. This includes those who have been in the university for 4 years and more. The university however conducted a stakeholder satisfaction survey in 2007 and due to sampling procedures used then (n-1150) and now for this study (n=66) chances of reaching students who were sampled during that study are very low. On the other hand, the implication is also that such studies are few and far between, the last one in the recent past being the 2007 survey.

5.3 Level of engagement:

Students would like to be engaged in the following ways by the university: keep students informed and aware of developments / changes in the university that affect their academic life for example how new fees structures are arrived at, new academic staff, among other issues. Students gave the university a low rating as far as university-student relations are concerned.

5.4 Communication:

Students would also like to have a convenient means of communication and on this note, would like to see the university embrace technology and use e-media. They cite the development of the UON student portal as a great idea but are disappointed by the lack of updates – some pages constantly indicated as 'under construction'. All the same they feel that this is a positive step towards enhancing university – student communication.

5.5 Relevance of stakeholder research:

It is much appreciated by those who fall under the stakeholder category. Students of the UON are of the view that it would be very relevant and a good method for the university to engage and be part of student life in some way. Students are however concerned that even if the university engages them and seeks their opinions and feedback, findings from the study would not be made public, and would not be implemented.

5.6 SWOT Analysis

Strengths
- Poitive image and association with university
- UON the ideal university in Kenya
- UON delivering quality service in terms of education
- UON living up to its world class university status.
- UON is a strong brand - historical and current association

Weaknesss
- Non-existence of university -student relations
- Lack of opinion polling to gauge student attitudes / opinions on developments/ initiatives / campaigns
- Lack of knkowledge of UON PR department and its role

Opportunities
- Adoption of new technology to keep up with the times and a young population of students
- High likelihood of UON positive image being further reinforced to potential students and general public
- Opportunity to attract foreign students and funding for varoius academic and delvelopmental projects.

Threats
- Mushrooming private universities all over Kenya - serious competition for UON parallel and even regular programs
- Migration of Kenya students to Uganda - to both public and private universities
- Consequesnces of student disengagement and dissatisfaction - strikes and disruption

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

To researchers:

Inform and educate scholars and professionals on applied, practical research and what it entails. Many are educated in universities and colleges on research methods and do engage in academic research. but are not educated on practical research that seeks to attain immediate solutions for current problems / issues.

The benefits of applied, practical research are not well understood and appreciated. It is upon researchers (research experts, research firms and the research association in Kenya – MSRA to inform and educate the masses on what can be achieved with research). In this day and age, the survival and existence of organizations depends much on their ability to keep up with a changing environment. attract and retain customers and staff. To do this, organizations must be well equipped with facts / data which will then inform their strategy.

The biggest advantage of professionals be it in fields of marketing, PR, in strategic management understating research is that those who are directly involved in implementing it or in making decisions based on research findings is that they will be able to set clear and concise research objectives and accurately interpret their findings.

To PR Practitioners:

Break down functions of PR from micro to macro in order to have a clear guideline for research. PR is multi-disciplined and multi-functional and the major reason as to why organizations do not pay much attention to research for PR is that PR practitioners cannot easily place a finger on what aspect or function of PR requires research. Along with Public relations comes public affairs. corporate relations, etc, which are comprised of a number of sub-sets such as media relations, employee relations, community relations, government relations, shareholder relations, and so on. There are a wide range of communications and relationships to be evaluated in PR and therefore it is imperative

71

that practitioners understand each of these and proceed with designing and appropriate research method based on concise objectives.

To the UON PR department

Since students already have a positive image of the university and have overwhelmingly chosen the UON as their ideal university, the PR department has a mandate to ensure that this positive attitude is maintained and built further and even more, propagated to potential students, parents and the general public. The university can achieve this by:

Conduct regular stakeholder surveys – the challenge of reaching all students for example during the survey period need not be a concern as research is not intended to reach the whole universe under study unless it is a census. Selecting a proportion that is representative of the total student population would do, and whatever the findings, they would be representative enough of the whole student population. If it is still too much of a task to hold such a survey, it could be done departmentally - running the survey periodically targeting few departments at a go.

Demystify the PR department – majority of students are not aware that the UON has a PR department and have no idea of the role it plays or is supposed to play. Most have not had firsthand experience with the department and those who have cite their experiences as – being assisted during registration, the reception / help desk, providing directions to students and guest around the university, the guards and Gandhi wing, etc. These varied experiences imply that not many have an understanding of the mandate of the department. Other departments for example finance – the UNES office – are very clear on their role in the university and there are no ambiguities. In order for the PR department to even be relevant in the university, there must be an understanding of why it exists.

Clarity of objectives and transparency of findings: Conduct stakeholder research with very clear objectives and be open to the findings with the knowledge that stakeholders may expect findings to be implemented immediately.

Educate stakeholders on research – what it entails, its scientific inclination and thus the basis upon which findings would be interpreted and implemented, and the ability / capacity of the university to implement the findings. Students seemed to think that whatever their opinion as an individual should matter to the university and any suggestions they make individually must be implemented. Thus implies that the understanding of applied research still has a long way to go. The university therefore has great responsibility in further educating students and being open as to the lengths the university can go in implementing research findings.

To the UON management

Research should be a priority area for budgetary allocation every financial year – Funding for research was cited by students as one of the possible challenges faced by the university in conducting and implementing stakeholder research. Majority of students sampled in the study – including those who have been in the university for the past 4 years, have never participated in a student satisfaction survey. Students are the key public of the university and therefore eliciting their opinions or feedback is integral to the success of the UON as a world class institution.

General recommendations to PR practitioners and researchers

This paper placed emphasis on stakeholder research as a key research area for PR, but PR practitioners need to conduct research on many more aspects; something that is not taking place at a large scale in organizations in Kenya. There are a variety of tools / methods that can be used for PR research be it stakeholder or evaluative. Researchers are aware of these tools and may be utilizing them while PR practitioners may be aware of them but not utilizing, or have no knowledge of these. The good news is that with all these methods available, PR practitioners have a wide range of choice and almost no excuse for not conducting research for PR.

Some tools, techniques and research methods that researchers can guide PR practitioners to utilize – depending on intended outcomes are:

Secondary Data

Information gained from sources other than primary (i.e. new original) research. Many research studies are conducted and made publicly available which can assist PR practitioners. These include social research publicized in the media or released by research companies and research reports available on-line through Web sites such as those of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), International Association of Business Communicators (IABC), and commercial on-line services such as CompuServe's PR & Marketing Forum.

Case Studies

Case studies are easily collected and can be used for comparison or to serve as a model to follow. For instance, an organization undergoing a name change and lacking budget to commission research to identify target audience attitudes and needs, collected case studies of a number of organizations which had undergone name changes and then emulated the strategies which seemed to be effective for them. Case studies can be used to identify best practice and to plan crisis communication.

Readability Tests

While not conclusive, readability tests typically estimate the number of years of education (secondary or tertiary) that a reader needs in order to easily understand the text. Methods include Gunning's Fog Index, the Flesh Formula, the Dale-Chall method, Cloze Procedure or Signalled Stopping Techniques (SST). These are very simple and can be self-administered by PR practitioners with a little training and no cost.

Media Monitoring

The most common form of evaluating public relations is media monitoring. However, press clippings and transcripts or tapes of electronic media broadcasts, provide only quantitative evaluation. They show how much coverage was achieved – crudely termed 'measurement by kilogram'. They do not show the quality of coverage achieved.

Clippings and transcripts, while useful, perform a limited role in measuring *output*. They are essentially collection of data and, as Gael Walker from the University of Technology Sydney notes: "... collection of data is only the beginning of research". 39

Press clippings, tapes and transcripts can also be misleading for a number of reasons:

1. **Negative and neutral coverage are included** with positive mentions;

2. Coverage is included from **unimportant or low circulation media** as well as major influential publications and programs;

3. Coverage is included with only **passing mention** of the organization, its products or services;

4. **Competitors may be mentioned** in the coverage and, in some cases, may receive more mention than the reviewing organization;

5. Articles **may discuss peripheral issues**;

6. And, most importantly, the organization's **key messages may not be included** in the coverage.

Media monitoring also suffers from a practical disadvantage. Piles of press clippings are unlikely to be read by busy management suffering from information overload. Presentation of these clippings to management is not likely to evoke a positive response. The up side of this is that in Kenya organizations can outsource media monitoring for example to Synovate which specializes in this. They then keep a record of all media material (paper, TV, radio) from various media and run analysis on timing, quality, among other aspects.

Advertising Value Equivalents (AVE)

Editorial coverage in the media is sometimes evaluated by calculating the advertising value equivalent of the space or time. This is done by multiplying the column inches of press coverage or seconds of radio and TV air time by the respective advertising rate of each medium. This practice provides quantitative data –often large numbers in dollar terms - which makes it appealing as a form of PR evaluation.

However, editorial and advertising are not directly comparable for several reasons. On one hand, editorial is often more credible than advertising because it appears under the imprimatur of the editor or writer and is seen to be independent, objective comment.

On the other hand:

1. Editorial articles **may be placed anywhere** in a publication or program, including being down the back sometimes, while the positioning (which can significantly affect impact) and design/layout of advertising is controlled by the client;

2. Editorial may contain **criticism**, which is not present in advertising;

3. Editorial often contains references to **competitors** or opposition views which advertising does not contain; and

4. Editorial sometimes contains **errors** or fact or messages which advertising does not.

In some cases, a 'credibility loading' is added to AVE calculations by multiplying the advertising value equivalent by a factor of three or even higher on the assumption that editorial is more believable than advertising. There is no research basis for this practice and it is spurious considering the points raised previously.

Public relations practitioners should be careful in using advertising value equivalents and are well advised to use and recommend more sophisticated and reliable methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Advertising Value Equivalents are generally invalid as an evaluation research methodology.

Media Content Analysis

Media coverage and comment are a vast under-utilized body of data in most organizations. John Naisbitt demonstrated in his popular book, *"Megatrends"* that media content analysis can provide valuable insights into what is likely to be on the public agenda in the future.

It is perhaps not surprising then that the most widely used method of evaluating PR beyond simple media monitoring is media content analysis. A number of research

companies now offer specialist and highly sophisticated media content analysis services in the US, UK, Europe, Canada, Japan and Asia Pacific, including CARMA International, The Delahaye Group, Precis and InfoPress' IMPACT system.

Paul Noble argues that "media evaluation is not the answer to the evaluation of public relations programs as a whole, although one might be tempted to think otherwise given some of the hyperbole surrounding it". However, he acknowledges that "media evaluation does have a very positive role to play …"

The Macro Model of Evaluation clearly suggests that media content analysis is but one methodology or tool for evaluating public relations. Given the high proportion of PR activity that is still focused on media relations and publicity, and the ability of computer-aided media content analysis systems to produce numeric data, charts and graphs that meet the information penchant of numerically-orientated management, this field of evaluation is likely to continue to grow.

The sophistication and statistical reliability of media content analysis systems vary, but well-developed systems evaluate *qualitative* criteria such as whether media coverage reaches key target audiences, whether it focuses on the main issues, and whether it contains the organization's messages. Also, media content analysis can be used to measure share of voice compared with competitors and identify and track issues (ie. environmental scanning).

Leading Float
Volume & Favourability
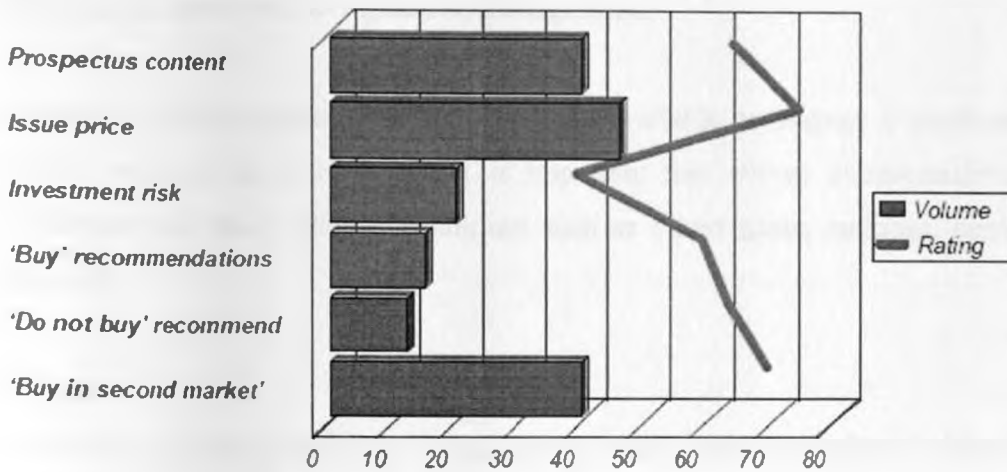
Media analysis can be a powerful tool for not only looking back, as Noble says, but also for forward planning. The chart in the above figure for instance, clearly shows that 'investment risk' is the issue which is attracting unfavorable media attention in relation to the company listing and, therefore, public relations strategy can be dynamically altered to address this issue. Such information can be available quarterly, monthly or even weekly through media analysis.

The underlying premise of media analysis, of course, is that media coverage is either likely to influence future public opinion or it reflects existing public opinion. Media analysis does not enter into the controversial debate over whether the media *create* or *reflect* or, as is likely to be the case, both. Whichever is the case; trends in media coverage generally correlate with public opinion and, therefore, can be used as a barometer and an early warning system.

Audience and Reader Surveys

Surveys are one of the most commonly used research instruments, employed for market research, customer satisfaction studies and social trends research. Customized surveys can be used in public relations. For instance, reader surveys can and should be used to

evaluate reader attitudes and use of publications. Audience surveys can be used at or after events to evaluate impact (ie. outcomes). Surveys are also a key evaluation tool for use in new, emerging practices such as reputation management.

Surveys can be self-administered if budget is not available to engage a professional research firm or consultant. However, it is important that survey questionnaires are properly constructed using reliable techniques such as Likert scale, rankings, semantic differential, etc.

Focus Groups

Public relations can also make use of focus groups, either formal or informal. Ideas can be pre-tested in small focus groups. If formal focus groups are not available or not possible within a budget, a ready-made group can be utilized. For instance, a company planning an employee newsletter and not able to afford formal research can have a staff canteen frequented by several hundred employees each lunch hour. The PR consultant can visit the staff canteen over several days asking staff what they wanted in a newsletter. This would not yield statistically valid quantitative research, but would be useful qualitative evaluation that will then enable the company to ensure its newsletter meets staff tastes, expectations and information needs.

5.8 Summary – study findings against hypotheses

This paper began with some assumptions (based on the objectives of the study) about the UON PR and research situation and at the conclusion of this study, some generalizations can be made against each hypothesis:

- Stakeholder research is the main focus of organizations / PR practitioners.
- Organizations place high priority on stakeholder research.

Based on the findings, stakeholder research does not seem to be the main focus of UON. Students sampled have not participated in any student satisfaction survey and are not even aware that there exists as PR department that would be responsible for this function. Even though the university has in the recent past (2007) conducted a

stakeholder satisfaction survey, such surveys are not conducted regularly enough to continually gauge and measure stakeholder expectations against satisfaction.

⬆ Research for PR is effective in management and strategic decision making.

Research for PR be it stakeholder or evaluation research is indeed important and integral to any business that cannot operate in a vacuum. Stakeholders i.e. students of UoN want to be engaged by the university; have their opinions listened to and feedback sought as this will create amicable relations rather than breed resentment and anger that could easily escalate into unrest. Effective and efficient management must take stock of this in order to make wise business decisions.

⬆ Lack of knowledge, expertise and understanding of research is a major hindrance to its conduction and implementation.

According to students of the UoN, the university lacks some fundamentals to enable it conduct and implement research. These include trained personnel, funds, interest / will, transparency, among other factors. According to research experts, expertise on practical research in Kenya is highly wanting, greatly under-appreciated and hardly ever included in budgetary allocations.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire – Students of the University of Nairobi

Study: To:

- Explore the research issues organizations focus on.
- Gain insight into the priority they place on research issues.
- Assess the effectiveness of research for PR.
- Explore the challenges faced in conducting and implementing research for PR.

Instructions: Please tick or underline your answer and explain if required.

SECTION 1: Demographics

1. Age
    a) 15 - 19
    b) 20 - 24
    c) 25 - 29
    d) 30 - 34
    e) 35 and above

2. Gender
    a) Female
    b) Male

3. Level of study
    a) Undergraduate
    b) Post- graduate

4. Year of study
a) First
b) Second
c) Third
d) Fourth
e) Fifth
f) Sixth

5. Academic department

6. Course of study

SECTION II

1. How were you admitted to the university?
a) Joint admissions Board
b) Parallel Program

2. Please name your ideal university in Kenya and explain reason for your choice.

3. Do you think that the UON lives up to its reputation as a world class university?
a) Yes
b) No

    ii. Please explain why.

4. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate the university's service delivery in terms of education?

    ii. Please explain the reason for your rating.

5. Have you ever participated in a Student satisfaction survey conducted by the UON?
    a) Yes
    b) No

6. Are you aware that the UON has a PR department?

a) Yes
b) No

7. Have you had any firsthand experience with the UON PR department?

a) Yes
b) No

    ii. If yes, in what capacity? Please explain.

8. What do you think is the role of the UON public relations department?

9. Do you feel that new programmes. courses, developments and / changes are communicated before their implementation?
a) Yes
b) No

    ii. If yes, how are these communicated?

a) Notice boards
b) External Media (Specify which)

c) In house magazines
d) Public announcements

10. Does the university seek your opinions / insight before embarking on new developments, campaigns, initiatives?
a) Yes
b) No
    ii. If no, do you think it should? What would this achieve?
    iii. If yes, please give examples of when this has happened.

11. Does the university seek feedback from the students on various initiatives it offers ie courses, campaigns, etc?
a) Yes
b) No
    ii. If no, do you think it should? What would this achieve?
    iii. If yes please give examples of when the university sought your feedback

12. What are the 2 major things you think the university ought to do to increase national and international awareness of its services and world class education status?

13. What are the 3 top issues / matters you think the university ought to seek your opinions about? Please rank them in order of importance.

	Rank
a) University student policy	
b) Academic developments	
c) Student extra curricular activities	
d) Other (Specify)	

14. What are the top 3 methods you think the university should use to elicit students' opinions? Please rank in order of importance.

a) Departmental forums
b) General student assemblies
c) Administering questionnaires

11. What do you think are the 3 major challenges the university faces in conducting research (student satisfaction, programme evaluation)?

12. On a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent, how would you rate the university's student relations.

    ii.   Please explain the reason for your rating.

Thank you!

Appendix II

Discussion Guide for PR / research experts

Objectives

The overarching objective is to understand and determine the significance of research as a PR function.

Specifically the study will seek,

- Explore the research issues organizations focus on.
- Gain insight into the priority they place on research issues.
- Assess the effectiveness of research for PR.
- Explore the challenges faced in conducting and implementing research for PR.

Questions

- Please tell me your name & your role in this organization?
- Please give me a general overview of the PR / research market in Kenya.
- Are organizations keen on practicing PR / research?
- What kinds of organizations are keen / not keen on research / PR?

Gain insight into priority areas of research

- For organizations that do practice research / PR, what functions do they place most priority on?
- Why do you think these functions are most significant?
- For organizations that conduct research, what areas of research are most commonly practiced? Market – (Consumer - FMCG, B2B, Stakeholder) social, opinion polling, etc.
- For organizations that practice PR, what kind of research is conducted?

Assess the effectiveness of research as a PR function

- In your opinion, how significant is stakeholder research (CSS, ESS,) for an organization? How can such research transform an organization and contribute significantly towards the achievement of the organization's goals?

Understand challenges faced in implementing research for PR

- Why do you think some organizations do not place priority on research / PR.
- What are the main challenges faced by organizations in Kenya in conducting research.

- What are the main challenges faced in practicing PR.
- What are the main challenges faced in conducting research for PR – stakeholder, evaluative research?

Discussion guide for head of PR department UON

- Please give me an overview of what the PR department of the university does.

Gain insight into priority areas of PR / research
- Why do you think it is important / relevant for the university to have a PR department?
- What are the 3 key PR functions carried out by the UON PR department?
- What kind of research has the PR department ever carried out?
- How often does the PR department carry out research for PR?
- When was the last time the department carried out evaluative research as follow up to programmes / initiatives / campaigns to derive feedback from students / staff eg on the online students portal, delivery of UNES, etc?
- When was the last time the university conducted a customer / employee satisfaction survey?

Assess the effectiveness of research as a PR function
- What was the main aim of this study and what objectives were achieved?
- What was the reaction by the students / employees/ suppliers to this survey?
- What was the outcome in terms of implementing the findings of the study?

Understand the challenges faced in conducting research for PR
- What challenges does the university face in conducting research for PR?
- What challenges does the university face in implementing findings from research for PR?

exchange rate changes and the size and duration of the foreign currency exposure (Shapiro, 2002).

1.1.2 Microfinance Institutions in Kenya

The World Bank defines Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) as institutions that engage in relatively small financial transactions using various methodologies to serve low income households, micro enterprises, small scale farmers, and others who lack access to traditional banking services. It is the providing of loans and banking services to the low income; small and micro entrepreneurs (SMEs) to help them engage in productive activities, to better organize their financial lives as well as expand their businesses (Chu, Michael 1998). The key objective of MFIs is to provide micro credit and other financial services like savings to the otherwise poor people and help alleviate poverty. Micro Finance has been recognized as one of the most important tools for poverty alleviation (KWFT PILLAR 2005).

The Kenya Microfinance sector consists of a large number of competing institutions which vary in formality, commercial orientation, professionalism, visibility, size and geographical coverage. These institutions range from informal organizations e.g. rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCAs), financial services associations (FSAs) (Dondo 2003). The goal of MFI organizations in Kenya is to raise the levels of income and welfare of people. They support the poor and unemployed by giving them loans often without collateral to establish small businesses. Kenyans today are faced by increased poverty, unemployment and insecurity of the AIDS pandemic, scarcity of food and rural urban migration among others. MFIs address the above problems by accessing small loans at affordable repayment rates, and other financial services for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE). These take the form of self-help projects and individual enterprises. Most MFIs lend up to a maximum of Shs. 500,000 and a minimum of Shs. 5,000 per applicant. The 1999 MSE base line survey found that micro-financing, a core source of funding for micro and small enterprises contributes about 18% of the county's GDP and employs 2.3 million people (The Financial Standard, March 19, 2002).