



COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

Public relations in sport: A case study on The South African Hockey Association with a focus on Social Media in public relations strategies.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Background of Study

The South African Hockey Association (SAHA) is tasked with the responsibility of the management and functionality of indoor and outdoor hockey in South Africa. This includes the administration, development and coordination of all activities of the game in areas such as coaching, umpiring and playing whether at International, Provincial, Club or School level. SAHA is a member of the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC), the Africa Hockey Federation (AHF) and the International Hockey Federation (FIH). SAHA organises annual Inter Provincial Tournaments (IPTs) for the four age groups (U13, U16, U18 and open) for both males and females as well as liaising with other international hockey federations and governing bodies to partake in various international test series and tournaments such as World Cups, Commonwealth Games and The Olympics (South African Hockey Association, 2012).

As with many other organisations, SAHA has in recent years adopted social media platforms to communicate with their stakeholders after having a website established for several years prior. Although SAHA is the governing body for all hockey in South Africa, this research will focus on the Men's and Women's National Teams and how the publicity is managed for these two teams. The social media platforms that are currently used by South African Men's and Women's teams are Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. This research will therefore focus on the content, management and connections that are facilitated by The SAHA website, the three Twitter pages (SA_Hockey, SA_Hockey_Men, and sawomenshockey), the two Instagram pages (sa_hockey_men and sawhockey) and the two Facebook pages (SA Hockey Men and SA Womens Hockey Team).

This usage of social media offers a research opportunity that will assist organisations such as SAHA to utilise social media to its advantage with regards to public relations. Even though there is a significant rise in the interest of research in social media for corporate use, there is very little notable research specifically dealing with the use of

social media for public relations activities in the sporting sector. This research uses a range of theories and related studies on public relations in various fields in order to develop a viable framework that can enhance the public relation efforts for The South African Hockey Association so that they can optimise social media to ensure maximum engagement with followers.

1.2 Introduction

Throughout my academic career I have always enjoyed the research aspect to my studies and during my degree in Corporate Communications and my honours in Cultural Studies and Media, I particularly enjoyed sections that dealt with Public Relations. I was interested in the dynamics between an organisation and its target audience, and how customers and their expectations influence an organisation to offer its target audience the best possible service or product based on the needs and expectations of its customers. I became interested in identifying the collaborative relationship between an organisation and its target audience and how this type of relationship needs to be established in order to make the organisation successful.

Apart from my studies, I have been heavily involved in sport and cultural activities since pre-school, whether it's been participating on the hockey field or dance floor or sitting in the stands supporting my favourite team. My father owned a box in The Kingspark Stadium, in Durban, where I supported The Sharks and The Springboks for many years. Only now, once I have studied public relations, do I really understand and fully appreciate how much input and effort goes into the public relations strategies of a sport team. After realising this, I started asking questions about the Public Relations strategies surrounding the sport I am heavily involved in and passionate about: hockey. Studying towards my masters in this particular field led me to acquiring an internship at Frontiers Sport and Entertainment, which allowed me to gain first-hand knowledge and field experience on the topic by working with key stakeholders of the research. This internship proved to be a pivotal role in my research as well as giving me the opportunity to earn practical experience that will serve me throughout my professional career.

Performing this research and working towards my Masters, gives me the opportunity to combine my interest in public relations and my passion for sport, as well as adding to the limited qualitative research of the public relations function and social media use in the sporting industry. Through qualitative research I aimed to investigate how public relations is applied within the sporting context, with a particular focus on The South African National Hockey Teams, with the objective of how the governing body of hockey in South Africa can maximise the use of social media as a tool for public relations. This also involved comparing the public relations approach taken by other sporting bodies, to that of traditional business's approach to public relations, asking questions such as how does a sport team with such a diverse fan base produce a public relations strategy that effectively communicates with its target audience and how can a non-profit national governing body activate the same strategies as organisations who have a significantly bigger budget for the same activities. This research recognises that public relations is an old discipline whereby its practices are increasingly being influenced by new modes such as social media. O'Shea and Alonso (2011) recognised that much of the existing literature on marketing communications and technology is focused on the end-user (i.e., the consumer and receiver) of online communication and that there is a saturation of quantitative research in social media but a lack of qualitative understanding (Pedersen, 2014). Of the research that has focused on the content creator (i.e., organisations) instead of the consumer, Day (2011) affirmed that social media is a challenging source of complexity in today's market environment and organisations must become more adaptive in order to succeed.

This research makes a two-fold contribution to previous research. Firstly, by identifying benefits that social media has for public relations and sport by amalgamating empirical and non-empirical research from over 40 sources. Secondly, suggestions will be made which can assist the South African Hockey Association's (SAHA) media channels to successfully activate strategic social media communication.

1.3 Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1 of this thesis is dedicated to introducing the research topic and providing background information on the research topic and researcher. Chapter 2 contains the

theoretical framework which serves as the foundation for the research and the prevailing discussions. This chapter contains theories, models and approaches to public relations, communication, relationships and social media that are important to acknowledge in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between public relations and social media.

In Chapter 3 these theories, models and approaches are taken out of the classroom and analysed in a practical environment where their teachings are executed in the field. Previous literature and case studies from over 40 journal articles on the applied studies of social media in public relations and sport were reviewed. These journal articles gave the researcher insight on various social media practices and campaigns as well as different approaches to public relations and strategies that various sport bodies have implemented to further their relationships with stakeholders or promote their brand or event. This cumulative knowledge enabled the researcher to identify appropriate social media practices that can be adopted to create a channel between the sport organisation and its stakeholders that effectively communicates and delivers a public relations strategy.

Chapter 4 introduces and explains the methodologies used in the research and how the information was gathered and analysed. This resulted in conclusions and suggestions being developed and put forward that will enhance the ability of The South African Hockey Association's social media practices to facilitate and grow relationships with its stakeholders.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to discussing SAHA which was used as a case study in this research. This section explains who SAHA is, what they do and what their public relations strategies are.

Chapter 6 serves as a discussion where all the theories, approaches and models from chapter 2 and all the practical knowledge attained from chapter 3 are amalgamated and applied to the case study of South African Hockey. This section discusses the social media and television presence of hockey within South Africa and globally. This section also discusses possible implementation tactics for SAHA to adopt when using social media as a channel to activate public relations strategies.

Chapter 7 brings the thesis and the research to a conclusion. Discussing limitations faced throughout the research and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories predict the way phenomena work or occur; they provide an understanding of the relationships between actions and events. The ability to understand and apply modern management principles and techniques is key to successful communication management. An in-depth knowledge of past and present processes, theories and models allows for effective management and facilitation of the emergence of strategic communication thinking (Verway and du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003). In this section the following models and theories will be discussed;

Models of and approaches to public relations;

- The Press Agency/ Publicity Model
- Public Information Model
- Two-Way Asymmetrical Model
- Two-Way Symmetrical Model
- Process Approach
- System Approach

Theories of communication;

- Steyn and Puth's Model for Developing a Communication Plan
- Uses and Gratifications Theory
- Framing Theory
- Agenda Setting Theory
- Dependency Theory
- Medium Theory

Theories of relationships and stakeholder management;

- A systems Perspective
- Situational Theory
- Social Penetration Theory
- Social Exchange Theory

Theories of persuasion;

- Social Exchange Theory
- Diffusion Theory
- Social Learning Theory

And conflict resolution.

2.1 Definition of Public Relations

There is no broadly accepted definition of the fundamental purpose of public relations and its intrinsic practices, dominant metaphor, scope or underlying dimensions (Hutton, 1999). Public relations has been redefined many times over the years due to the various approaches to public relations and its practices constantly changing.

Public relations takes on a systems perspective which entails mutually dependent relationships being established and maintained between organisations and its *publics (Cutlip, Center, Brom and Du Plessis, 2012). Rachel Barker and George Angelopulo (2006) contextualised PRISA's definition of public relations as follows:

“Public relations is the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders, aligned and coordinated with other communication to contribute to the corporate brand.”

Therefore, public relations ultimately aims to manage perceptions and relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders to ensure a mutually beneficial relationship is formed. In order to do this successfully, a public relations strategy must fulfill three functions:

1. Identify and interpret the needs, attitudes and opinions of individuals, groups or organisations (their stakeholders).
2. Communicate these needs to the relevant stakeholders.

3. Manage this process of communication to either change or maintain the needs, attitudes and opinions of their stakeholders (Barker and Angelopulo, 2006).

2.2 Roles of Public Relations

The role of public relations has changed dramatically over the years. Previously public relations was perceived simply as tactical tools for influencing media coverage and disseminating information that didn't consider stakeholder's interpretation of these messages; but with the proliferation of communications, the need to engage with multiple stakeholders, and the demands for greater corporate transparency, have situated public relations at the heart of strategic management.

Developing the roles of practitioners in organisational life has been some of the most important developments in public relations. These roles are tied to managerial or marketing functions and communication demands from the human resources function; even the legal department influences public relations actions in a crisis. It is easy to see why public relations practitioners need to play the right roles to achieve organisational effectiveness (Mehta and Xavier, 2009). The roles of the public relation function are the collection of daily activities that public relations practitioners perform and how these activities produce the right programs, influence strategic planning and affect the short-range (bottom line) and long-range (survival) goals of the organisation.

Through research on public relations activities, two broad roles have consistently emerged in public relations: the technician and the manager (Mehta and Xavier, 2009). The technician's role is representative of the craft side of public relations: writing, editing, taking photos, handling communication production, running social events and communicating with the media. All these activities focus on the implementation of the management's overall communication strategies, which facilitate the achievement of organisational goals. The manager's role has a greater focus on activities that help identify and solve public relations problems. Public relations managers advise senior managers about communication needs and are

responsible for the broader organisational results. Public relations managers perform three roles (Mehta and Xavier, 2009):

Expert Prescriber- a person who acts as a consultant to identify the problem, suggest options and oversee implementation.

Communication facilitator- A person on the boundary between an organisation and its environment who links the two systems, keeping two-way communication flowing, ensuring an open system is maintained.

Problem-solving facilitator- a person who works with senior management to identify and solve problems.

The capability of performing all three roles successfully depends on the knowledge that the individual manager has of the organisation as well as the theories of public relations. If managers can deliver both the technician and managerial functions, they are likely to achieve higher status in organisational decision-making. Public relations practitioners cannot expect to successfully influence how to achieve beneficial relationships with stakeholders unless they perform both roles (Mehta and Xavier, 2009). By executing the managerial role successfully, top management will understand the value of the public relations function and demand a certain standard from the practitioners.

Barker and Angelopulo (2006) provide more strategic roles of a public relations practitioner, which include identifying the organisation's strategic stakeholders and their concerns, determining the consequences of organisational decisions and behaviour on their stakeholders, and identifying and monitoring the issues which their stakeholders and publics are concerned with before they become detrimental to the relationship formed between the organisation and the stakeholders. The principles of Systems Theory (which will be discussed in section 2.5) allow us to perceive public relations practitioners as boundary spanners, who look both internally and externally at an organisation; they are the 'go-betweeners' that connect the parts within an organisation together to create a brand image which they present and communicate to the external environment. They are tasked with explaining the organisation to external stakeholders as well as translating and interpreting the external environment to internal stakeholders. Public relations practitioners advise the

primary decisions makers, which allow them to develop strategies and make informed decisions in order to respond to changes in the environment.

Within its practices, public relations also encompasses public affairs, issue management, stakeholder relations, corporate communication, risk communication and social responsibility. Public relations is also a vital tool of adjustment, interpretation and integration between an organisation, individuals, groups and society. Public understanding and support is imperative to the existence of an organisation and to remain relevant in today's competitive system (Petrovici, 2014). Ultimately, the public relations practitioner needs to relay all this information and findings to the top management of the company, allowing them to make critical decisions that will ensure their organisation offers their stakeholders the best possible product or service.

Research done by Rensburg and Cant (2003) identified that public relations processes involve research and fact finding, planning and developing programs that respond to the research and facts, action the best program that will yield the desired results, and evaluating the success of the program. Their findings also identified eight elements of public relations planning and management: (1) the environment in which (2) the organisation operates in, (3) the communication, (4) the messages, (5) the medium which will be most successful to communicate with their (6) target audience and publics, (7) the effects and effectiveness of the communication must be evaluated and the (8) feed back and feed forward.

Public relations focuses on two subsystems that an organisation encompasses: the behaviour, culture and attitudes of internal stakeholders and perceptions and values of external stakeholders (Rensburg and Cant, 2003). The public relations function is tasked with building and maintaining connections within the organisation, with the aim of ensuring the climate internal to the organisation is functional. Externally, the public relations function is responsible for building durable connections with their external environment that includes all potential stakeholders the organisation has.

Public relations practitioners should also ensure that the organisations brand is perceived in the intended manner from both internal and external stakeholders. Thus,

public relations practitioners need to build the brand from within by creating an organisational culture that serves as a guideline for internal stakeholders' behaviour and performance and communicates this through the correct channels to external stakeholders. If the internal culture and brand is strong and all employees are working with the same brand values, it will result in better organisational performance as well as sending a consistent message to external stakeholders resulting in a solid reputation (Clifton and Simons, 2003). Winchel (2010) stated that the role of public relations in brand management is to be the creator of a narrative as well as being the purveyor of the medium that facilitates the narrative. This suggests that a public relations practitioner would be responsible for creating content or producing material that starts a conversation amongst stakeholders as well as identifying the correct platform on which to start and host this conversation. Nowadays, social media is an extremely beneficial tool to utilise for this function (this will be discussed later, in more detail).

Given that a main role of public relations is communications, Verway and du Plooy-Cilliers (2003) identify three main communication functions: production, maintenance and innovation.

Production communication provides information to all stakeholders to ensure that the organisation is able to operate efficiently. Production communication describes the communication, which is developed by the organisation, to send out to stakeholders to inform them of any products, services or events that the organisation is offering as well as the communication they receive from stakeholders holding feedback (Verway and du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003). *Maintenance* communication identifies that individuals form part of social relationships and networks and understand that these need to be created and maintained through the exchange of information. Therefore this type of communication describes communication that is used to maintain interpersonal relationships, which is vital to the public relations function in order to develop mutually beneficial, long-term relationships with stakeholders (Verway and du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003). *Innovation* communication recognises the interdependent nature of relationships between stakeholders and the organisation and that organisations need information that will allow them to adapt and respond to changes in their environment. They can attempt to adapt to this environment by creating innovations

that will ensure the sustainability of the organisation. Innovation is described as planned and directed change that is designed to improve organisations and organisational life, as well as the development of new ideas which involves exploration, creation and diffusion of new ideas and organisational approaches (Verway and du Plooy-Cilliers, 2003).

Complimenting the findings of Verway and du Plooy-Cilliers (2003), Rensburg and Cant (2003) believe that an organisation should aim to generate purposeful interactivity with their stakeholders rather than just sending out a mass media monologue. They also argue that an organisation should have a focus on all stakeholders and their needs rather than only those of their customers and shareholders. The broader stakeholders of an organisation would include competitors, individuals who may not purchase goods or services from the company but could be affected by the actions of the company, suppliers and employees.

By understanding and incorporating all three functions of communication as identified by Verway and du Plooy-Cilliers (2003) and the beliefs of Rensburg and Cant (2003) into the messages an organisation sends to stakeholders, public relations practitioners will develop communication that is informed, relevant, creative, and which has the potential to create mutually beneficial and long term relationships between the organisation and all of its stakeholders.

2.3 Models of and Approaches to Public Relations

Due to public relations being considered a young academic topic in the social sciences, there are difficulties that occur in the attempt to explain its practices in a theoretical framework. However, theorising the profession will allow development of the discipline as a science and build up a body of knowledge that will bring about cohesion and consistency. Public relations models aim to identify central ideas of public relations practices and how they are related to each other.

2.3.1 Grunig and Hunt's four models of Public Relations

In 1984 James Grunig and Todd Hunt proposed four models based on communication, research and ethics to distinguish and understand the practice of public relations (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012):

The press agency/ publicity model this model describes the flow of information and communication as one way from the organisation to the public. It is described as the oldest form of public relations and is synonymous with promotions and publicity. Practitioners operating under this model are likely to focus on looking for opportunities to get their organisation's name favourably mentioned in the media, conducting little research about their publics. This model includes propaganda tactics that could use celebrities' names or attention-gaining devices such as giveaways and grand openings. Although the press agents are not considered unethical, they do not desire to be ethical either.

The public information model contrasts with the press agency model because the intent of public relations here is to inform rather than simply aim for publicity or promotion. However, the communication and flow of information is still essentially one-way. In today's society, this model represents public relations practices in government, education institutions, non-profit organisations and, in some cases, businesses. This model reflects practitioners who do very little research about their audiences beyond testing the clarity of their messages, doing little to understand the needs of their audience. They value accuracy but decide what information is best to communicate to their publics.

The two-way asymmetrical model considers public relations to be scientific persuasion. Public relations will use social science research methods to increase the persuasiveness of their messages. Although feedback from stakeholders is acknowledged and built into the process, the organisation is considered to be more interested in relying on publics to adjust to the organisation rather than the reverse.

The two-way symmetrical model depicts public relations in which organisations and their publics adjust to each other, focusing on the use of social science research methods to achieve mutual understanding and two-way communication rather

than one-way persuasion. This is the most recently developed model which aims to present a model that balances self-interests of the organisation with that of others in a give-and-take process that can waver between advocacy and collaboration. Grunig argued that this model was the most ethical due to its recognition of all groups being part of the resolution to problems. The ‘new model of symmetry as two-way practice’ emerged which placed the organisation and its publics on a continuum (Figure 1 (StandUpSmart, 2014)). In the best practice of public relations, public relations practitioners and their supervisors reported using both two-way symmetry and asymmetry models and in each specific public relations situation, organisations and their publics would seek to persuade and influence each other as much as possible.

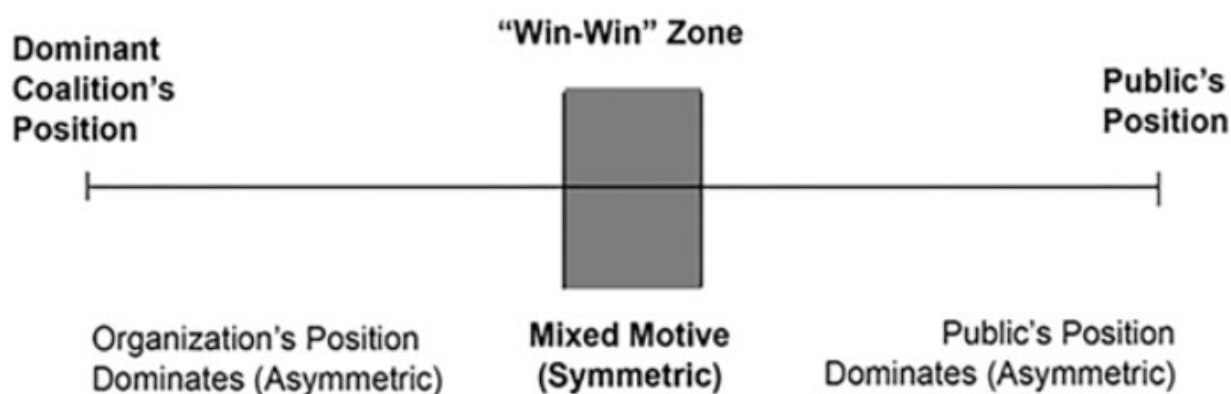


FIGURE 1. New Model of Symmetry as Two-Way Practice (StandUpSmart, 2014)

In the figure, the organisation and their publics are pictured at opposite ends of the continuum, as either a pure asymmetry model whereby the dominant coalition tries to force publics to accept the organisation's position, or as a pure cooperation model whereby publics use communication to convince the dominant coalition to accept the publics position. The middle of the continuum represents the “win-win” zone in which the organisation and its publics use communication to achieve a decision which is mutually beneficial. Using this new model, we advance our thinking about the practices of public relations by considering both parties in the situation.

The first three models reflect the practice of public relations as it attempts to achieve organisational goals through persuasion while the fourth model focuses on the balancing of self-interests and those of other groups/stakeholders. Hence, for the

purposes of this research, the two-way symmetrical model will be focused on due to the nature of this model encompassing a collaborative and mutual understanding between the organisation and its stakeholders. Communication is considered as two-way with balanced effects. According to this model, public relations practitioners should serve as mediators between an organisation and its stakeholders. It suggests that the public relations function should use formative research to learn how the public perceives the organisation and determine the impact of an organisation's actions on its relevant publics. This model also includes evaluative measurement, which is applied to determine to what extent a public relations intervention impacts the audiences' understanding and perception of the organisation, and to what extent the management's understanding and perceptions of its stakeholders are (Barker and Angelopulo, 2006).

2.3.2 The cultural interpreter and the personal influence models

In addition to these models, the cultural interpreter model and the personal influence model were developed due to continued research and assessment on models being performed. Although both models fall into the asymmetrical category, they allow us to further our understanding of the practices of public relations. The cultural interpreter model acknowledges that the practice of public relations in organisations that perform business in other countries such as multinational organisations needs to identify the wide variety of stakeholders that the organisation has (Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang and Lyra, 1995). In order to successfully communicate with both local and international stakeholders the organisation needs to recognise that they need a representative in each country who understands the culture, language, customs and political systems of the host country in order to develop effective communication strategies. The personal influence model depicts a practice of public relations in which practitioners attempt to establish personal relationships with key individuals in the hope that these relationships will facilitate support and loyalty to the brand (Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang and Lyra, 1995).

2.3.3 Approaches to public relations

Two approaches can be made towards public relations, a Process approach or a Systems approach. A Process approach assumes that public relations involves a series of routine procedures in an ongoing and systematic process that is not constrained by

a specific time frame. This approach considers public relations as a scientifically managed part of an organisation's problem solving and change processes which is applied by using a four step problem-solving process (Barker and Angelopulo, 2006):

Step 1- Defining the problem or opportunity

Step 2- Planning and programming

Step 3- Taking action and communicating

Step 4- Evaluating

A Systems approach acknowledges that public relations deals with issues of interdependence between people and an organisation and the environment in which they co-exist, emphasising that organisations need to adjust and adapt to changes in their environments in order to maintain strong relationships with their publics (Barker and Angelopulo, 2006). This approach emphasises the importance of maintaining the equilibrium and interdependence of the various parts of the system and sub-systems in society. In this sense, an organisation is dependent on their environments for everything they need to survive, therefore they need to accept public responsibility, communicate with their publics and achieve integration into the communities. The purpose of public relations, in a Systems approach, is to help organisations adjust and adapt to their environments (Barker and Angelopulo, 2006).

2.3.4 Operational model for managing corporate reputation and image

Although not classified as a theory or an approach to public relations, Edmund Gray and John Balmer (1998) proposed an Operational model (Figure 2 (Gray and Balmer, 1998)) for managing corporate reputation and image, a model that can offer public relations rich insight into creating and communicating a strong, positive corporate image and reputation. In this model, Gray and Balmer identify the fundamental components of the process are corporate identity, communication and image and reputation, while tracing the interrelationships amongst these components and indicating that feedback and correction are essential to the efficacy of the process. They recognise that corporate reputation and image are critical corporate assets that are directly linked to competitive success, highlighting the need to strategically manage both corporate reputation and image.

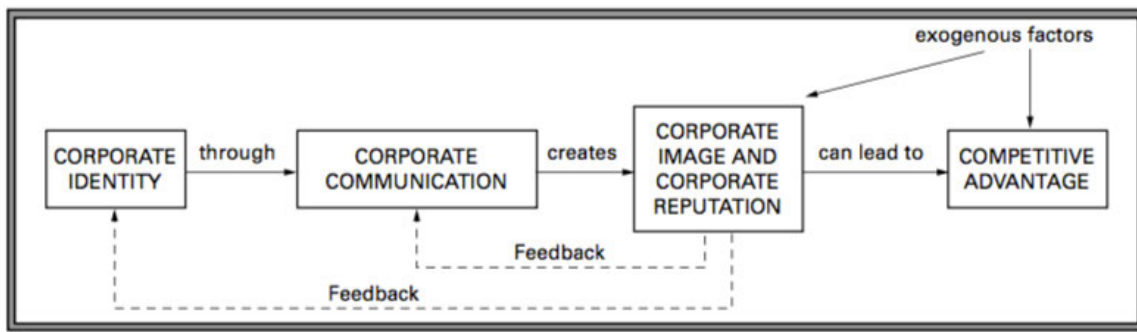


FIGURE 2. Operational model for managing corporate reputation and image (Gray and Balmer, 1998)

Corporate communication describes all messages that an organisation disseminates from both official and informal sources, through a variety of media, to convey its identity to its multiple audiences and stakeholders. Corporate communication is the nexus between an organisation's identity and its reputation/image (Gray and Balmer, 1998). Image and reputation are components that each stakeholder constructs based on the organisation's identity, behaviour and values. These conceptual components are managed with two primary objectives. The first objective is to create an intended image in the minds of the organisation's key stakeholders by creating a wide-spread name recognition and immediate identification of the organisation's business field, services and products amongst target stakeholder groups. The second objective in managing the process is to create a favourable reputation amongst stakeholders. A strong reputation can be built by ensuring consistent messages are sent out and the behaviour of the organisation and its employees reflect and align with the messages they disseminate. Gray and Balmer (1998) explain that it is important for messages to be constructed in such a way that they are aligned with each other and consistent in the key ideas they contain. The need for aligned and consistent messages is due to the fact that an organisation is likely to have a large variety of stakeholder groups that hold different relationships, interests and concerns regarding the organisation but can also potentially share some of these. A supplier for an organisation could also be a consumer of the organisation's products, thus if an organisation does not strategically construct their messages, this stakeholder, like many others, will be presented with potentially conflicting messages or ideas in the communication that is received from the organisation. This poses the threat that the stakeholder may develop a perception

of the organisation, which is not the intended or ideal perception the organisation wishes to construct.

Based on the above evidence, we can conclude that public relations entails mutually dependent relationships being established between an organisation and its publics. However, people do not depend on a sport team like they would, for instance, a brand of food. This research will investigate how a sport team can create mutually dependent relationships with their fans based on the theories and models discussed in this paper.

Within the theory of public relations, its practices are guided by the theories in the following phenomena; communication, relationships and stakeholder management, persuasion and social influence, and conflict resolution. These theories will be discussed in the following sections. Public relations practitioners should have knowledge of these theories in order to make informed decisions that will facilitate effective and successful public relations programs and plans.

2.4 Theories of Communication

In this section the theories of communication that are of relevance to this research will be identified and discussed. These theories will ensure an in depth understanding of how communication takes place and the need for strategically designed communication plans which not only include a strategically constructed message but holistically designed communication campaigns that carefully consider elements such as the medium, the frequency and time of message delivery. These campaigns encompass a variety of communications plans and activities which aim to communicate with various stakeholders in a consistent manner. If an organisation has the ability to understand and activate the elements discussed in the proceeding chapters, they will have the potential to create meaningful communication which serves not only to advertise their products or services, but to establish a relationship with consumers and grow their brand.

2.4.1 Steyn and Puth's Model for Developing a Communication Plan

Steyn and Puth (2000) proposed the following model for developing a communication plan:

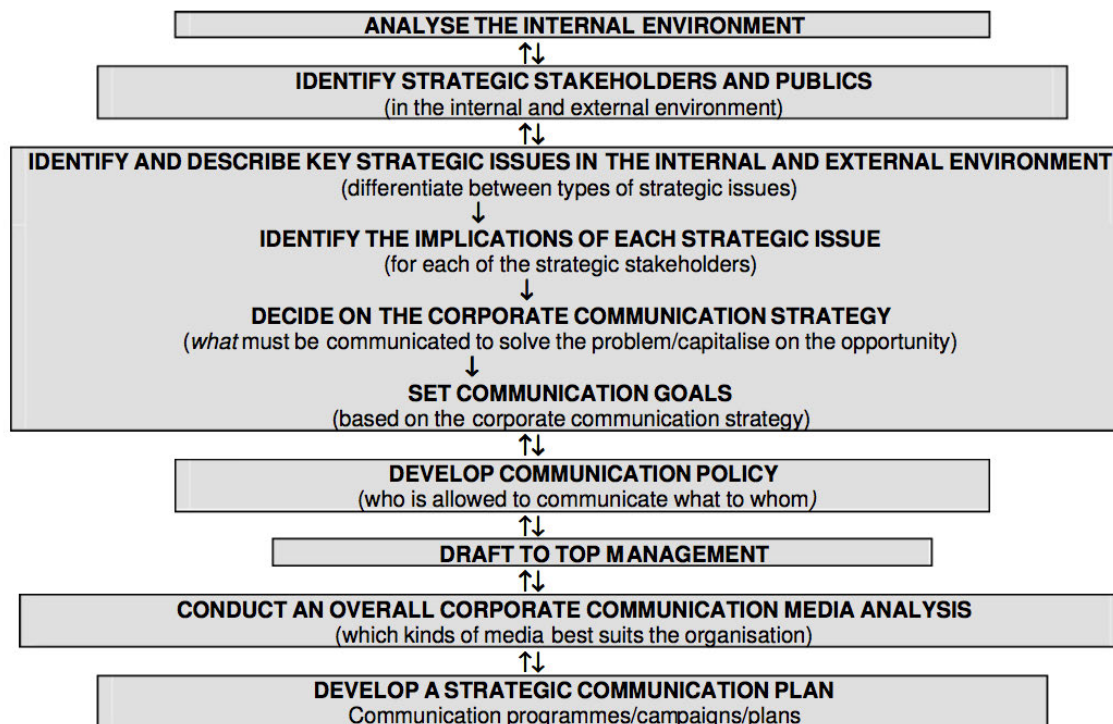


FIGURE 3. A Model for Developing a Corporate Communication Strategy (Steyn and Puth, 2000)

In this model, we see seven stages whereby the internal and external environments are acknowledged and great emphasis is put on understanding and identifying the potential influences they may have on the organisation. The model ensures that practitioners use the information they have gathered when analysing the internal and external environment, to inform the communication plan, ensuring that the strategies will have relevance to the organisation and its stakeholders as well as be able to yield results for the organisation (Steyn and Puth, 2000). This model also addresses the matter of 'the right people' for the job. This encourages the organisation to identify and allocate a person who is capable of effectively activating the communication plan. By allocating a dedicated person or team to this task, it will allow the person or team to take responsibility and accountability for all communications and activations that are a result of the communication plan. By having a specialised team that has the skills and knowledge to implement a communications plan effectively a number of benefits may arise: a single consistent message and communication style being communicated with all stakeholders; and through evaluation and analysis, the person

or team can potentially develop a clear understanding of stakeholder's needs and perceptions which can be a reliable source of information for top management (Steyn and Puth, 2000).

External communication describes all messages, both verbal (oral or written) and non-verbal (attitude, appearance, behaviour), that occur between an organisation and the outside world, such as clients, media and shareholders (van Staden, Marx, Erasmus-Kritzinger, 2002). The main aim of this communication is to establish and maintain sound public relations and marketing. An effective external communication system is therefore very important for the general growth and success of any organisation, as it facilitates the formation of long lasting, mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders.

2.4.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications Theory asserts that people are *active* users of media and select how they will use it in order to fulfil certain needs: entertainment, information, diversion, substitute for personal relations or for personal identification and value (Independent Institute of Education, 2015). Millions of people use social media platforms on a daily basis; however, as this theory suggests, each user turns to social media to satisfy different needs. Some users may use social media for entertainment purposes (i.e. watch funny videos, browse through memes etc.), while other users may use the platform to satisfy interpersonal communication needs by messaging their online friends. This leaves public relations practitioners needing to accept that not everyone will receive their messages, and just because a message is available does not mean that people will attend to or remember it, even if the most optimal medium is used. As the way in which messages are shaped, selected and interpreted by an individual is highly sensitive to each individual, public relations practitioners must expect that their messages will be interpreted in many different ways if read at all.

2.4.3 Framing Theory

The Framing Theory explains that messages and information that are sent to audiences carry with them a pre-existing set of meanings or frames. Framing is an active process whereby an individual draws out dominant themes that emerge in the content of the communication. These meanings are derived from cultural and social

groupings in which individuals live and work (Chong and Druckman, 2007). This means that when an individual reads an article, newspaper or story or views an advert, video or image, their perception of and their ability to understand the message is influenced by their values and knowledge which have been formed by their past experiences. It is useful for communicators and public relations practitioners to understand the pre-existing interpretations or frames that audiences instantly know and accept. Public relations practitioners seek to get their frames adopted by their publics using common devices such as catch phrases, depictions, metaphors, examples and visual images.

2.4.4 Agenda Setting Theory

The Agenda Setting Theory explains that although media cannot tell people what to think, they are highly successful in telling them what to think about. Media set the agenda for what people think and talk about by giving specific events and information attention through publishing content on them. This ‘talking and thinking’ can lead to individuals seeking and processing certain information, following the reasoning of the situational theory (which will be discussed in section 2.5), but only if their conditions are met. Public relations practitioners attempt to influence the media agenda by providing news worthy items for public consumption. In order to do this successfully, they must identify subjects and stories that editors and news directors consider news worthy, localise their messages and help media reporters cover the story (McCombs and Shaw, 2011).

2.4.5 Dependency Theory

The Dependency Theory understands that not all media are used equally, stating that a medium is more heavily relied on depending on the degree to which the medium meets the needs of the user and societal factors surrounding the media. This theory is based upon the notion that there is a dependency in the relationship whereby the fulfilment of one party’s needs and goals is reliant on the resources of the other party (Lin, 2014). Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) explain that the greater the number of social functions provided to an audience by a particular medium, the greater the audience’s dependency on that medium will likely be.

2.4.6 Medium Theory

The Medium Theory developed by Marshall McLuhan emphasises that the medium is the message (Gibson, 2008). In this theory, the medium used to communicate influences the way that the message is perceived by the audience. On a social and personal scale, social media is used by individuals to feel a sense of closeness to their family and friends. By nature, social media is very personal as it is an experience and environment completely customised by the user. Therefore, when an organisation is communicating with people via social media, this sense of closeness and personification is transferred to their image. By communicating with their stakeholders on social media, the stakeholders have already actively chosen to follow them and partake in communication (Gibson, 2008). This can give credit to the communication an organisation disseminates on social media platforms, as well as the organisation itself, as it shows stakeholders the organisation's willingness to engage and form relationships with their stakeholders that are similar to the interpersonal relationships these stakeholders are using social media to maintain.

Social media is potentially the most personal mass communication. Based on the findings of the uses and gratifications theory and the presumption that individuals have the ability to customise their social media environment by deciding which accounts they follow and like and which posts they see on their *timelines, we can assume that their willingness to follow an organisation can influence their perception of the communication they receive from this organisation online. Although an organisation can have hundreds of thousands of users following their social media pages and posts, the individual user reading a post may feel like the post is more personally applicable to them than an advert in a magazine or on the radio. This can also be identified in their willingness to respond to a post, by either a like, comment or share.

2.5 Theories of Relationships and Stakeholder Management

Within the context of public relations, it is important to understand theories that describe and explain the dynamics of relationships. This allows scholars and practitioners to better understand how an organisation can effectively capitalise on

the potential relationships that occur between their brand and their stakeholders. By having the skills and expertise to develop, grow and maintain relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders, an organisation has the potential to become a favoured brand amongst consumers, develop a strong and trusted image and ultimately survive in a highly competitive market where every organisation is trying to make a profit and fight for consumer loyalty. Understanding the intricate dynamics of relationships, organisations can ensure their strategic plan incorporates elements and activities that will promote relationship building amongst their internal and external stakeholders.

2.5.1 A systems perspective

The practices of public relations are highly influenced by the principles of ‘Systems Theory’. Systems theory presents a holistic view of relationships, identifying an organisation as being made up of interrelated parts which all adapt and adjust to the changes in the political, economic, social, environmental and technological environments in which an organisation operates. In figure 3 below (Rawlins, 2006), we see how the organisation is positioned and affected by its environment.

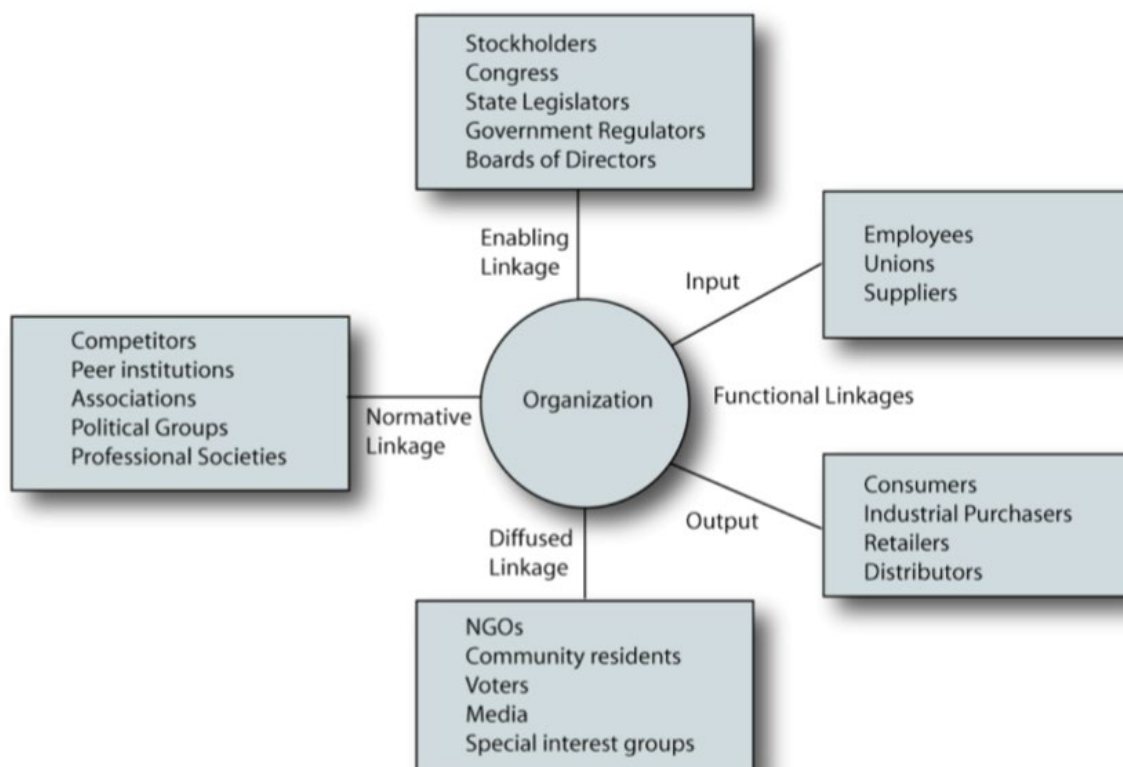


FIGURE 3. A model linking an organisation with its environment (Rawlins, 2006)

As in the Systems Theory's approach to public relations, it emphasises the interdependence of organisations within their environment, which is both external and internal to the organisation (Barker and Angelopulo, 2006). This perspective states that organisations depend on resources from their environment such as raw materials, human resources and clients, while the environment also depends on the organisations for their products/services. The organisation itself is part of a larger system where other organisations compete for stakeholder loyalty, which makes it important for an organisation to develop a communications structure that guides the many parts of the organisation to achieve the same goals and create a competitive advantage. Monitoring these relationships is a major function for public relations practitioners (Barker and Angelopulo, 2006).

Two types of systems have been categorised using this theory: open and closed systems. A closed system describes an organisation that does not seek new information about its external environment, which often results in an organisation being inactive in its approach to external changes or responding in a reactive manner as previously discussed. This results in decision makers being uninformed by past and personal experiences (Barker and Angelopulo, 2006). An open system describes an organisation that utilises public relations practitioners, amongst others, to gather and analyse information from their internal and external environments in order to gauge how productive their relationships are with their stakeholders and external environment. An open system allows for and encourages the two-way flow of resources and information between an organisation and its environment, using the new information and findings to meet opportunities and threats and adapt to the environment in which it operates (Barker and Angelopulo, 2006).

Through research, Grunig and Repper (1992) identified that it was important to use the concept of stakeholders as a way of describing relationships; however, they concluded that not all individuals in a stakeholder group would be equally likely to communicate with the organisation that is trying to make contact. Therefore, it is important for public relations practitioners to identify specific publics within stakeholder groups in order to manage communications effectively. These "subgroups" were considered to be more or less active in their communication behaviour. Grunig and Repper (1992) identify and use 'active voters' within the broader population of

registered voters as an example to explain this concept. Based on their findings, Grunig and Repper (1992) proposed the 'Situational Theory' to provide more specific information and research about publics' communication needs. They theorised that publics range from those who actively seek and process information from the organisation or issue of interest, to those who passively receive information or ignore it completely. The key is that publics are situational; as the situation, problem opportunity or issue changes, the publics with which the organisation must communicate with also changes (Grunig and Repper, 1992).

Three variables were proposed that predict when publics are most likely to seek and process information about an issue: problem recognition, constraint recognition and the level of involvement (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012). To relate these findings to the topic of this research, the decision that SASCOC made in 2016 not to send the National Hockey Teams to the Rio Olympic Games will be used as an example.

Problem recognition- publics must be aware of the issue being faced and recognise its potential to affect them. Hockey players and fans will be more aware of their national teams not being sent to a major international tournament such as the Olympics, and the detrimental effects this has on their teams' world rankings rather than non-hockey players/ fans (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012).

Constraint recognition- this variable describes how the publics perceive any obstacles that potentially inhibit a solution. If they believe they have a great opportunity to influence an issue, they will be more likely to seek and process information on that issue. Hockey fans identify and acknowledge the detrimental effects of not partaking in International tournaments and could potentially start petitions and pressure governing bodies to start sending National teams to these tournaments (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012).

Level of involvement- this variable refers to how much an individual cares about an issue. The higher the perceived care/ interest in an issue is, the more actively they will communicate or seek information on the issue. Those who care little

would likely be more passive in seeking and processing information. It is anticipated that those publics who play hockey or know someone who does, would be more likely to get involved and put pressure on governing bodies to ensure the teams partake in future tournaments (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012).

2.5.2 Situational Theory

The Situational Theory also helps explain how some individuals and stakeholder groups are active on a single issue while others are active on multiple issues and others who are apathetic to the issues/ events that are related to an organisation. The specific relationship an organisation forms with its stakeholders is determined by said stakeholder group, their activeness or passiveness towards the organisation and how the organisation is linked with an issue. Public relations practitioners can develop communication strategies more accurately if they know how actively their stakeholders will seek information about specific issues, events and the organisation. Public relations practitioners must identify which kinds of information their stakeholder's want rather than what information the organisation presumes they want and what information the organisation wants to distribute. Organisations must find a balance between what information to disseminate so that it satisfies both the stakeholders needs and those of the organisation. This theory also assumes that publics are more likely to seek out information that is in their best interest, therefore public relations practitioners must disseminate information that will interest stakeholders and facilitate conversation while serving the interests and goals of the organisation. This can be done through establishing and building relationships with stakeholders to get an accurate understanding of what information these stakeholders seek.

Research performed by van Staden et al (2002) acknowledged the importance of identifying stakeholder expectations, stating that stakeholders responded best to a friendly yet professional approach from organisations, which included a sense of reliability, responsiveness, concern for customers' problems, effective communication and credibility.

2.5.3 Steyn and Puths four basic approaches to dealing with stakeholders

Four basic approaches to dealing with stakeholders in an organisation's environment were developed by Steyn and Puth (2000);

Inactivity- describes an organisation that ignores the opinions and values of their stakeholders and continues business with no reflection on their stakeholder's perceptions. An organisation that adopts this approach to stakeholder management will likely perform one-way communication, whereby stakeholders are spoken to and not with, allowing little chance for stakeholder feedback.

Reactivity- refers to an organisation that waits for an event or phenomenon to occur and responds to that. Unlike the previous approach, the organisation is stimulated by their stakeholders to a certain degree but does little planning to pre-empt or inform their actions or communications when responding to the situation. By adopting a reactivate approach when dealing with stakeholders, an organisation often faces the threat of reacting to crises instead of addressing issues prior to them escalating.

Proactivity- is an anticipatory approach whereby an organisation is willing to predict, through research, stakeholder behaviour and external changes which could potentially occur. Public relations practitioners are able to develop a strategy that will position the organisation towards these changes in order to capitalise on the opportunity or overcome the threat before it becomes a crisis.

Interactivity- describes the approach an organisation takes when they have an active involvement with stakeholders that can influence the future of the organisation. This approach adopts frequent, two-way communication with their stakeholders that will allow them to identify potential threats in the early stages and collaborates with their stakeholders to reach a solution or an outcome that is mutually beneficial. Public relations practitioners will communicate with stakeholders to ensure they have an accurate portrayal of what their stakeholder's expectations and values are.

2.5.4 Social Penetration Theory

The Social Penetration Theory explains the importance of relational closeness and how to establish and develop this closeness in order to enhance relationships. This sense of closeness can range and progress from superficial to intimate and develops from self-disclosure (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012). Although originally developed to describe interpersonal relationships, the findings of this theory can be translated to the corporate environment, whereby the organisation takes the role as one of the participants in the relationship. An organisation can mimic this “human phenomenon” by ensuring they are transparent, behave ethically, ensure they keep their stakeholder’s needs and values aligned with their own, and embarking on two-way communication with their stakeholders in order to adequately portray all the above (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012). Closeness is also influenced according to the following factors;

- Rewards/ benefits

- Costs/ vulnerability

- Satisfaction

- Stability and security

2.5.5 Social Exchange Theory

George Casper Homans proposed the Social Exchange Theory in 1958 which explains that “give and take”, albeit in different proportions and intensities, forms the basis of almost all relationships (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012). In a relationship, every individual has expectations from the other participant and in order for the relationship to be successful and long lasting, the feelings and emotions should be reciprocated by both parties in the relationship. Individuals are more likely to invest their time and energy into a relationship if they perceive the relationship as valuable and beneficial to them. An organisation can capitalise on this phenomenon by ensuring they highlight their worth and contribution to stakeholders by communicating their shared values and goals both verbally and non-verbally. An organisation should align their actions and behaviour with the values and beliefs they communicate with their stakeholders, ensuring a consistent message is sent to all stakeholders. In turn, stakeholders will be presented with a strong brand image, one they are willing to form a relationship with the organisation based on the image and

communication the organisation communicates to its publics (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012).

2.6 Theories of Persuasion and Social Influence

In order for any communication an organisation disseminates to have the desired effect and outcome on stakeholders, it is important to know how to use the findings that were identified in theories of mass communication to establish relationships with stakeholders. By merging the findings of theories of communication and theories of relationships and stakeholder management with the following findings, it will allow organisations to develop communication strategies that will have the power to persuade stakeholders and allow the organisation itself to become a social influencer.

Public relations practitioners try to persuade publics to learn and accept new information, to change emotions and act in a certain way. Persuasion is defined as the use of communication in an attempt to change, shape or reinforce perceptions, feelings, thinking and or behaviour of an individual or public. Several factors influence how persuasive public relations messages and actions can be. These include the source of the message, the message itself and the receiver of the message. Research has indicated that the more credible or believable the source, the more likely the stakeholder will accept the message that is being disseminated by the organisation and respond in the desired/intended manner. Therefore, it is important for public relations to present the organisation to stakeholders and communicate with them in such a way as to ensure a trusting relationship is established and maintained.

2.6.1 Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory, as previously mentioned, uses an economic metaphor of cost and benefits to predict behaviour, assuming that individuals or groups choose strategies based on perceived cost and reward (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012). It argues that people identify and factor in the consequences of their behaviour before acting, wanting to keep their perceived cost to a minimum while ensuring rewards are high. Incorporating the principles of this theory into public relations communication can be highly beneficial for public relations practitioners to ensure

they provide decision makers with a wide variety of options along with the associated costs and risks when developing strategies and goals for an organisation.

2.6.2 Diffusion Theory

The Diffusion Theory compliments the findings of the Social Exchange theory; however it explains further how people come to accept or reject information. This theory suggests that people will adopt an idea only after going through the following five discrete steps (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012):

Step 1: Awareness- an individual must identify and give attention to the idea or message.

Step 2: Interest- the individual must then make a decision to actively become involved and engage with the information.

Step 3: Evaluation- the individual must consider whether the idea or message is potentially useful or beneficial.

Step 4: Trial- this step involves the individual implementing the idea on a trial basis and discussing it with others to seek opinions.

Step 5: Adoption- this final step represents a final acceptance or rejection of an idea or message after successfully passing the previous four stages.

The findings of the Diffusion Theory are useful to explain how stakeholders reach important decisions, indicating that each stakeholder needs time to process and engage with the message. This theory suggests that if a stakeholder passes through all five of these stages successfully, the message and/or idea that an organisation wishes to convey to stakeholders, is more likely to be successful and implemented into the perceptions these stakeholders have. Research has proved that mass communication is important in the first two stages while personal contacts are important for the last two (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012).

2.6.3 Social Learning Theory

The last theory of persuasion that will be discussed is the Social Learning Theory. This theory suggests that we can learn new behaviours by merely observing others. Unlike the previous two theories, this theory identifies that some media consumers adopt a less active role when seeking new information, and how mass media and

personal example are important to these receivers acquiring new behaviours (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012). This theory explains that an individual will identify and experience a certain behaviour being portrayed by another individual (actor) and evaluate whether that behaviour brings reward to the actor. If the observer agrees that the behaviour is potentially useful, it can lie dormant for long periods of time until it is needed, suggesting that the observer will recall this 'useful' action when placed in a similar scenario and re-enact it to receive the same perceived rewards (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012).

The likelihood of a specific behaviour occurring is determined by the expected consequences that will result from performing that behaviour. The more positive and rewarding the consequences are perceived, the more likely the behaviour will occur. This can be highly beneficial for public relations when anticipating stakeholder behaviour as well as informing practitioners how they can construct messages and stories to influence stakeholders to behave in a desired manner (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012).

2.7 Conflict Resolution

Conflict occurs when an individual or group actively oppose another's ideas, values or goals. Conflict is a phenomenon present in any relationship, and as with individuals, organisational conflict occurs when a stakeholder moves in a direction that differs from the organisation, which produces friction among the parties affected. When this occurs, public relations practitioners need to identify the conflict and move the organisation and its stakeholders towards a resolution.

Plowman, Briggs and Huang identified nine types of conflict resolution strategies and linked them to the motives of organisations and their publics (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012):

1. *Contention*- one party forcing its position on another
2. *Cooperation*- both parties work together to reach a mutually beneficial solution

3. *Accommodation*- One party partially yields on its position and lowers its aspirations
4. *Avoidance*- One or both parties leaves/ignores the conflict, either physically or psychologically
5. *Unconditional constructive*- The organisation reconciles the strategic interests of both the organisation and its stakeholders, whether the publics follow the guidelines and reciprocate or not
6. *Compromise*- an alternative agreement that is positioned between both parties' preferred position
7. *Principled*- both parties hold to their own higher ethics that cannot be compromised
8. *Win-win or no deal*- both parties hold off on any agreement until they are ready for a decision to be made that serves both parties interests equally.
9. *Mediated*- involves the use of an outside, disinterested party to help both parties reach a decision or agreement.

Plowman later substituted perseverance for mediation as he reasoned that mediation was useful across all nine strategies. He proposed a new word 'humwillity' which combined humility and strength of will or perseverance (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012). Not all of these strategies will result in mutually satisfied parties and even if the conflict is "resolved" the public relations practitioners job is far from over. The practitioner needs to ensure that they hold true to any promises made during conflict resolution and ensure they communicate with all parties effectively in order to rebuild and strengthen the relationship. The situation should be analysed in order to understand where the conflict came from, was the conflict resolution strategy used successful, and how could future situations similar to the conflict be avoided (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012).

It is important for practitioners to fully understand each of these strategies in order to quickly identify which strategy is best used when resolving conflict. The quicker the conflict is addressed and the more openly the organisation deals with conflict will enhance the perception of transparency that stakeholders hold towards the organisation. This can offer the potential strengthening of relationships between an organisation and their stakeholders (Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman and Toth, 2012).

2.8 Role of Social Media in Public Relation Strategies

Traditionally, any information stakeholders received about an organisation came from traditional media, which limited communication to a one way and often one sided view, whether it was in the form of advertising from the organisation itself or reviews from external critics. In today's society, the media are constantly pressurised to compromise their impartiality. Mikáčová and Gavlaková (2014) explain that this pressure comes from the constant need to produce news and the ownership of many media sources lying with mega-sized corporate entities whose primary interest is to generate profit, resulting in the media selling airtime and print space to advertisers. These two influencing factors, in addition to any bias that is held by the media entity itself, leave the media vulnerable to press releases and other content that is strategically constructed by the organisations that pay for the content to be published. The media that is then presented to readers and viewers contains one-sided information that doesn't facilitate interaction or allow them to interact with the content.

However, the Internet and Web 2.0, have changed how society functions, especially the practices of communication. Everyday life involves individuals sending emails, writing or commenting on blogs and participating in online forums, websites and social media platforms (Hambrick and Pegoraro, 2014). SmartInsights.com (2018) indicated that as of January 2018 there were 4.021 billion Internet users worldwide, 3.196 billion social media users worldwide and 5.135 billion mobile phone users.

There has been a shift from mass communication to mass conversation (Vann, 2014) through the development of social media changing the way in which users search, assess, produce, purchase and consume information, products and services as well as the way in which organisations and their stakeholders can interact and actively participate in conversations (Bizirgiannia and Dionysopoulou, 2013). Hall and Newbury (1999) suggest that the creative potential of the Internet takes two forms: firstly, it offers new opportunities for cultural participation, and secondly it provides a highly accessible medium that enables young people to explore and promote their own identities and concerns.

The popularity of social media has broken the barriers between the organisations who advertise and the stakeholders who receive this content. The traditional nature of disseminating advertising content was delivering one-sided constructed material to stakeholders, who could only view the advertisement with little to no interaction with the organisation itself or other stakeholders. With the introduction and unique communication methods of social media marketing, the receiver of this marketing content has the ability to interact with the organisation, giving feedback and comments based on the advertising material, hence social media platforms are a critical tool for mutual exchange (Filo, Lock and Karg, 2014). This is due to social media having a receiver-orientated focus that fosters two-way communication while traditional advertising channels were one-way and sender-orientated forms of marketing communication (Mikáčová and Gavlaková, 2014). The production of information is therefore collaborative amongst users, which creates interactive content where users and group members are able to share, co-create, discuss and modify their own comments (Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat and Fabeil, 2014).

According to the 2014 Social Media Industry Report, more than 90% of marketing managers from various organisations across the globe stated that social media is an important tool for organisational success (Stelzner, 2014). In a study conducted by O'Shea and Alonso (2011), the researchers explain that recent studies have noted trends towards the reduced mass media expenditure from organisations, while a progression is being made towards re-allocating media and marketing budget away from traditional media towards alternative advertising sources, such as online mediums. This change is a result of the segmentation of tastes and preferences among consumers, increased media fragmentation, easier access to digital resources and consumer databases and the emphasis on consumer loyalty through relationship marketing. In this study, O'shea and Alonso (2011) identified that communicating via online mediums and social media is an important way to enhance visibility, fan knowledge and thus strengthen ties with the sport club.

According to Bamini Balakrishnan, Mohd Dahnil and Wong Yi (2014) stakeholders are logging onto social media platforms to exchange and seek product/ service information. The comments and feedback made by these users are extremely valuable resources to the organisation, as they stand as testimonials for the organisation. This is a source of

information for other stakeholders which has not been produced by the organisation resulting in stakeholders potentially being more likely to trust the values and opinions of fellow stakeholders as opposed to the strategically developed content from the organisation itself (Bizirgiannia and Dionysopoulou, 2013). According to Nielsen's Global Survey of Trust In Advertising (Nielsen, 2013), 68% of global respondents indicated that they are more likely to trust consumer opinions posted online, with 84% of respondents stating that they trust word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and family. A study performed by Bamini Balakrishnan, Mohd Dahnail and Wong Yi (2014) revealed that online marketing communications, especially electronic word-of-mouth and online communities, positively affect the brand through the organisation's websites and social media pages.

Researchers have recognised the importance of online word-of-mouth or eWOM to brands. Information that pertains to organisations and brands flow freer and faster in eWOM than traditional WOM due to two main reasons. Firstly, geographical boundaries do not constrain this information, allowing consumers to connect with other consumers beyond their personal circle. Secondly, eWOM on social media also crosses geographical and socio-cultural boundaries, allowing consumers to connect with people they do not know and probably will never meet, but with whom they share a common interest (Hambrick and Pegoraro, 2014). As a result of this, marketers are becoming more aware of the possibilities that online and social media discussions can, and do, impact sales, reputations and brands.

Many online users, more importantly stakeholders, maintain their own websites, blogs or pages, which circumvent traditional outlets, where they review products or services which often generate a lot of engagement on social media platforms (Dahnail, et al, 2014). This engagement with others is a critical motivation for bloggers whereby the producers and users of this content do so to compliment mainstream media (Filo, Lock and Karg, 2014). Organisations can capitalise on this user-generated content by sharing such reviews on their own pages, directing stakeholders to these 'testimonials' or ensure they are responding in a transparent manner to stakeholders that may not have favourable perceptions of the organisation and its products or services. Organisations are also able to use this user-generated content to forecast the

behaviour, needs and expectations of stakeholders, attract new stakeholders, enhance the brands popularity and build loyalty (Dahnil, et al, 2014).

As skilled relationship-builders, public relations practitioners are highly proficient in the art of two-way communication, therefore they add significant value when using social media as a channel of communication with stakeholders (Mikáčová and Gavlaková, 2014). This dialogic communication created by the strategic use of online public relations is one way where practitioners can build a relationship between stakeholders and the organisation (Petrovici, 2014). A study performed by Garcia (2011) highlighted the importance of relationship building through social media and ascertained that The Real Madrid Football Club relied heavily on fan feedback when developing its online marketing communications strategies. Garcia (2011) concluded that Real Madrid built its strong reputation partly through fostering these positive relationships with its fan base, which helped the brand remain strong and retain support even when the team itself did not perform well.

Matt Haig (2000) proposed the term e-PR to describe the new age and practices of public relations that have resulted in the growing popularity of the Internet. He suggested that online public relations supports the objectives of contemporary public relations, helping to balance long-term relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders and becoming a fundamental vector of communication that offers considerable advantages in facilitating the establishment and development of relationships. These advantages arise when online public relations allows audiences to interact with the organisation and the ability to receive immediate response, thus developing a sense of knowing the audience. Along with the significant lower costs of using social media to facilitate public relations strategies, a notable advantage of using these platforms is represented by message accuracy and precision. Unlike traditional public relations that made use of mass-media when communicating with external stakeholders, which carried a high risk of the possibility of message deformation, online public relations use the Internet to communicate with the audience. This new form of communication allows them to publish the message correctly, diminishing the possible *noises that may occur during communication as well as giving them the opportunity to engage with the recipients to identify if

stakeholders are responding to the message in a favourable and desired manner (Haig, 2000).

Due to the open nature of Internet and social media based communication, the messages released on these platforms have the potential to reach a wide range of stakeholders, if not all the stakeholder groups, an organisation might have. Rensburg and Cant (2003) explain that all stakeholders see the same message online, this means that an organisation needs to construct their messages in such a way that it aligns with the message being disseminated through every other channel of communication the organisation utilises. By ensuring all the messages of an organisation are aligned, it will translate to stakeholder's perceptions that the organisation is transparent, trustworthy and consistent, enhancing their brand image.

Rensburg and Cant (2003) further explained that a public relations practitioner must develop a campaign, which uses the best possible channel and frequency to ensure the messages of the campaign are aligned and that effective communication is constructed. Campaigns are a defined, purposive, organised set of communication activities that target various diverse publics over a given time period. A campaign should therefore identify its target audience and set out general and specific outcomes. Based on the findings of their research, social media can be used as a tool to implement the following campaign types with little to no cost for disseminating their messages: bringing about public awareness to a product/service, idea or concern; information along with awareness; public education that aims to educate the public on a topic; reinforce attitudes and behaviours that are in agreement with the organisation's desired position and a reminder of their shared values; attempt to change attitudes that are not in line with the organisation's desired image; and behaviour modification that involves convincing the public to behave in a certain way towards the organisation or the subject the campaign is focusing on (Rensburg and Cant, 2003). Social media is an effective tool to implement all these campaigns due to its versatility and wide audience. Managers who are responsible for implementing these social media campaigns have the opportunity to be integrated into consumer discussions in a manner that is consistent with the organisation's mission and campaign objectives via the creation of pages and websites, bringing stakeholders together and creating e-communities.

Through their research, Rensburg and Cant (2003) identified stages of effective campaigns which can be easily transferred to social media campaigns. Stage one describes the *identification* stage of the campaign, stating that a campaign must have an image or identification which allows stakeholders to quickly identify its message as well as serving a purpose of recalling the campaign and distinguishing it from other campaigns. A strong identification also encourages public buy in. An easy way for social media campaigns to create a campaign identification is to create a hashtag or use a specific logo or colour scheme. A hashtag can reflect a certain online community or message whether the hashtag is encouraging positive or negative word-of-mouth (Whiteside, 2014). Social media pages that are dedicated to a certain campaign can even be created for users to follow for details, information and to converse with other stakeholders or the campaign organisers.

Stage two deals with developing *legitimacy*. Legitimacy needs to be established amongst stakeholders by demonstrating the intentions for the campaign. If these intentions are clear, align with stakeholder's values and beliefs and the stakeholders believe the campaign is relevant and worthy of their attention, they are more likely to buy in to the campaign and support it.

Stage three involves *participation*. Campaigns should seek to involve previously uncommitted persons by encouraging them to participate in the campaign and ultimately increasing commitment to the cause. This can be done on social media by encouraging users to like, share and comment on posts. The *shareability of a campaign can potentially result in the campaign being shared by hundreds of different users thus ensuring the campaign is a talking point amongst different online communities.

Stage four addresses the *penetration* of a campaign and its degree of success. This can be monitored easily online by taking note of the number of shares, comments and likes a post or campaign receives. To drive penetration as well as participation many campaigns offer their stakeholders incentives to share or comment on the posts, such as giving away spot prizes.

The fifth and final stage is concerned with the *distribution* of the campaign. If the campaign is successful, the messages, values and beliefs the campaign wished to bring about become institutionalised. In order for them to bring about the institutionalisation of the campaign, the organisation needs to implement and uphold their promises and behaviour.

Alžběta Királová and Antonín Pavlíčka (2015) identified and summarised success factors of social media campaigns: (1) an in-depth understanding of social media; (2) allocation of resources for planning, production and promotion; (3) clear identification of goals based on analysis; (4) timing; (5) online and offline promotion of the campaign including advertising and strong public relations; (6) innovation (new approaches to social media communication); (7) creativity (Games, competitions, mobile applications); (8) focus on emotions (perceptions and expectations of the stakeholders); (9) perceived benefits of participants (e. g. prizes, publicity); (10) provision of relevant information; (11) relationship and support services; (12) identification of organisations ambassadors; (13) continuous monitoring and assessment of all components of the campaign; (14) implementation of corrections if needed.

Along with these success factors, social media are also capable of delivering the four types of messages identified by Rensburg and Cant (2003);

Planned- these messages are developed by the organisation to disseminate information about the organisation's plans, events, products and services to various stakeholders. This is often done through advertising, newsletters and other forms of formal communication channels and traditional media.

Inferred- these are non-verbal messages sent out and communicated to stakeholders. These non-verbal messages are conveyed through elements such as product design, the performance and behaviours of the organisation and its employees and the brand image and reputation.

Maintenance- these are messages that aim to create and maintain interpersonal relationships by the exchange of information.

Unplanned- messages from and about the organisation that emerge from breaking news and rumours. These unplanned messages often emerge suddenly and have the ability to be circulated very quickly, but have a short life span as stakeholders lose interest in the topic and the news event is taken over by a newer story. Social media can play a vital role in unplanned messages by allowing real time responses and the immediate addressing of issues and concerns that stakeholders have.

Verway and du Plooy-Cilliers (2003) state that Internet technology has allowed organisations to personalise communication between them and their stakeholders, facilitating one-on-one marketing as well as providing a platform for suggestion engines. With the increasing mass media costs, social media in particular are affordable communication channels that offer a deep richness of information with a large reach. These Internet based communications also provide a platform where a conversation can take place simultaneously between an organisation and its stakeholders as well as facilitate communication between stakeholders, which can serve as a testimonial to the organisation. However, this may also pose the threat that some users may voice negative opinions or try bring down the reputation of the brand; but in this case the social media manager along with the public relations practitioner must work together in order to address the user openly and honestly and come to a solution with the disgruntled user. This could strengthen the brands image, as it will show responsiveness and willingness to address the concerns of their stakeholders.

Social media has given organisations the opportunity to engage and embark on two-way communication with stakeholders allowing them to communicate directly with stakeholders, obtaining unfiltered information, as well as enabling them to connect their stakeholders with other stakeholders on one platform, allowing the organisation to start, monitor and influence the conversation. As public relations is largely dependent on communication, practitioners must ensure their strategies follow the public's appetite for media, which is fast becoming Internet based. The integration of social networking and new technology in user's daily routines is a fact. With this new media, new possibilities and challenges are introduced for public relations functions (Bizirgiannia and Dionysopoulou, 2013). Due to the perceived importance of the Internet in the everyday lives of stakeholders, a contemporary public relations

strategy that fails to identify the importance of communicating with stakeholders online or does not communicate effectively online can no longer effectively shape or maintain the desired public image they intend on developing (Petrovici, 2014). Aligning with this reasoning and based on the findings of the Diffusion Theory, social media has the potential to be a very successful tool in facilitating persuasion due to its ability to disseminate “mass communication” (which is important for the first two steps) while also offering a personal contact medium for the final two stages. Social media can also be a useful tool in monitoring and analysing an organisation’s stakeholder perceptions and relationships through tracking the brand engagement, word-of-mouth and the number of followers, likes and shares as well as facilitating brand awareness, engagement, trust and social validation (Kiráľová and Pavlíčka 2015).

CHAPTER THREE

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will analyse the existing literature and body of knowledge on social media and public relations in the field of sport. Over 40 journal articles were reviewed; these journal articles investigated new media technology's ability to facilitate interactivity and co-creation that allow organisations to develop and share user-generated content among and between their stakeholders.

3.1 The Brand and Public Relations Role in Communicating It

Organisational public relations encompass public relations' advertising and marketing communication activities; these functions were originally completely independent functions within the organisation. The convergence of these communication activities arose as a response to the evolving business environment, noticeably the exponential growth in social media fuelled by consumer demands. A Text 100 Global Public Relations study revealed that relationships might be more important than advertising when it comes to brand value (Mikáčová and Gavlaková, 2014).

3.1.1 Relationship marketing

As it has been identified, one of public relations main roles is to establish and maintain relationships by communicating credibly with key audiences who affect business results. Therefore, public relations is an important element in communicating and supporting the power and value of the organisation's brand to all stakeholders. Public relations facilitates the awareness, understanding and commitment to a brand through its practices and has become an essential part of an overall strategy that is aimed at sustaining and raising standards of performance and credibility (Mikáčová and Gavlaková, 2014). Similarly, Filo, Lock and Karg (2014) explain that relationship marketing is the efforts that a brand makes to build and maintain bonds with their customers and other stakeholders through mutual exchange and interactivity. To build these relationships a brand needs to psychologically engage with their consumers in the co-creation process that is facilitated by social media platforms. Filo, Lock and Karg (2014) place psychological

engagement as a core component of relationship marketing as it drives the formation of meaningful relationships to be formed between the brand and its consumers and other stakeholders as well as the communities of consumers. This exchange between brands and consumers, via social media, aligns with the interactive nature of relationships.

Relationship marketing emphasises the cultivation, recruitment and maintenance of various stakeholders and highlights mutual benefits derived from each member in the relationship. The core of relationship marketing lies with stakeholders engaging in ongoing loyal relationships with an organisation. Sport bodies adopting relationship marketing strategies will facilitate the development of a more loyal fan base. From a sporting perspective, these stakeholders are more influential due to the ever-increasing need for reliance on outside revenues due to increasing costs (Dixon, Martinez and Martin, 2015). Dixon, Martinez and Martin (2015) identified five characteristics of relationship quality which include trust, commitment, intimacy, self-connection and reciprocity. Social media has the potential to be an effective tool to facilitate relationship marketing for sport bodies as it will enable them to gain better knowledge of consumers (awareness), improved interaction and better engagement with stakeholders. Using social media for relationship marketing also poses some areas of concern, such as control over messages, credibility and reliability of information and effectiveness of messages. This is due to the anonymity that the Internet offers and the ease of making fake accounts.

3.1.2 The Brand

A brand has become more than a visual symbol and memorable tag line; it should anchor the mission and vision, operating principles and tactics for an organisation. A brand is the name, term, design, symbol or any other feature designed by an organisation that allows publics to distinctly identify an organisation and differentiate it from its competitors. A brand goes beyond the products and services the organisation offers, it encompasses everything else about an organisation such as its reputation, culture and core values (Mikáčová and Gavlaková, 2014). Due to its ability to encompass so many elements an organisation wishes to communicate with its stakeholders into one 'image', branding has been referred to as a messaging instrument that can aid a business in reaching its goals and encompasses the

promotion of everything associated with the organisation. By developing a strong brand, an organisation can create identification and brand awareness for the organisation as well as serving as an organisation's spokesperson guaranteeing a certain standard of quality and satisfaction.

A brand is no longer an element exclusive to for-profit organisations; it is an emerging trend that shows prevalence and importance in the area of sport, travel, politics, culture and non-profit segments (Mikáčová and Gavlaková, 2014). The brand impacts both the internal and external stakeholders of an organisation; internally, the brand is central to all decisions, values and actions that enable the employees to deliver the brand's promises; externally it communicates the organisational elements, values and standards. The brand and all of its messages should represent the following (Mikáčová and Gavlaková, 2014):

Values- the core beliefs of the organisation and what it and the brand stands for.

Behaviours- how the organisation interacts and communicates with internal and external stake holders.

Positioning- what the organisation wants stakeholders to think about their brand and how they intend to be perceived amongst these stakeholders.

Identity- names, visual standards, logos, verbal themes.

A brand's identity must be built internally, across all geographies, levels and functions. This facilitates the development of a winning culture, which is reinforced over time when the actions and communications of the organisation reflect the stated mission, vision, values and beliefs of the organisation. By enforcing brand-based values, it serves as a guideline for employees on which they can base their behaviour and attitude. This can create a community of employees who share an understanding of the values and behaviours an organisation promotes, bringing vibrancy and momentum to an organisation and helps focus people on the need for consistently high standards of performance- this is the source of stakeholder satisfaction and corporate reputation (Mikáčová and Gavlaková, 2013). This relationship between brand, culture, performance and reputation is represented visually in the below figure.

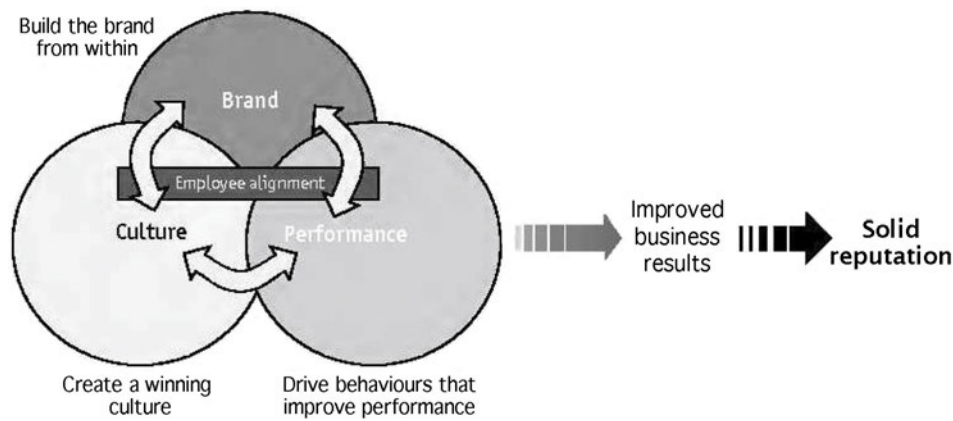


FIGURE 4. Brand organisational linkages (Clifton and Simons, 2003)

In their article, Mikáčová and Gavlaková (2014) address the common misconception that branding and marketing are synonymous concepts. Marketing is differentiated from branding whereby it involves the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods and services with the aim of creating exchanges that satisfy both individual and organisational objectives. While the role of marketing, concepts of marketing and marketing planning have changed little to none in the current business environment, the manner in which organisations and their customers communicate has changed dramatically. Central to this perspective is the recognition that communication in the current business environment is now a two-way process between an organisation and its stakeholders, whereby social media greatly encourages and facilitates this manner of communication. While the rapid expansion of the Internet and social media platforms presents organisations with greater opportunities to connect to their stakeholders, this channel also requires organisations to monitor their brand online. As a result of the rise in popularity of social media, social consciousness among consumers has risen along with their expectation of brands to “stand for something beyond their own attributes” (Finchum, 2010).

Munteanu Cătălin and Pagalea Andreea (2014) explained that people are more likely and more willing to associate themselves with an organisation that has a strong brand and good reputation as this is another way for the individual to express their own identity to the world. They suggest that publics will choose a brand that they consider congruent to their self-image or the image they want to project; it is therefore

imperative for an organisation to identify what their stakeholders needs, values and beliefs are in order to align their own.

The role of public relations in branding ensures a strategic message is shaped and communicated internally and externally to stakeholders, ensuring a consistent message is being sent to both internal and external stakeholders. It is the role of the public relations function to create the narrative (the conversation on social media) as well as to be the purveyor of the medium to facilitate the conversation. Filo, Lock and Karg (2014) proposed three streams that serve to describe the process and impact that social media can have on a brand:

1. Allows the brand to strategically build relationships and facilitate outcomes with stakeholders using contemporary methods.
2. The achievement of relationship building relies on the understanding and execution of operational action to sustain and cultivate relationships.
3. Users co-create content and participate as members of communities, fostering meaning between individuals, in turn, benefitting the brand.

Although based on tourism destinations, the findings of Alžbeta Kiráľová and Antonín Pavlíček (2015) can be transferred to the way in which people interact and perceive a brand. They suggest that potential visitors of a specific tourist destination develop an image and a set of expectations about a destination based on previous experiences of fellow tourists, word-of-mouth, press reports, advertising and common beliefs before visiting a destination. A mental picture is formed through their reasoned and emotional interpretations, concluding that an attractive destination reflects their perceptions about the destination's ability to satisfy their needs and deliver on its promises. The same can be said about the formation of stakeholders' perceptions towards an organisation based on the same elements as identified by Kiráľová and Pavlíček (2015). Benyman (2010) explains that public relations do not only focus on an organisation's products or services, rather it should also assist in shaping strategic messaging. By taking both Benyman's reasoning and the findings of Kiráľová and Pavlíček (2015), it can be said that the public relations role in communicating the brand must encompass both product/service information, incorporate what the organisation values, as well as ensuring different communication channels and sources are available for stakeholders to seek and disseminate information about the

organisation. Consistent with Benyman's line of reason, Winchel (2010) encouraged organisations to "join the conversation" in social media, which is a mission perfectly suited for public relations practitioners.

Based on the findings of their research, Mikáčová and Gavlaková (2013) proposed that public relations has a dual role in brand management; as a creator of narrative and as the purveyor of the medium that will facilitate the conversation. The current economic environment is characterised by consumer cynicism and a loss of consumer confidence and trust, whereby consumers no longer blindly trust and accept the messages an organisation disseminates. An example of this growing cynicism amongst consumers is found in the findings of a Starcom USA 2005 study that revealed 65% of magazine readers believed that the articles magazines publish about certain products were paid for by advertisers, leaving them skeptical of the authenticity of the article (Starcom Study, 2005). Hynes pointed out that "one of the notable characteristics of this economic downturn is a focus on transparency" (Hynes, 2009).

Based on the premise of these findings, it can be said that consumers have acknowledged that marketing and advertising are paid forms of communication that are strategically developed by the organisation with the sole intentions of enticing them to purchase products or services. The need for transparency that stakeholders perceive as important means that an organisation needs to communicate with their stakeholders on a more personal and frequent level in order to satisfy this need. This suggests that stakeholders will assign greater credibility to brands that not only disseminate communication that is marketing or promotion focused, but communication that aims to establish or nurture a relationship between the two.

Owing to stakeholders' cynicism surrounding paid forms of marketing, word-of-mouth in the brand conversation has given rise on social media and can be an extremely valuable asset for organisations who wish to capitalise from online communication and referrals from stakeholder to stakeholder communication. Hynes (2009) believes that the authenticity to elevate a brand should come from public relations. It is therefore important for public relations to join the conversation by developing narratives that will shape and encourage transparent online conversations amongst stakeholders. This also proves as a useful tool whereby the public relations function can track and

monitor what their publics are saying about them, what their needs, values and attitudes are, and identify the best way in which to satisfy these by communicating directly with their stakeholders.

Given that one of the many roles of public relations practitioners is to create a competitive advantage by developing a recognisable brand, Nezakati, Amidi, Jusoh, Moghadas, Azize and Sohrabinezhadtalemif (2015) explain that knowledge sharing is a highly important competitive asset that substantially supports and fosters an organisation's ability to adapt, survive and perform by establishing relationships through this concept. This is an important function offered by social media which sport teams need to identify and take advantage of. Knowledge in this case can pertain to awareness and proactivity. This will ensure people who cannot be present at certain games due to geographical constraints are still able to feel 'present' by having the opportunity to be connected and virtually present through online platforms.

Aligning with the findings of Nezakati, et al (2015), Jiang, Chen, Nunamaker and Zimbra (2014) explain that organisation-specific social media helps managers understand and identify stakeholders' concerns which enables them to make informed decisions based on their stakeholders' expectations. The ease with which stakeholders can access social media and the freedom this medium offers its users enables stakeholders to voice their opinions with little to no restrictions to express their true perceptions and beliefs. Stakeholders do not have to spend time enquiring which channel to go through or who to communicate with; nowadays, they can simply logon to social media and post on either the organisation's page or send them a message. Online web forums which are formed can become an essential information source on which public relations practitioners can base their evaluations on the impacts of events on stakeholders. These forums facilitate microtargetting as well as allowing more effective managerial responses to be made through the analysis of its content (Jaing, et al, 2014). Social media has also been credited as a very important tool in raising brand awareness and supporting the overall organisational marketing strategies. Research revealed that utilising social media to accomplish organisational purposes of raising awareness and marketing was deemed to be most important, used most frequently and were perceived by respondents as the most successful (Dixon, Martinez and Martin, 2015).

The creation of social media groups, pages and accounts allows for the grouping of stakeholders with similar interests and enables organisations to directly identify and address their interests and concerns. This makes the identification of major areas of discussion easier for management or public relations practitioners, as key stakeholder concerns will emerge (Jaing, et al, 2014). In the same research Jain, et al (2014) explained that discussions that occur on social media show great variations over time, especially when major events occur. This is a phenomenon referred to as the temporal dynamics of social media (TDSM). TDSM is observed in terms of participants, discussion content and relationships between social media activity and happenings in the real world. The aim of studying TDSM participants is to understand how different groups of people react to critical situations, ie. the way in which players, spectators and coaches react when facing critical situations and the way in which they express their views on social media. Knowing this and being proactive in this approach will allow a sports body to facilitate an approach to public relations which aligns with the two-way symmetrical model as proposed by Grunig and Hunt.

3.2 Applied Studies of Social Media in Public Relations and Sport

“Sport personifies much of what humanity is about: community, the pursuit of physical excellence and the full range of emotions.” (Smith & Westerbeck, 2004)

Sport is widely regarded as a cultural subsystem of modern day society, and because of the huge numbers of individuals who participate, watch or engage regularly in sporting activities, it has also become a big business sector (Hopwood, 2005). Sport organisations are not immune to the rapid changes taking place globally that effect corporate business. In similar ways to these corporate businesses feeling pressure from their consumers, the competitive environment and external pressures and demands from sport enthusiasts are dictating the way managers of professional and amateur sport organisations market and brand their product. Social networking sites have become popular channels for sport fans to communicate and engage with their favourite teams, players and coaches and as an outlet to express their enthusiasm and support. Sport organisations are therefore using social media platforms to connect with their stakeholders at a level beyond the reach of traditional media (O’Shea and

Alonso, 2011). Soccer is a sport that has long enjoyed the success as a business venture owing to the huge financial sums associated with the game. If hockey wishes to stay relevant and compete for media and supporter attention, it has to modernise and behave in a more commercial way.

Due to this popularity of social media, sport teams and brands have bought in to the trend and have invested significant time and resources to drive relationships and engagement online (Filo, Lock and Karg, 2014). The newness of social media has resulted in its adoption being experimental in nature by these organisations who do not have clear objectives or evaluation criteria for it (Eagleman, 2013). As social media is considerably younger than other traditional marketing communication tools, so too is the sport management research that has been conducted on it.

The following section will describe how a sport's governing body or organisation can use social media to promote its game, players or events.

3.2.1 Using social media to supplement traditional media in sport

Sport fans, much like consumers of products and services, no longer rely solely on traditional means of information-gathering. They are more likely to check scores and results online if they are not physically present at the game. Physical proximity is no longer an excluding or restricting factor when it comes to consuming live sport events because social media allows all users to be direct participants of sport entertainment (Alonso and O'Shea, 2012). The convergence culture that is present in today's society describes the behaviour of consumers where two or more screens are being used to consume media. O'Shea and Alonso (2011) provide a useful illustration (Figure 5) of the sport marketing dynamics identified in the different interviews as they refer to technology-based and social media tools being used in conjunction with traditional marketing tools.

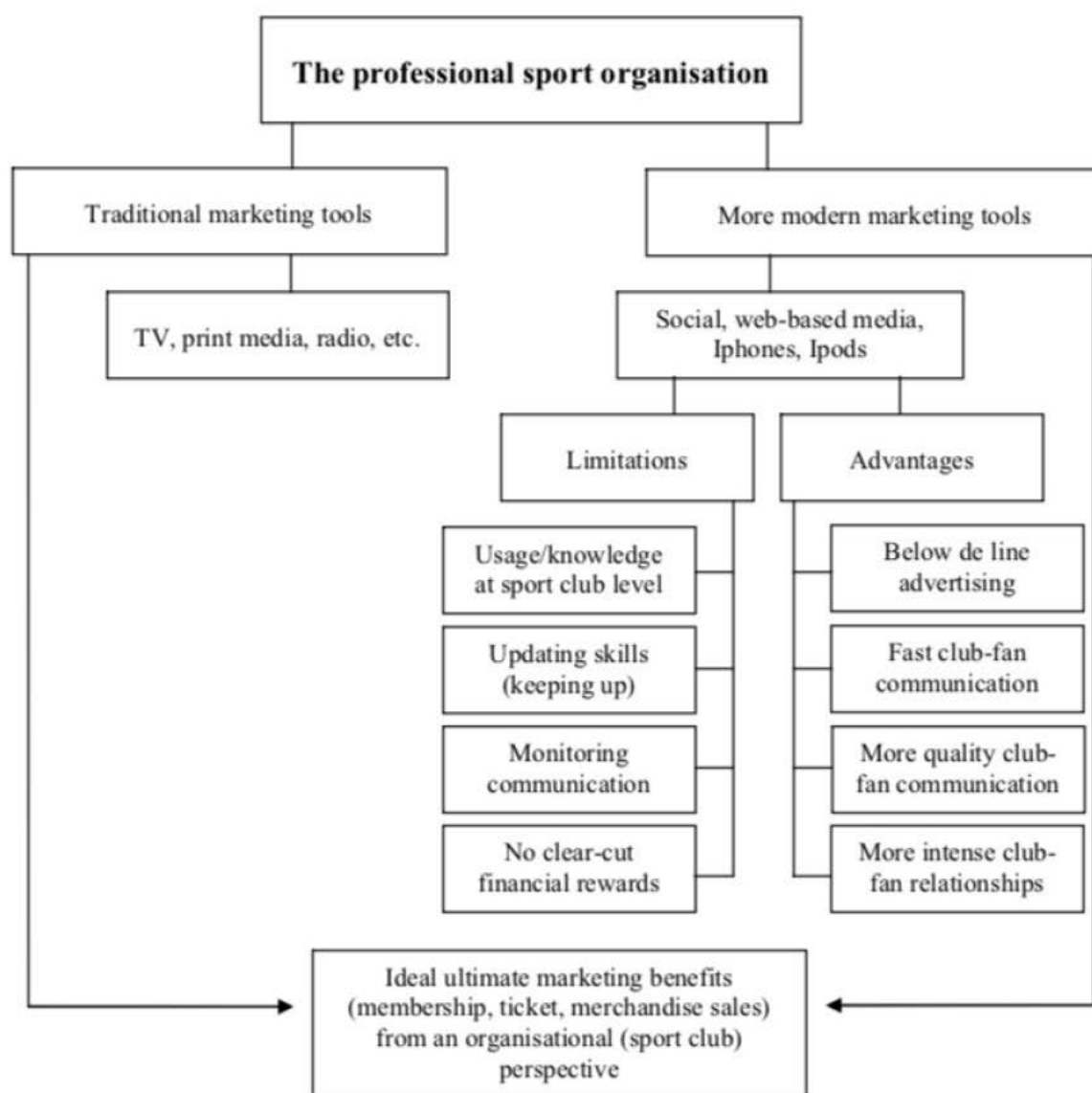


FIGURE 5. The sport organisation and marketing tools (O'Shea and Alonso, 2011)

In the case of sports consumption, fans are wanting and seeking more information than in previous times. This explains why fans are using social media to enhance their experience when watching sport either on screens or live. Fans are using social media platforms to seek out different content via multiple platforms other than that offered by traditional media. The presence of social media content on live broadcasts (in the form of mentioning social media platforms on air or airing tweets made during the game) directs the live audience to the social media platforms while high levels of activity on social media provides evidence of fan participation and demand for the broadcast. Live sport broadcasts have not been outdated, but “repositioned” and redefined by its relationship to the Internet and mobile media due to social media providing a live experience and social atmosphere for fans to discuss the game/sport

online in real time (Vann, 2014). Similarly, technology also provides sport fans, spectators and consumers additional ways to become symbolically and metaphorically involved with a sport or team (Alonso and O'Shea, 2012). By liking or following a team on social media, an individual is associating the image of their team to their own image. Similar to the way in which that individual might wear the official team jersey, they are able to create their online social identity by publicising their support for a team or sport. In doing so, they are also shaping their online reality by customising what information and content is appearing on their timeline.

3.2.2 Social media in public relations of sports and teams

The ever-increasing reliance on digital technology has significantly altered marketing and communication in the sport landscape. This is evident in the incorporation of Internet based platforms into the marketing and communication strategies of global sports properties such as The Olympic Games (Mahan, 2011). Recently, digital and social media (platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook) have become a point of emphasis in the sporting world with sport organisations and their athletes, sponsors and media outlets incorporating these new technologies in to their strategic communication with sport consumers. Mahan (2011) stressed that the creation of a concrete Internet marketing plan is critical to successfully incorporating this medium into organisational strategy. O'Shea and Alonso (2011) state that the emphasis on social media should be about the degree to which the organisation can engage with and create dialog between its current and prospective market.

Although preceding social media, Grunig and Hunt (1984) observed that sport organisations predominantly used the press agency model, more recent research from Jackowski (2007) yielded similar results showing that the predominant public relations models employed in the field were press agency and the public information models. In the same research Jackowski (2007) concluded that stakeholder relationships are now of optimum importance; however neither one of these one-way models embrace the mutual, dyadic climate necessary for successful relationships to be developed. Given the ease of access to, and the nature of social media, public relations practitioners have a tool that has the potential to facilitate the type of communication and public relations needed to develop and maintain meaningful relationships with their stakeholders.

There is an on-going effort towards the efficient use, development and integration of these new technologies in public relations strategies in order to approach fans in the most effective way possible (Bizirgiannia and Dionysopoulou, 2013). The use of social media in public relations can substantially reduce the promotional and advertising costs that traditional practices incurred due to its applications and channels not requiring payment. Although platforms do give business profiles the opportunity to boost their posts, this fare is significantly cheaper than placing the same material on TV or magazines. Social media allows the rapid dissemination of information to a wide range of fans, in real time. This allows a public relations team to directly interact with its fans, allowing them to ask questions that result in the identification and addressing of information and concerns of their stakeholders that will reveal stakeholder expectations and perceptions (Bizirgiannia and Dionysopoulou, 2013). Filo, Lock and Karg (2014) identified opportunities and challenges that brands are faced with when using social media as a communication tool. Opportunities include enhanced knowledge of their stakeholders, advanced interaction, effective engagement and efficient use of resources while the challenges involve lack of control, difficulties identifying true customers, allocation of organisational resources, concerns over effectiveness and concerns over credibility.

Social media also facilitates active participation amongst its users, suggesting that fans turn to social media for additional content that goes beyond just simply watching the sport being broadcasted. In this sense, social media is a vehicle to solidify relationships with fans. It offers fans content to consume outside of match/ game time. As fans continue to engage with sport organisations, social media tools provide means for quick access to information and allows fans to better identify with the organisation (Dixon, Martinez and Martin, 2015). Fans want to interact with players and sport bodies and have a behind the scenes view of their team. This presents the public relations team with an opportunity to grow their brand through their players and governing bodies by encouraging a strong social media presence from these actors. Recognising the strategic use of players and coaches for public relations purposes can enhance the overall communication of an organisation (Hopwood, 2005). This will not only enrich their fans' experience but also provide them with a platform that provides an accessible channel of communication where they can receive transparent information. This engagement can result in a more intimate, close knit community,

which can in-turn provide for more outcome based actions such as fan attendance (Dixon, Martinez and Martin, 2015).

The findings of research performed by Barbu (2014) can optimise the ability of social media efforts to ensure the right target market is reached. Barbu (2014) explains a concept called 'microtargeting', whereby a detailed segmentation of the target audience is identified in order to successfully create and deliver personalised messages to the relevant stakeholders. By targeting stakeholders through social media allows the strategic placement of advertisements and posts that facilitate communication and public relations efforts being received by the relevant people. These online environments allow researchers access to detailed data that can be analysed and used in progress reports. Based on this information and the strengths and beneficial attributes of social media, Facebook groups, Instagram accounts and Twitter pages have the potential to be a vital source of stakeholder information which public relations practitioners can analyse and base stakeholder research on. Barbu (2014) acknowledges that issues of privacy invasion arise with microtargeting due to unsolicited communication and marketing content being sent to publics. However, in the case of social media pages and platforms being created for online users and fans to like and follow, they are doing so of their own free will, and therefore are more likely to appreciate and accept the content then dislike it, as Barbu (2014) suggests.

Social media needs to be constantly worked on and updated. New, exciting posts need to be uploaded on a regular basis in order to attract and retain users. It is important to determine the right amount of posts per week based on the expectations of their followers. Too much information and too many posts may leave followers feeling bombarded or irritated while too little may result in followers becoming bored, losing interest with no perks perceived by following the account, which will result in users turning to another source to meet their needs, or shifting their allegiance to other teams who are utilising social media in a more effective manner.

An important element of social media is knowing what to post in order to attract followers and to encourage these followers to engage with the post by either liking, sharing or commenting. Topic selection is the manner in which a topic is selected and dealt with (Pavelka, 2014). Events that are considered newsworthy often have the

following characteristics: threshold, frequency, negativity, unexpectedness, unambiguity, personalisation, meaningfulness, reference to elite nations, reference to elite persons, consonance (the media's expectations), continuity and composition (the news value depends not only on its own value, but on values of competing news). Regardless of the news type and value, the emphasis is always laid upon attracting the attention and interest of the audience. Audiences are interested in a wide range of news topics, which range from local to international news events (Pavelka, 2014).

It is important for public relations practitioners who work in the sporting industry to identify which news events to incorporate in their social media feed; local stories that will attract attention and events that these stakeholders are more likely to respond positively to while incorporating international news events that are relevant or interesting to the local community. Kavoura and Stavrianea (2014) argue that online users should be provided with a broad range of content and that the range, richness, reliability and timeliness of information available on these platforms is likely to be far greater than that of information available through conventional means.

3.2.3 Strategic, operational and user focused social media use by organisations

Filo, Lock and Karg (2014) suggest that sport brands use social media with the following objectives: engagement, communication, relationship development and branding, while their fans use social media for interactivity, information gathering purposes and live game updates. Fans are motivated to engage with sport teams and brands on social media because of passion, hope, fandom/esteem and camaraderie, while social media allows these sport teams to interact with fans on a personal and engaging level. Lance Armstrong utilised social media to communicate with his followers and the public to counteract messages communicated by traditional media in the aftermath of his doping scandal. Interacting with fans and engaging in ongoing discussions can positively impact the number of 'fans' or 'likes' on a brands official Facebook page. Demonstrating authenticity can positively impact the number of followers and is an important part of building brand trust within social media. Clavio and Walsh (2013) argued six identifiable gratifications that social media have for sport fans: evaluation, community, information gathering, knowledge demonstration, argumentation and diversion. A further four gratifications of social media from a sport fan's perspective were identified by Witkemper, Blaszk and Chung (2014):

interaction, promotion, live game updates and news. This need for social media and its diverse content reflects the findings of Grunig and Hunt's situational theory that explains how stakeholder's media and communication needs change over time and in different scenarios.

Based on the findings of Clavio and Walsh (2013) and Witkemper, Blaszkas and Chung (2014), it is evident that sport fans have a wide variety of needs which they are using social media to gratify. Each user will use social media to gratify a different need. As explained by Clavio and Walsh (2013), college students used social media most frequently to find out about upcoming sports events and least frequently to interact with other fans. This could be due to the close proximity college students have to their social circle and the frequency at which they partake in social gatherings compared to a group of online users who are more likely to watch the game at home and have less social interactions, hence they turn to social media to meet their need of social interaction. It is important for sport social media managers to acknowledge these elements in order to provide users with content that is able to lead to gratification.

3.2.4 Using social media and public relations to create strong relationships

Noui, Talbia, Fernex, Lima, Hadji, Gonegai, Bouziane and Radid (2012) identified the ways in which sporting bodies would benefit from the practices of public relations. Through its practices, as discussed previously, it would allow the organisation to potentially create a strong identity as a credible entity amongst stakeholders as well as developing trusting relationships with them which the survival and development of its entity depend partly upon. Like any other organisation geared towards success, sporting bodies must seek effective public relations aiming to: develop and reinforce the links based on mutual trust that exist between the organisation and its stakeholders, provide initiatives and resources that will allow the construction of an image to be formed that positions the sporting body amongst its competitors, and disseminate information (Noui, et al. 2012). A good public relations strategy should increase a sport body's reputation through its players, past achievements and rankings at international levels through effective communication with its stakeholder. A study conducted by Aslan and Sendogdu (2012) identified a positive correlation between ethical leadership, corporate ethical values and ethical behaviour. The findings of their study can be applied to this research by identifying the players,

managers, coaches and other staff of sporting bodies as the “leaders”. If these actors are viewed as the leaders, the findings of Aslan and Sendogdu will result in the actions of these leaders influencing the image of their sporting body. The ethical behaviour showed by these leaders will influence stakeholder opinion and could potentially increase stakeholder’s willingness to support the sport body, form relationships with them and attract more players to participate. Their findings also show that in today’s society, stakeholders place immense pressure on organisations to behave in an ethical manner. Compared to the individuals that work for a company, sport players and coaches cannot hide behind the brand name due to their constant presence in the public eye. Thus, the “leaders” in sporting bodies should identify their key role in developing and creating the image and reputation of their sport. It is important for the sporting code to explicitly communicate its ethical values in order to guide the behaviour of its leaders. As identified previously, social media is considered a highly intimate form of communication between an organisation and its stakeholders. This personal touch allows the adaption of messages that could potentially result in an emotional link being formed between the individual and the organisation. This could result in greater support from the public in terms of physically coming to support teams at various venues and being the sport of choice amongst players and spectators. Alonso and O’shea’s (2012) research revealed that individuals with high team identification reported higher attendance to games than individuals with low team identification.

3.2.5 Facilitating and measuring effective and successful public relations activities

Much like public relations in the corporate world, sport public relations professionals are challenged with evaluating the effectiveness of public relations functions within their organisations (Stoldt, Miller and Vermillion, 2009). Evaluation methods are shifting from the quantitative, and evolving to measure the quality of media coverage and strength of relationships. The concept of public relations effectiveness is multifaceted as its practices can focus on the individual practitioner, the organisation, a specific communication program or society overall. Duties associated with public relations have grown and are often shared by multiple departments including marketing, development and media relations (Stoldt, Miller and Vermillion, 2009).

Measuring the effectiveness of public relations is a difficult task as it deals with measuring public opinion. Stoldt, Miller and Vermillion (2009) suggest that “you can look at your efforts and see if what you are doing is hitting the media the way you hoped it would” but this is not a scientific measure. Word-of-mouth cannot be measured nor can you be certain that the media will cover your events or broadcast your messages but the word will spread and word-of-mouth can be infinitely more valuable to public relations efforts than a newspaper article. Although no widely accepted, concrete measurement tools have been suggested, Stoldt, Miller and Vermillion’s (2009) research revealed that the most common methods of measurement include tracking media placement, primarily the volume of publicity received by the organisation, calculating financial values on publicity received, focus groups, online surveys, evaluating the relative quality of the information being shared from the media, tracking consumer response and tracking traffic on their website or social media channels.

Hon (1998) acknowledged that public relations practitioners struggle to evaluate public relations efforts and activities due to the lack of quantifiable data emerging. However, these practitioners identified a few evaluation methods that they used which included conducting focus groups, customer surveys, monitoring government research, tracking media placement, attendance at events, store traffic, calls to toll free numbers and ‘hits’ on the organisations website (this would translate to the number of likes or followers on social media pages in today’s climate). The same research (Hon, 1998) revealed public relations professionals describing effectiveness in terms of goal achievement, increasing understanding, facilitating two-way communication, building relationships, disseminating the right message, working through the public relations process, communicating strategically, earning respect, promoting and fostering good media relations, changing attitudes, changing behavior and affecting legislation.

Hon (1998) contended that for public relations to be considered effective, communication activities must achieve communication goals in the most cost-efficient manner. Hons (1998) states that it is implicit for public relations goals to be derived from the overall organisation goals and objectives. Hon (1998) believes that it is important for sport organisations to establish specific goals, which will aid public relations practitioners when developing and evaluating public relations activities.

Research (Hon, 1998) revealed that public relations practitioners stressed the importance of the goals being strategic or having linkages to the overall organisational goals. In the instances when public relations goals were not well defined or linked to the overall organisation goals, practitioners encountered difficulties attempting to establish value for public relations within the organisation. One of the most common themes that emerged from research conducted by Stoldt, Miller and Vermillion (2009) was the main goal of public relations to get viewers into stadiums while other goals included awareness of the sport, image building, obtaining positive publicity, promotion of the sport, its athletes and sponsors and providing public relations support to other departments within the organisation. Stoldt, Miller and Vermillion (2009) also noted that public relations can serve as an ethical watchdog internally, ensuring employees, athletes and sponsors behave in an ethical and responsible manner.

3.2.6 *Social media and the Olympic Games*

The Olympic Games is classified as a mega event through which governments can promote nation-states and forge their national identity in an international arena. The same can be said for each sporting code. Like the Olympics, other mega-events such as The Commonwealth Games and World Cups all celebrate and create identities in an international context to reinforce and legitimise their capabilities (L'Etang, 2006). As the best of the best compete with one another, the sport is on show case which has the potential to attract new fans, encourage existing fans to become more active supporters, and create a desire for the sport to be consumed and played. The 2012 London Olympic Games were dubbed the '*Twitter Olympics*' leading one social analyst to assert 'social media changed the way in which the Olympics are consumed and discussed' (Whiteside, 2014). This analogy came as a result of the excessive use and integration of social media in the broadcasting, marketing and communication strategies of the 2012 London Olympics Games and The Winter Games held in Sochi. The Sochi Winter Olympics organising committee utilised social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to publicise the event in the buildup to the opening ceremonies, similarly sponsors publicised their affiliation with and support of the games, while athletes, journalists and others in attendance provided first-hand accounts of their experiences, discussing related topics and issues via the same platforms (Whiteside, 2014). It is evident how social media became an accessible tool

which enabled engagement among most, if not all, stakeholders of the Olympic Games, people in different countries were able to join the conversation and engage on social media despite geographical limitations. Through these activities, impromptu and ad hoc sport communities were developed around the Olympic Games, giving users an opportunity to participate in the ever-evolving conversations around the games (Whiteside, 2014).

3.2.7 Social media in non-professional/ non-profit sport

Eagleman (2013) expressed that due to national sport governing bodies operating as nonprofit organisations, they typically receive less mainstream media coverage and have significantly smaller marketing budgets compared to professional or private sport clubs or organisations. Therefore, these governing bodies would benefit from seeking alternative methods from mainstream media and traditional marketing in order to increase brand awareness and stakeholder engagement. Social media has been identified to be significantly cost effective while also bringing in the potential for additional revenue through promotions (Witkemper, Blaszkas and Chung, 2014).

While all sport organisations have the potential to benefit from social media, national governing bodies are a segment that are uniquely positioned to capitalise on social media's benefits (Eagleman, 2013). Examples of national governing bodies in South Africa include Athletics South Africa, DanceSport South Africa and The South African Hockey Association, the national governing body that this research focuses on.

A study performed by Eagleman (2013) revealed two main themes when identifying why a sport governing body uses social media, these were to enhance the organisation's relationship with fans and to promote the organisation's brand and sport. In terms of enhancing the relationship with their fans, respondents of the study indicated their organisation's willingness to inform fans of news, educate fans about the sport, attract new fans, promote more interaction between the organisation and the fans, and to provide a forum on which fans have the opportunity to communicate and share information with each other. With regards to the promotion of the organisation's brand and sport, the results indicated that national governing bodies sought to utilise social media with the desire to increase brand awareness, maintain

control over the organisation's image, increase awareness and exposure for the sport and develop respect amongst the public and media for the sport.

In the same study, Eagleman (2013) was also able to identify two themes that were revealed when asking respondents what they regard as the greatest advantages of social media for their organisation. These first theme credited social media with developing a greater connection between the organisation and its fans; the ease of communicating with fans in terms of answering fan and member questions; and the ability to publicly thank and interact with fans and potential fans. The second theme pertained to the inexpensive nature of social media, which gave national governing bodies the ability to reach a large number of fans at a very low cost. Results also revealed three main challenges of social media use perceived by national governing bodies: maintaining control over the messages (inappropriate comments and how to deal with them), monitoring fan comments (difficult to find time to provide updates and respond to large numbers of queries), and finding the correct balance between posting too much and too little from the organisation's account (each individual's social media preference is different) (Eagleman, 2013).

3.2.8 Competing with mainstream sport

Research performed by Moradi, Honari, Naghshbandi and Jabari (2012) aimed to determine the relationships that occur between sport media (informational, educational, social participation and culture making) and development of champion sports (organised competitive sporting events to promote sport records and access medals or rank). The results of their study showed a significant relationship between the role of sport media and the development of champion sport, and that extensive strategies are required to ensure sport's media programs are developing champion sport. In their paper, they explained that dominant cultures among people are influenced by several social factors that can affect beliefs, attitudes and performances. The mass media is identified as one of the basic instruments to inform, instruct and examine social problems and model social values (Moradi, et al. 2012). Like other social phenomena, sport is influenced by social attitudes; these attitudes, beliefs and behaviour towards sport can be highly influenced and constructed based on happenings presented through media, where mass media is considered an effective factor in modelling social values. Circumstantially, it is important for the public

relations function of a sporting code or body to identify the role mass media can play in terms of researching and identifying the current values and atmosphere of their stakeholders as well as use mass media channels in order to shape and influence their stakeholders. A study performed by Di Carlo and Cezar (2014) expands the findings of Moradi, et al (2012) by identifying that children were highly influenced by their favourite sport team when it came to deciding which sport they would partake in and play. Media coverage, along with sibling and parental influence and preference, was a highly influential factor for determining the favourite sport of each child. Based on these findings it is important for sporting bodies to consider the younger generation as well as their parents when strategising. Their study revealed that the main broadcasted sports (Rugby, cricket and soccer) are the most commonly played (Di Carlo and Cezar, 2014). These findings can explain the data in the following table which contains the number of students who play soccer, cricket, rugby and/or hockey for their school situated in Durban, South Africa throughout the 2018 school year.

	Northwood Boys High	Westville Boys High School
Soccer	411	372
Cricket	247	241
Rugby	219	359
Hockey	235	203

A table showing the number of students who play various sports at two boys' schools in Durban, KZN

From the table above, we can see that soccer tends to be the most popular sport. However, this sport is played while the other sports are off season which could explain the high participation numbers. Hockey numbers do not fall too short from the other sports but it still generally receives less participation than the other three sports.

Research revealed that live TV broadcasts resulted in teams receiving financial sponsors as well as leading to an increased closeness between fans and media, which in turn led to the sport receiving more attention (Moradi, et al. 2012). It cannot be argued that there are a handful of sports that dominate broadcasts and mainstream

media's attention, leaving less popular, niche sports to find alternative ways to attract fans and sponsorships. Vann (2014) revealed that social media platforms may be able to accelerate a sport's growth into mainstream media. Eagleman (2013) noted that although niche sports and athletes typically receive greater attention during the time periods surrounding the Olympic Games and possibly World Cups and Commonwealth Games, in the United States of America, they are largely ignored by mainstream sport media during the three year gap between Olympics. This results in the national governing bodies of these sports to attempt to generate publicity using methods outside of traditional media (Eagleman, 2013). As the attention for these sports grow, public relations practitioners should respond accordingly by strategically planning messages to disseminate on social media to create a hype surrounding the sport's events and athletes as well as to manage fan expectations of both. Social media, in this sense, is a potentially effective tool to utilise in order to attract investors, grow their supporter base and encourage people to participate in the sport. By doing this, it will ensure the sport is sustainable to sponsors and ensuring the sport has a growing pool of players to make up teams.

3.2.9 Social media and sponsorship activation

Recently, a large proportion of sponsorship activation includes mobile, digital and online media activations in addition to traditional areas of advertising, public relations and hospitality. The IEG Sports Report (2013) stated that public relations (98%) and social media (88%) are two of the most popular platforms of activation used by sponsors. Social media now offers new pathways to reach a sponsor's target market (Abeza, Pegoraro, Naraine, Séguin and O'Reilly, 2014). Sponsors use sport products, such as events, athletes, facilities and teams, to influence consumers to form a positive brand image. Sport products provide sponsors with highly passionate, involved and loyal audiences. Similar features such as public interest, involvement and commitment, emotional attachment and drama make sport an ideal platform for sponsorship. Sponsorship objectives of utilising social media include: promotion of their service, products or company image, to express customer appreciation and to encourage the athletes they sponsor. Retweets also function as an endorsement of the product, service or message an organisation is communicating and show athlete buy-in. The features of social media, which have been discussed previously, have significant implications for sponsorship and create an opportunity for sponsors to

interact and engage with their consumers (Abeza, Pegoraro, Naraine, Séguin and O'Reilly, 2014).

3.2.10 Social media and the promotion of sports events

Social media has the potential to play an integral role in the way sporting events are experienced by fans, sponsors and athletes alike, to varying degrees and with varying effects. Whether its highlighting positive occurrences, such as supporting athletes, or to expose negative topics and issues, social media posts can be influential pre, during or post the event (Whiteside, 2014). Hopwood (2005) revealed that “crowds want to see big shots and action. We need to encourage people to come and watch.” Although this statement is referring to cricket, the same can be said for hockey as sport fans generally share similar characteristics. This atmosphere and hype must be portrayed and developed on social media. Prior to the event social media can be used to communicate what spectators can expect from the event while “during” and “post” tournament social media posts can portray the vibe from the tournament and previous tournaments as a reminder and teaser for upcoming events.

Using platforms such as Twitter allows for the creation of official Twitter handles and hashtags for an event and can benefit the event in different ways. Events can make use of an official Twitter handle to disseminate news and information while the hashtag can bring attention to broader discussions surrounding the event (Filo, Lock and Karg, 2014). Using hashtags can also heighten the visibility of a keyword or theme and serve as a hub for connecting fragmented audiences (Abeza, Pegoraro, Naraine, Séguin and O'Reilly, 2014). Whiteside's (2014) research revealed that post event, individuals and parody accounts often drove the conversation as opposed to corporate organisations and media outlets. These findings emphasise the importance of driving fan created content and integrating this material into a social media plan.

A study performed by O'Reilly, Berger, Hernandez, Parent and Seguin (2012) resulted in the identification of similar attributes but within a younger target market. These include a sense of belonging, camaraderie, a platform to demonstrate knowledge and ideas, make new friends, persuade others and build a network with individuals who possess similar ideals, morals and values. The youth utilise this online marketplace for more than just the exchange of products/services or a venue to gather and share

information; they use social media as an environment in which they can express their identity, build their social networks and convey their views to their peers. The researchers claim that these online personal identities developed by adolescents are potentially as important as their offline image. These findings can be translated to the context of social media in sport as these platforms will allow users to like and follow their favourite teams and by doing so, connecting the image of the brand to their own personal identity, which shows loyalty and support for a sport or team (O'Reilly, Berger, Hernandez, Parent and Seguin, 2012). In this regard, sport public relations practitioners could use social media pages and forums to engage with the youth and provide input on the benefits of sport and outline opportunities for participation.

A study by Moise and Crucerub (2014) aimed to identify which social media networks are more suitable for advertising events and reaching the right audience with the right message with the desired outcome. Events such as the Super Bowl, FIFA World Cup and the Olympics expend significant resources to integrate social media practices into their marketing strategy (Filo, Lock and Karg, 2014). Moise and Crucerub (2014) suggested that social media has fundamentally shifted the way in which people gather and transmit, communicate and digest information, adding that creating social media pages and events provides an organisation with a new approach to reaching people with similar interests by creating sub communities, allowing them to grow their target audience and fan base. Their study revealed that Facebook is the most commonly used social media platform, agreeing that it is an effective tool in which to activate public relations strategies because users follow events that they have been to but also follow events that they or their friends are interested in. Facebook notifications inform users which events their friends are interested in and are going to, which holds the potential to push the event even further. Another feature of Facebook that adds to its popularity in this context is that it also enables users to invite their friends to an event and share the details of the event to their entire online friend network with the click of a button (Moise and Crucerub, 2014). This allows an organisation to reach not only its intended target market, but also a wider market of potentially interested individuals. The organisation can communicate with this wide range of potential and current stakeholders as this channel establishes the relevant connections with them, enabling relationships to be formed.

Their study also revealed that organisations can no longer rely solely on traditional media to communicate with their stakeholders, as previously explained in the findings of Grunig and Hunt's situational theory where stakeholders use different types of media within different situations. Social media platforms are considered to be more accessible in some target markets as people have social media and Internet apps on their phone; this results in stakeholders no longer feeling the need to buy newspapers and magazines due to the free access they have to this information online (Moise and Crucerub, 2014). Aligned with the findings of Aslan and Sendogdu (2012), Moise and Crucerub (2014) suggest that leaders should be used to connect with stakeholders on social media. Sport stars and players who interact with fans on social media have the ability to persuade and convince others to echo their behaviour and thoughts. This thinking also transfers to using the network established amongst the fans; if one fan shows interest in an event, other people might become interested too, thus creating a snowball effect. Users find these events credible due to the trusting relationships they have formed with the host organisation as well as events being endorsed and supported by their friends. An example of this in the South African context would be the highly successful, nationwide, Pick n Pay Women's Walk where thousands of men, women and children gather to walk a 5km route in support of breast cancer awareness.

Whiteside (2014) proposed that sport organisations can benefit from using popular social media users and groups to spread the word about an event to other users. Witkemper, Blaszkka and Chung (2014) suggested that electronic media likely increases the number of individuals seeking advice from online opinion leaders. Sport marketers can use these findings to create posts that encourage these online leaders to share the message with their followers, thus potentially resulting in public buy-in of a message or event.

3.2.11 Online sport communities

Online communities exhibit many aspects of contemporary social life (Popp and Woratschek, 2015). Kavoura and Stavrianea (2014), argued that social media creates a virtual community which spreads a 'sense of belonging' to its members, which makes the users feel a part of the community even if they haven't physically met. They believe that social media plays a significant role in the creation of the experience for

the stakeholders in terms of brand experience and engagement. From their research, it can be said that the online experience that social media offers enhances the offline experiences and relationships between a sport's stakeholders. Platforms such as Facebook allow users to join or follow a page creating and sharing their own content with other users, creating a much stronger sense of community, while platforms such as Instagram and Twitter allow stakeholders to join the conversation using hashtags (Kavoura and Stavrianea, 2014). These online communities, as in the case of traditional communities, offer participants a platform used for the exchange of ideas and information, to entertain people, to share common interests, to offer support to promote products and services (the team), and to create and support relationships. Based on the findings of Bizirgiannia and Dionysopoulou (2013), by using and encouraging consumer-generated media, sporting bodies can increase the hype surrounding a team and increase their support.

Simulating this in the sporting environment has many perceived benefits. Firstly, it rallies all the supporters of a sport together, unifying people towards a common goal or passion. These online communities can stand as testament to the strength and loyalty of fans as well as the number of fans a sport has. This is beneficial for potential sponsors as an established social media account ensures these stakeholders will be exposed to their product via the sponsorship of the team. Using social media in this manner strengthens and reinforces fan involvement by providing a direct marketing opportunity. This was identified in a study by Eagleman and Krohn (2012) where it was found that road race series participants who visited the series' website more frequently indicated a higher likelihood of purchasing and supporting series sponsors. Creating online communities can also serve as a newsroom or forum, whereby users will visit the page for information as well as disseminating information and discussing their views, concerns and ideas with like-minded individuals. All these factors contribute to the sense of belonging and the strength and credibility the online community has. Online communities will also ensure the sport team's organisational body has a valuable source of unfiltered information coming directly from various stakeholder groups. Sport marketers need to identify which messages, hashtags and slogans resonate with their users in these online communities and prompt them to use them repeatedly. This can sway positively or negatively for a team or sport and therefore it is important to continuously monitor these communities, whether formally

initiated by the organisation or organically formed amongst social media users (Whiteside, 2014).

Popp and Woratschek (2015) explain that branded communities are an effective means for organisations to deploy sponsorship and brand strategies in social media and provide opportunities for sport managers to generate value. Past research has revealed that interactions in branded communities influence members' (but also non-members) attitudes and behaviours regarding the brand. In particular, the positive effects of branded communities on several brand objectives (customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, feedback and product innovation) have been empirically proven in a variety of contexts, including sport. Empirical studies have revealed several positive aspects of brand communities which include increases in brand involvement, brand loyalty, positive word-of-mouth behaviour and customer support to community members. Particularly, in sport, managers increasingly recognise the crucial role of branded communities for key aspects of team identification and game attendance. Primarily, it is the content that is provided and created on these online communities, but also the interaction among users that contribute to the ongoing usage of online platforms (Popp and Woratschek, 2015). The key challenge for sport bodies, in this regard, is to establish and maintain a successful online commitment amongst its members.

A study by Hambrick and Pegoraro (2014) examined social media communities which occurred around three types of hash tags:

Marketing #'s- These hashtags are dedicated to capitalise on electronic word of mouth by sport organisations to promote their goods, services, companies and brands. These hashtags are strategically created and aim to brand a campaign or allow the easy identification of communication which is specific to a campaign, event, product etc.

Hijacked #'s- Most planned marketing campaigns promote positive word of mouth, however others can create negative publicity for a brand or campaign. Hijacked hashtags describe the situation when, despite their best efforts, hash tag creators face the risk of 'hash tag hijacking', which occurs when a different individual or group uses the hash tag in opposition to the creator's original intent. An example

of this was when McDonalds developed the #CheersToSochi to promote its sponsorship of the Winter Olympic Games and the participating athletes. However, activists from the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) community appropriated the hash tag almost immediately, and used it to deride Russian President Vladimir Putin and anti-gay discriminatory practices in Russia. It is important for sport bodies to be aware of this trend and be able to identify it in order to ensure a unique hashtag is created that is, to the best of its ability, not applicable to any other situation and does not contain any innuendos or ulterior meanings.

Organic #s – Contrasting to strategically developed marketing hashtags, organic hash tags often emerge as social media users spontaneously “gather” to discuss a topic or event. The #SochiProblems appeared alongside official ones to highlight various issues, particularly those related to accommodations for Olympic athletes and journalists.

3.2.12 Choosing the right medium

Different social media platforms allow brands to communicate and develop relationships with their stakeholders in various ways and the availability of constant updates through a variety of modes and platforms allows these stakeholders to stay informed (Mahan, 2011). Twitter provides a platform for real time updates and interactivity while Facebook and Instagram provide mediums to enrich consumer experiences (Filo, Lock and Karg, 2014). Sport content makes up half of Twitter’s affiliated social activity (Pedersen, 2014) and with approximately 500 million tweets being made each day (Internet Live Stats, 2018), it is evident that this platform is suitable to disseminate real time updates and news of sports content, i.e. Live match updates, breaking news, match build up, post-match interviews etc.

A study by Eagleman (2013) revealed that 100% of respondents that participated in the survey stated that their sport organisation has a Facebook page while 98.4% said that their organisation used Twitter. This shows that Facebook and Twitter are popular platforms to have a presence on and is an important aspect to ensure the team’s/sport’s brand is online and can facilitate the development of relationships between the team/sport and its fans and stakeholders.

With regards to content, the most top rated messages (in terms of likes and retweets) contained links to websites, videos or pictures. This suggests that visuals may enhance the written message and aid in the likeability and shareability of a post (Whiteside, 2014). The same research showed that despite some tweets receiving no likes or retweets, these users continued to tweet and partake in the larger conversation.

It is also beneficial to understand why individuals are using social media. Witkemper, Blaszk and Chung (2014) explain that users are consuming social media not only to seek information but to also provide information. These users are interactive in their online social communities and generally have a large social following, while some users use social media to gain financial advantage through ticket discounts, retail promotions/ team product discounts. Understanding the behaviours that lead sport consumers to engage in social media can aid sport bodies in their efforts to attract more followers.

Based on the evidence above, it can be concluded that social media can be used as a tool to effectively implement public relations activities to establish, develop and maintain relationships with stakeholders and achieve the goals of the organisation. A study by Mehra for Practical Ecommerce (2017) identified 105 leading social networks, which is growing on a daily basis. Amidst a sea of possible social media platforms to use when connecting with stakeholders, it is important for public relations practitioners to identify which platform will ensure optimum engagement and produce the best results for the strategies developed.

3.3 Relevant Information on hockey within South Africa

Hockey is proving itself to be an emerging market within the South African sports and entertainment sector. The game has received more TV coverage in the last year (2017-2018) compared to previous years, with the broadcast covering both local and international tournaments, including European tournaments that the SA teams do not partake in. This shows that SA viewers are interested in the sport, not only their national team's participation. Research performed on the viewership and the audience

analysis of the recent Hockey World League Semi-Finals, a top tier international event hosted in Johannesburg during July 2017, showed that more than 50% of the television viewers were below the age of 24. This is a significant statistic as popular “traditional” sports such as rugby have a viewership that is significantly older than the ones shown for hockey, as well as this viewership steadily declining (Nielsen Sports, 2017). These results indicate that hockey has the potential to sustain and grow itself amongst its youthful audience if given adequate attention and resources.

Hockey has the potential to generate a market and create business as it is steadily progressing in its aspiration to become a professional sport in South Africa, following in the footsteps of its reach in places like Europe and Australia. The recent HWL showed the enormous economic potential and opportunities for sponsors who wish to invest money in the sporting sector. Previously, The SA hockey teams did not get significant TV time, locally or internationally; now with the extensive coverage on both local and international TV stations, sponsors could potentially penetrate hundreds of International markets: HWL was broadcast into 134 countries for 8.5 hours every day for 16 days. With many innovative projects in place such as The PHL (Professional Hockey League) and plans to host future International events such as The HWL, there are high aspirations to build hockey in SA to become a major sporting code.

In an attempt to grow the game of hockey and its professionalism, a company (Frontiers Sport and Entertainment) has been contracted to procure sponsorships for The SA National Teams and hockey events as well as assist in the co-ordination of these events. The inclusion of Frontiers in SA Hockey’s endeavors has proven thus far to be successful; not only does it allow for the monitoring of viewership and audience numbers but it also allows the sport to take a professional approach to tournaments and sponsorship, where previous tournaments lacked a commercial or entertainment approach.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. METHODOLOGIES

All the aforementioned studies and literature on sport organisations' usage of social media as a public relations tool have focused on social media from the view point of the consumer and content analysis. The researcher noted that previous studies and literature focused solely on either public relations in sport or social media in sport. Therefore, this research identified the importance of using both to enable sport bodies to maximise their social media communications being informed by both social media and public relations practices.

This chapter explains what research dimensions influenced the way in which information was gathered and how it was analysed during the research process. It describes the methodologies used to gather information from a wide range of sources and how this information was analysed and amalgamated in order to develop solutions and suggestions for The South African Hockey Association to maximize their social media efforts.

4.1 Cultural Studies

Cultural studies acknowledges that the concept of the 'active audience' is of central importance to its practices. This challenges a long tradition that assumed a passive media audience, that was thought to be easily tricked into accepting the dominant ideologies of an invincible capitalism (Hall, 1996). Cultural studies accepts that ordinary people are capable of actively engaging in media, digesting the content that is communicated to them and identifying the information that is relevant to them and using this information to actively produce their own understandings and perceptions (Fiske, 1989).

A distinguishable feature of this research is that it conforms to the constructs of cultural studies which focused on the "subjective dimension of social relations, on how particular social arrangements and configurations are lived and made sense of, so highlighting the complex intersections between public culture and private subjectivity

and the transformative potentials that may arise there” (Pickering, 2008). These elements are crucial in forming our identity and experiences and how we articulate, understand, draw on and share these with others. This research acknowledges that online sport fans use social media for a number of reasons and seek these online platforms to gratify their varying and multiple needs. The dominant recurring use of social media is due to the ability for the various platforms to allow users to create an online identity by sharing and communicating with other users, in essence forming identities and experiences as suggested by Pickering (2008). Cultural studies has a special point of interest with the manner in which particular social worlds are experienced, and how the diverse phenomena of that experience are subjectively felt and articulated by those who live it. Theory allows us to understand and be informed as to how social worlds are configured; however we will not be able to relate these findings to the living landscape to which it relates if we do not attend to experience (Pickering, 2008). In this sense, the research was guided by the fundamentals of public relations, communication and relationship theories from the theoretical framework section, while an internship and field study made it possible to “attend to experience” as suggested by Pickering (2008).

4.2 Fandom and Research

‘Fan-academics’ describe academics who decide to base their research on a phenomenon or community of which they have first-hand knowledge and experience. In this sense, they claim privilege of researching and writing about their fannish passions and interests. This is an occupation referred to as a fan specialisation, where the size, diversity and global reach of a contemporary fandom promotes such specialisation (Nightingale, 2008). The researcher is an active member within the hockey community (both playing the game and working the social media, graphic design and coordination of events and tournaments) as well as being an avid sport fan in general.

4.3 Qualitative Research

The research is qualitative in nature as it aimed to understand the practices of public relations and identify the best social media practices informed by public relations that result in relationship building between a sport organisation and its stakeholders. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to emphasise that online social values held by sport fans effect their needs and expectations of social media content posted by sporting bodies. Through the literature review process, a number of uses and gratifications of sport fans' in terms of social media use were identified allowing the researcher to give feed back to SAHA that will guide and improve their social media activites to facilitate relationship building between their organisation, hockey and their stakeholders.

The research process followed Yin's (2011) five phases model which is summarised as:

1. *Compiling Data*: Information was gathered from field-notes taken during the field study, semi structured and informal interviews held between the researcher and members of Frontiers, SAHA and sport departments from certain schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal, observation during the field study and archives of relevant information on the Internet;
2. *Disassembling*: The information and data that was gathered was broken down into smaller fragments, from which themes were identified, these themes guided the structure of the research paper, allowing sub headings to be formed;
3. *Reassembling*: Using the substantive themes that emerged, the information was reorganised into different groupings and sequences. These groups are dealt with under subheadings through the research paper;
4. *Interpreting*: Under these subheadings, the analysis of data occurred. This allowed the researcher to explain the relevance of the information to the study as well as gain a holistic understanding of the public relations and social media within a sporting context;
5. *Conclusion*: The summaries of the research findings were then discussed in Chapter 6.

A short quantitative study was also performed to identify the number of pupils participating in hockey compared to other sports at two boy's high schools in Durban, South Africa. The information gathered was provided by the head of hockey or head of sport at the respective schools. Due to time and capacity limitations, the number of schools used in this short quantitative study was very limited. Given more time and resources, the research would ideally include more schools from junior, senior and high school levels around South Africa as well as include data from co-ed, all boys and all girls schools. This would result in a more accurate representation of the current state of hockey in South Africa.

4.4 Ethnography

Ethnography is defined by Brewer (2000) as the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by methods of data collection that capture their social meanings and ordinary activities. This involved the researcher participating directly in the setting and activities in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on or influencing the participants or activities externally. This research involved the study of sport fans and their use of social media to communicate with sport organisations, ultimately forming mutual relationships.

This research followed the features of ethnographic research as described by Hammersley (1990):

- The online behaviour of hockey and general sport fans and sport organisations were studied in the everyday context as opposed to under unnatural or experimental circumstances constructed by the researcher;
- Data was collected by various techniques, including review of literature and semi-structured interviews, but primarily by means of observation through field research;
- Data collection was flexible and unstructured to avoid pre-fixed arrangements or assumptions that impose categories on what sport fans and organisations say and do on social media;

- The focus was on a single setting or group and was small-scale. The research dealt with social media use of sport fans and sport organisations with the specific case study of South African hockey being implemented;
- The analysis of the data involved attribution of the meanings of the sport fans' and sport organisations' actions on social media being described and explained.

Participant observation is the data collection technique most closely associated with ethnography and is evident in this research design (Brewer, 2000). This research involved data gathering by means of participation in the daily life and activities of sport fans and organisations online activities in a natural setting by means of watching, observing and immersing into the environment. This was made possible through an internship (discussed in chapter 4.8) that allowed the discovery of interpretations, social meanings and activities from a sport organisation's perspective while being an active and informed member of various sporting social media pages from a sport fan's perspective. The intent behind this close involvement and association from both a content consumer and content creator perspective, was to generate data through watching and listening to what people naturally do and say, but also to add the dimension of personally experiencing and sharing the same everyday life of those under study.

4.5 Validity

This study followed the beliefs of the 'new ethnography', thus its validity will be guided by Paula Saukko's (2003) notion of 'dialogic validity'. In this notion, she believes that research should be evaluated in terms of how well it manages to capture the lived realities of others. Dialogism, unlike old ethnographic goals, does not view research in terms of describing other worlds from the outside, rather in terms of an encounter or interaction. The main criteria of validity of this approach is how well the researcher fulfills the ethical imperative to be true to, and to respect, other people's lived worlds and realities.

To surpass the traditional ethnographic notion of a detached researcher capable of achieving an objective account, Saukko (2003) added three specific criteria for valid research, all which this research conformed:

1. Truthfulness- This refers to collaborative forms of research such as measures to allow the people being studied to have a say in the way in which they are studied and represented. Both the company that offered the internship as well as the South African Hockey Association gave consent for the research to take place.
2. Self-reflexivity- Researchers should be reflexive about the personal, social and paradigmatic discourses that guide the way they perceive reality and other people.
3. Polyvocality- Researchers should be conscious that they are not studying a lived reality but many. This research ensured that the views or voices of major stakeholders were included. The research took into account both internal (players, admin staff, SAHA and Frontiers representatives etc.) and external stakeholder (hockey fans and sport fans) perspectives when using social media.

The goal of new ethnographic research is to develop methods of research that enable the scholar to be truer to the lived realities of other people. Thus, new ethnographic practices are characterised by various strategies, including collaboration which aims to increase the participant's involvement in the way in which the study is conducted and their lives reported. Another characteristic feature of new ethnography is self-reflexivity, which aims to enhance the researcher's awareness of the social and cultural constructs that influence his/her understanding of worlds that may be radically different from his/hers. Polyvocality draws attention to the fact that there are many lived realities and in order to acknowledge and represent them accurately, one may need to listen to multiple voices or perspectives (Saukko, 2003). This was executed in the study through field research from both a sport organisation's perspective as well as that of a sport fan's perspective. Various sources of literature were reviewed that allowed data to be gathered that contained a variety of needs of sport fans and organisations and the gratifications that they sought through social media use.

4.6 Reflexivity

The concept of reflexivity recognises that the orientations of the researcher will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, values, beliefs and interests. This represents a rejection of the idea that social research is, or can be, carried out in an autonomous realm that is isolated from the wider society and from the biography of the researcher in such a way that its findings can be unaffected by social processes and personal characteristics. Brewer (2000) argues that the researcher is situated, both physically and theoretically and therefore the need for reflexivity is vital. He implies that ethnographers be explicit and open about the circumstances which produced the data and recognising that ethnographers (like all researchers) are within the social world they seek to analyse. There is no perfectly transparent or neutral way to represent the social world, therefore reflexivity on the part of the researcher assists in identifying the possibilities that produced the researcher's portrayal of it (Brewer, 2000). Given that the research was performed within an industry and a sport that the researcher has been highly immersed in, the researcher has an immense and intricate understanding and knowledge of the dynamics of both fields. However this can result in a bias being formed or over reliance on certain platforms due to perceived influenced and benefits of that platform.

4.7 Purposive Sampling

As is expected in a qualitative ethnography, purposive sampling determined the selection of participants, social media pages and sources of data used in the research, based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information in relation to the research questions (Marvasti, 2004). Richness and relevance included sources whose data were presumed to challenge and not just support the researcher's thinking about the research questions and therefore included in the sample of literature.

As this research is not quantitative or reliant upon the random sampling of a population, a qualitative study focused on the cultural meanings constructed by participants and obtained through in-depth observations. 'Purposive sampling' was used to identify the organisation and social media pages and communities that were

applicable to the research and that would allow the researcher to obtain the broadest range of information and perspectives (Kuzel, 1992). Purposive sampling allowed samples to be chosen that would yield the most relevant and plentiful data (Yin 2011).

The research performed for this paper involved the conceptual analysis of academic literature that aimed to analyse public relations practice in sport and how sport organisations use social media in order to develop a framework for effective and proactive social media communication. The review and conceptual analysis of literature comprised of four steps: firstly, a database was developed by undertaking a comprehensive and systematic search to identify and extract all the relevant literature in relation to public relations and/or social media in sport published in peer-reviewed academic journals. Online academic databases were used to search for articles that had at least one of several key terms in the title, abstract or subject terms. These key terms included but were not restricted to: social media, public relations, public relations in sport, social media in sport, social media activation, online public relations, corporate social media use. Secondly, in an iterative process between theoretically derived and empirically emerging themes, articles were analysed based on their relevance and perceived value contribution they added to the research. Third, a content analysis of the relevant articles was used to extract descriptive, relevant and qualitative conceptual data. Finally, the results were interpreted and the findings meaningfully synthesised within the literature review.

4.8 Field Study

An internship offered by Frontiers Sport and Entertainment from May 2017 to September 2017 informed the field study. A relationship continued with Frontiers and SAHA throughout the research because the researcher still had access to the company through contractual work. Participant observation was a key information gathering method in this research. The researcher immersed herself in the natural environment and partook in research led conversations with many players, fans and stakeholders of Frontiers and SAHA. It was unnecessary to conduct single sit down or formal interviews due to the extensive informal conversations that were had in participant observation: however, rich and raw information was accumulated via the close

interpersonal relationships the researcher established with stakeholders of Frontiers, SAHA and members from the wider hockey community. During the internship, multiple informal conversations with a range of stakeholders contributed to the information gathered; together with the extent of knowledge the researcher has attained from being a fully committed member of the hockey community, and the position the researcher holds at Frontiers as a social media manager; it gave the researcher a comprehensive understanding of the way SAHA and Frontiers conduct public relations activities with particular reference to their social media needs. The researcher ensured that conversations were had with key stakeholders such as the CEO of SAHA, managing directors and CEOs of Frontiers, national, provincial and club players and fans, as well as general sport fans. The researcher made a point of exposing herself to the views and opinions of a vast group of people which represent all ages, races and genders.

Information which was gathered via the internship and contractual work was recorded in a diary. The day to day tasks of the researcher were entered in the diary as well as other ideas that the researcher developed throughout the field study. After which a case study approach was used to examine to what extent the South African Hockey Association understands and utilises social media. Studies were made of The South African Hockey Association, focusing on, among other elements, issues of identity and the operational social media practices of a national governing sport body compared to those of big budget corporate organisations. Communication and relationship-building strategies were analysed and key theoretical principles of public relations, insight and understanding were applied to develop the framework.

The field study allowed the researcher to be integrated into the everyday workings of Frontiers Sport and Entertainment, the company contracted by SAHA to execute sponsorship deals and public relations. During the internship, the researcher was responsible for managing several social media accounts including the verified South African Hockey Twitter page. The experience and insights gained from this internship were vital to the development of an effective framework for strategic social media communication for a sport organisation. It allowed the identification of what elements need to be focused on in a social media plan in order to achieve social media and communication goals, experience on how hockey fans react to certain types of posts

and the planning and execution of said social media plans. Due to the extended contract Frontiers offered the researcher, the research and participant observation continued longer than anticipated and is currently still on going. This served as an advantage to the researcher as important channels of communication and information are still open.

4.9 Case Study

Secondary research involved reviewing a variety of literature sources which included key texts, journals and other print material, the majority of which deal with sports from a social science perspective. Through the extensive literature search it was noted that there are limited texts dealing specifically with hockey or sport within a South African context.

In addition, public relations literature and theoretical material were consulted and applied to the research in order to gain an understanding of how public relations practitioners strategically use social media to communicate with stakeholders in order to build relationships. The specific elements that pertain to public relations theory that were fundamental in informing the development of the framework included theories on communication, relationships and stakeholder management, persuasion and social influence, and conflict resolution.

At no time during the field study or case study did it become necessary to adapt or alter the research methodology. As the basic methodology was sound, reliable and achievable, the quality of the research and its outcomes were in no way or at any stage compromised or threatened.

4.10 Netnography

A brief netnographic study was conducted on two other Instagram pages; The Inside Pull and Inside Hockey. These two pages were used as a template and comparison for SAHA's social media efforts as these two pages are the epitome of what SAHA should be striving for. Based on the information gathered during the literature review and theoretical framework, these two pages successfully develop a social media feed that promotes stakeholder engagement through a wide variety of content that is

informative and entertaining.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. CASE STUDY

5.1 The South African National Hockey Teams

As previously discussed, The South African Hockey Association is the governing body of hockey in South Africa and based on their roles and responsibilities for promoting and governing hockey in South Africa, they would greatly benefit from implementing a social media strategy that is informed by the practices of public relations. This research has a specific focus on the South African national men's and women's outdoor hockey teams. These two teams are both ranked in the top 20 of the world according to The International Federation of Hockey (FIH, 2019). These two teams often participate in major international tournaments such as The African Cup of Nations, The Olympic Games, The Commonwealth Games and World Cups.

With specific regards to the national men's and women's outdoor hockey teams, SAHA can use these two teams to form an image for their brand. These two teams should be regarded as elite teams who are comprised of the best players South Africa has developed and promote these players as role models for younger and/or aspiring hockey players. Social media content around these two teams should be strategised and disseminated throughout the year and not only prior, during and post tournament.

5.2 The South African National Hockey Association's Public Relations Strategies

At the time of this research, SAHA has contracted a company called Frontiers Sport and Entertainment to handle and coordinate events, public relations, sponsorship procurement and marketing for the national teams and the various events that have occurred in the period of the contract.

Based on information acquired during the field study and the theories in the literature review and theoretical framework sections, it can be concluded that SAHA, together with Frontiers, respond to public relations in a reactive manner. A more proactive or

interactive approach could potentially result in gaining their publics favour and being perceived as efficient and having intentions of building relationships with their stakeholders as opposed to being perceived as a liaison body.

The social media communication takes a similar reactive approach. Social media accounts are left dormant when there are no tournaments and only start becoming active at most a few weeks prior to tournaments. This content is then put together in a couple of days with little prior planning and often results in the social media managers feeling rushed and unsure of the direction of the campaigns. The potential reason for the reactive approach to social media is that there is a number of social media managers appointed by the individual teams (National Men or National Women's teams) and by SAHA itself leaving uncertain and ambiguous roles for each member in the social media team. This results in members of the social media team feeling uncertain as to whether or not they are allowed to take the initiative to start campaigns or when these campaigns should be started as well as not knowing who to report to or who has final sign off. Appointing a dedicated social media team will address any issues of uncertainty as well as give them the confidence to take initiative and run with suitable campaigns. A more proactive and interactive approach could be an opportunity to keep fans engaging with pages even when there are no major tournaments in the near future, which allows the teams to keep in contact with their fans.

CHAPTER SIX

6. DISCUSSION

Based on the findings of the literature review and theoretical framework sections, this section will compare the activation of the South African National Hockey Team's social media to those of the various organisations and examples as previously discussed. The arguments within the literature review will guide the discussion and evaluation of the social media and public relations as activated by SAHA and Frontiers on the SA Hockey teams' Instagram, Twitter and Facebook pages. The purpose of this research has been to evaluate the public relations and social media strategies of SAHA. As it stands, the research has led to the conclusion that there is a lack of a formal, structured social media driven public relations strategy, resulting in a very informal, ad hoc social media feed being presented to followers which does not sustain their audience or allow relationships with stakeholders to be built. The consequences of this type of approach to social media puts SAHA in a position where they are missing an opportunity to greatly expand engagement and relationship building between them and their stakeholders (players, fans and sponsors).

Mahan (2011) stressed that the creation of a concrete Internet marketing plan is critical to successfully incorporating this medium into organisational strategy. Steyn and Puth's (2000) model, introduced and discussed in chapter 2.4 explained the process, need for and benefits of developing a strategic and clear corporate communications strategy. However, there is a lack of such strategical framework when it comes to developing and activating social media communications to achieve the organisational goals identified in Steyn and Puth's (2000) model. Future research should be conducted with the aim to propose such a framework in order to aid sporting organisations to develop and activate a social media communication plan.

6.1 South African Hockey Social Media Channels

The South African Men's and Women's hockey teams have several social media pages dedicated to informing, communicating with and entertaining their stakeholders. SAHA has three Twitter accounts (a page for the men's team, a page for the women's

team and a page dedicated to South African hockey in general), two Facebook pages (a page for the men's team and a page for the women's team) and two Instagram pages (a page for the men's team and a page for the women's team).

Through these platforms, South African hockey has a cumulative following of over 64 000 users, which serves as a database that includes individuals from every stakeholder group that the sport has: players, teams, opposing teams and players, fans, sponsors, umpires, technical staff and sport fans in general. This is a vital source for both acquiring and disseminating information from a SAHA point of view due to the ease and cost effectiveness of social media.

6.2 The Growing Presence of Hockey in South Africa

In order to maintain "license to operate" in South Africa and amongst its people, hockey must regard itself as part of the entertainment industry and compete for its share of the market. A key strategic objective to facilitate this would be to build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with a variety of publics (Woodhop, 2005). It is important to notice that hockey in South Africa has undergone some significant developments since this research began.

Two recent tournaments that took place in South Africa have changed the way South African hockey players and fans experience hockey; The Hockey World League and The Premier Hockey League (The PHL). The Hockey World League is an international hockey tournament which serves as a World Cup qualifying event. This top-tier international tournament was hosted in Johannesburg in July 2017 and pulled in over 23 186 stadium visits and 664 517 television viewers (Nielsen Sports, 2017). The tournament was broadcasted to 130 countries which drew in several big-name sponsors for the tournament due to the potential it offered these sponsors to advertise to millions of viewers. Some of these relationships between certain sponsors developed from this tournament, resulting in the sponsors willingness to continue their support for the national teams and future hockey events and tournaments.

The PHL is a first of its kind tournament in South Africa whereby 12 coaches, who represent six ladies' teams and six men's teams, pick players from a draft that is made up of the best players in each province. These teams then play in a televised tournament which runs over three weekends. This tournament made a massive contribution to the popularity and development of hockey in South Africa for several reasons. The composition of teams ensure that all teams have at minimum three national players, at minimum two players that are under 21 and that the demographics of the team are conducive to transformation in South African sport.

In addition to broadcasting the games, during The PHL media were invited to the stadium to watch the games live while every evening after the last game, a press release was sent out to a data base of 150+ media contacts containing the top stories of the day. Understanding the findings of the Agenda Setting Theory, it is acknowledged that these press releases were not published by every media source that received the press release; PHL had no control as to when the media released the information and the spread or article published by the media often didn't contain all the information that was sent out in the press release. This is due to each media having the freedom to decide which information will be deemed as relevant and exciting to their readers. SAHA has also contracted a journalist to write a press release after every international match that the national teams play. This is a positive initiative from SAHA as it gives fans an opportunity to seek information about the game as well as giving the coach and players who are interviewed an opportunity to express their thoughts about the game and their performance. These press releases are uploaded to SAHA's website with the link shared on the various social media platforms. Sharing these press releases on social media initiates stakeholders to engage with SAHA and each other which facilitates community building.

Apart from the mainstream media coverage PHL received, a spontaneous hashtag started to gain momentum by a player who was hoping to be picked in the draft to play in the tournament. Although his social media hashtag #PickWoody did not land him a spot in any of the teams, his efforts on Twitter did not go unnoticed. Organisers of the tournament recognised how much traction this "campaign" picked up and invited the individual on board as a member of the media team. The hashtag #AskWoody was developed which allowed all social media users who wanted to join in

on the conversation to use the hashtag when asking questions pertaining to the PHL tournament. The conversation took many forms; some serious questions were asked while other questions tended to be witty and aimed at contributing to the online banter. This gave users a medium to interact with PHL while it also allowed PHL to address technical and tactical questions asked by Twitter users regarding the game, its rules and tournament structure. It also allowed PHL to reach fans on an entertainment level that brought a new element of entertainment content to the game of hockey in South Africa.

6.3 The Growing Presence of Hockey in South African Television

In South Africa, hockey has been broadcasted more frequently in the past two years than previous years where the game received little to no coverage. Previously, hockey has not received much airtime on television. A handful of games that were played in international tournaments were televised but the whole event was never covered, whether the South African teams were present or not. Since The Hockey World League, where every game was broadcasted live, tournaments such as The PHL, Varsity Sports, Commonwealth Games and The Hockey World Cup have seen all games being broadcasted, a majority of these games broadcasted live, with most games being re-aired at a later stage. Based on the research of Mario Di Carlo and Hantaũ Cezar (2014), by broadcasting major international hockey tournaments, it is ensuring the game is available and being broadcasted to a wider variety of viewers, potentially attracting them to become more involved players or fans. Their findings also suggest why it is important to increase the media coverage even further. Broadcasting local events such as The PHL and Varsity Sports is growing the viewership of hockey as we can see in the results of the Nielsen Sports Report Adendum 1 (Nielsen Sports, 2017).

The broadcasting of hockey also creates local heroes and leaders which in turn can strengthen the brand. These players need to acknowledge the potential roles that they could play in the lives of many fans; therefore, players must be aware that they need to act in a responsible and respectable manner which is in accordance with that of the brands' and what they are attempting to accomplish. SAHA can capitalise on this by incorporating individual national players in their social media plan. Encouraging

these players to post certain stories or provide them with specific content to upload onto the SAHA owned social media channels. It would also be advised that all national players are sent a social media code of conduct and a social media brief which will ensure the players understand what is expected from them when it comes to social media.

The findings of Moradi, et al. (2012) explain the relationship between the growing number of followers on social media and the increased broadcasting time the game has received. Based on their research, it can also be beneficial to use social media platforms to encourage followers to tune in and watch the broadcasted games as well as encourage them to physically go and watch the games at the stadiums and fields where the games are played. This is slowly creating an energetic and vibrant atmosphere around the game of hockey, the effects of which are two-fold. Hockey fans and general sports fans will perceive the game of hockey as fun and beneficial to their entertainment needs and be willing to support and watch the games, while the vibrant nature of the game and its events could potentially attract more players to partake in the game and encourage sponsors to come on board and assist financially.

6.4 Social Media Presence of Hockey

Both The PHL and Hockey World League were activated on social media by SAHA. A dedicated PHL Twitter, Instagram and Facebook page were run prior, during and post the event while the respective pages for the men's and women's hockey teams used their platforms to enhance their presence during The Hockey World League. The verified SA Hockey account was used to promote each game of The Hockey World League through a number of graphics and tweets to both local and international followers that were interested in the tournament. Tournaments such as these indicate that hockey has a wide fan base that is willing to support and engage with the game, both physically (being present at games) or virtually (watching on TV or engaging on social media). This is an aspect that sport organisations rely upon heavily: loyal consumers that buy tickets and merchandise, create, like and share posts regarding the sport or team that repeatedly bring about publicity and income for the sport or team (Dixon, Martinez and Martin, 2015). SA hockey does not rely solely on fans


buying products or tickets nor is it their fundamental income. However, recognising the ability of these two aspects to bring in revenue as well as create a fandom for the sport can only enhance its brand.

Two pages that dedicate themselves to hockey have emerged on Instagram that are relevant to this research; @insidehockey and @theinsidepull. These two pages have created a brand for themselves by effectively encouraging users to follow their pages and comment and like their posts. These pages are both dedicated to the game of hockey and both boast a high rate of engagement but differ vastly. Of the two pages, @insidehockey is a more established page, first posting on the 15 January 2016. The page was created by Ronald Brouwer (Dutch national hockey player) and Shae McAleese (New Zealand national hockey player) and has gained international traction over the years. With over 42,800 followers and over 1046 posts, the page's content is comprised mainly of hockey videos and pictures but can be considered entertaining to those who are not avid hockey spectators.



IMAGE 1. insidehockey a (2018)



 **insidehockey** • Following

insidehockey 🤔 caption this 📌 Credit: @gettyimages 🙌

antonvanbiesen Sliding into her DM's like @hugo.inglis

samueldavid_1312 Lads there's a tenpence piece down here!

leonsuzuki Look at hu go! OMG that was dry 🤔🤔

taradon_yamunsabedeem He can fly

lethabo.m3 The floor is lava 2018

📖 🗨️

1,722 likes

APRIL 12

Add a comment... ⋮

IMAGE 2. insidehockey b (2018)



 **insidehockey** • Following

insidehockey Ouch 🤔

.

Remember boys & girls you should all be wearing a 🧤

Load more comments

jontye04 Mmmm Delicious

florhabif @nadinekanler4

piagazal @co_tanco 🙌🙌🙌

charlie__newsome @mimiinewsome

fivemetresplease 🙌🤔🤔

co_tanco @piagazal iainia ya me la compro!

📖 🗨️

1,915 likes

7 DAYS AGO

Add a comment... ⋮

IMAGE 3. insidehockey c (2018)

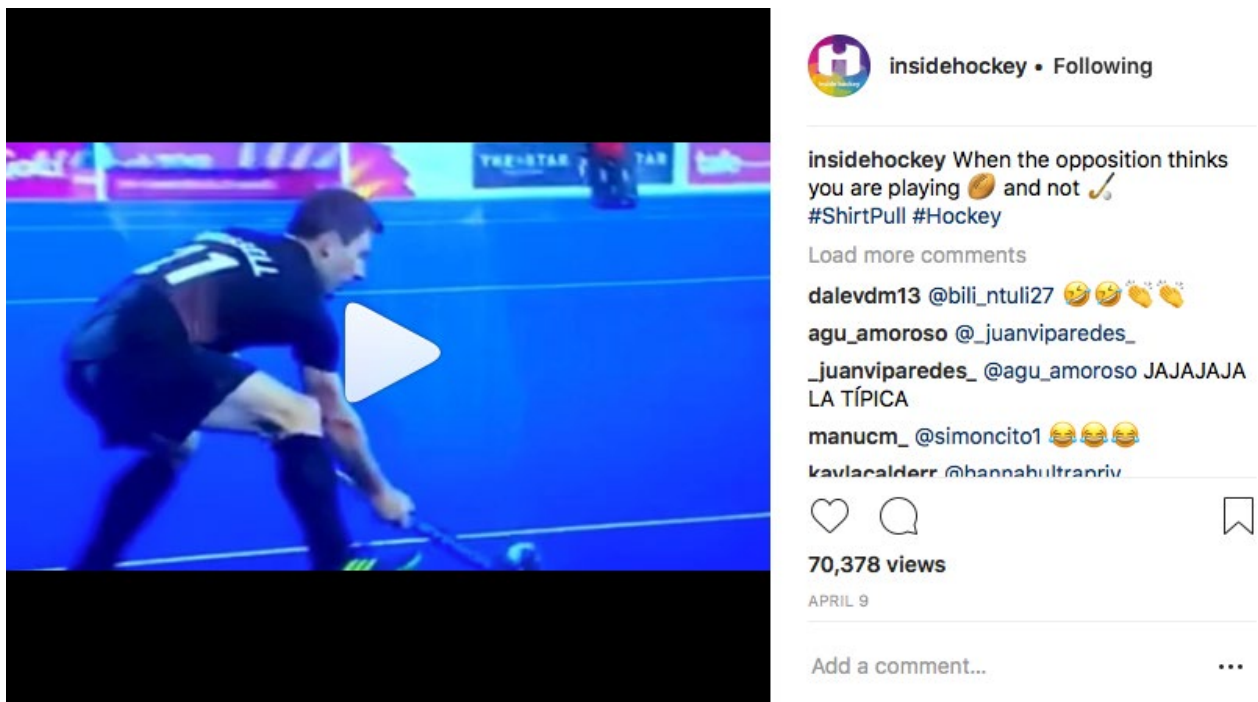


IMAGE 4. insidehockey d (2018)

As we can see in the screen shots of posts from their page above, the posts made by @insidehockey consist of both educational and witty content. Videos are frequently posted showing players exhibiting their unique skills in matches or trick shots in training as well as funny images taken during games. Pages dedicated to capturing the fast paced, highly skilful and adrenaline pumping nature of the game have the ability to unite the international hockey community and general sport fans as well as attract new members to this community. What @insidehockey does particularly well, is incorporating player ‘take overs’ into their content (Image 5). This is an activity whereby the owner of the account gives another individual player, or a player that is representing a specific team, access to the account to let them essentially run the account for a few days. This allows a personal and fun touch to the account as well as exposing viewers to the inside life of semi-professional and professional hockey players in the build up to and during major tournaments such as World Cups. The popularity and success of this page can be owed to the unique and charismatic content that is shared on the page. It would be beneficial for SAHA to incorporate player take overs in to their social media content plan. This will give the fans a first-hand account of what the teams are doing in their down time, showing off the team apart from their performances on the hockey field. This will foster a close relationship between the fans

and the team as fans will feel like they are getting to know their team off the turf and in a more personal and intimate manner.



IMAGE 5. insidehockey e (2018)

@theinsidepull was established in 2018 with the first post being made on the 20 May 2018. This page was created by two local Durban hockey players, Tanner Bottomley and Michael Baker, who wanted to create a page that kept fans and players of the Kwa-Zulu Natal premier hockey division informed about top goal scorers, league results and events. More recently they have started including results and fixtures from the school league in Durban. Their bio reads the “unofficial hub of KZN Hockey”. A page such as this one is a prime example of enthusiastic sport fans creating a page on social media dedicated to the sport they love, in turn adding value to the hockey content that is available on social media. Although, at the time of this research, this page started recently, a number of sponsors have come on board, promising to sponsor or reward the winning teams and top goal scorers of the league. The page creates a lot of traction for their sponsors by naming the leagues (as seen in Images 6 and 7) as well as creating competitions that allow both their brand and their sponsor’s brands to be engaged with on social media (as seen in Image 8). Through research, Kiráľová and Pavlíček (2015) identified that competitions and interactive campaigns are amongst the most popular forms of social media campaigns which increase engagement and

page visits while a high number of likes does not necessarily translate to a high number of page visits (Királová and Pavlíčka, 2015). These are influential factors when uploading content to a social media page. The page is highly successful in their ability to encourage users to comment on their posts by ensuring the caption is witty, exciting and shareable. The willingness of their followers to comment shows community buy in from the Kwa-Zulu Natal hockey community and demonstrates that a page of this nature has the potential to be successful amongst the public while lending beneficial opportunities to sponsors and the brand of hockey. SAHA should consider posting the various league results from each province at the end of each weekends fixtures. This would allow hockey players and fans to keep up to date with league fixtures and log standings.

WEEK 4
THE SPORTBOX
LADIES LOG STANDINGS

TEAM	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
KEARSNEY HC	4	4	0	0	27	3	24	12
VARSITY COLLEGE	4	3	0	1	11	5	6	9
COLLEGIANS HC	4	3	0	1	10	7	3	9
RIVERSIDE HC 1's	4	2	1	1	12	7	5	7
RIVERSIDE HC 2's	4	2	1	1	10	8	2	7
ROVERS HC	4	0	2	2	4	7	-3	2
UNIV. OF KZN	4	0	0	4	6	24	-18	0
CRUSADERS	4	0	0	4	1	20	-19	0

THE INSIDE PULL PROMOTING LOCAL HOCKEY

theinsidepull • Following
Munies Hockey Club

theinsidepull ⚠ BREAKING NEWS ⚠

The team at @sportboxsa and @futurasportsagency seem to love hockey just as much as we do here at #theinsidepullanski 🌟 They have BOTH sponsored R4 000 to the Men's and Women's teams that end up on top of the KZN Premier League! 🏒🏒

All to play for this year with R4000 prize money on top of bragging right's as 2018 League Champion's. Who do you think will

125 likes
MAY 31

Add a comment...

IMAGE 6. theinsidepull a (2018)

WEEK 5
THE FUTURA SPORTS AGENCY
MENS LOG STANDINGS

TEAM	MP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	PTS
KEARSNEY HC	4	4	0	0	35	6	29	12
UNIV. OF KZN	5	4	0	1	32	6	26	12
RIVERSIDE HC 1's	4	4	0	0	23	2	21	12
VARSITY COLLEGE	5	3	0	2	25	9	16	9
CRUSADERS HC	5	3	0	2	31	17	14	9
INK HC	5	1	0	4	4	25	-21	3
RIVERSIDE HC 2's	5	0	0	5	5	32	-21	0
GONGS HC	5	0	0	5	0	59	-59	0

THE INSIDE PULL PROMOTING LOCAL HOCKEY

theinsidepull • Following
Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

theinsidepull The @futuresportsagency Mens Log is really heating up! 🌟 and there is no ways of making any brave prediction on who will take top spot. Riverside HC 2's and Gongs HC are playing in the next game week which is a 6 point game as they fight it out at the bottom.

- Still a bit of @robertsonsspace as the likes of @kearsney_hc and @hockey_at_riverside men still have their game in hand 🙏

- Reigning champions @varsitycollege continue to struggle with form, is it already



101 likes

JUNE 5

Add a comment...



...

IMAGE 7. theinsidepull b (2018)

THE STRENGTH SOCIETY
MENS TOP GOAL
SCORERS

JETHRO EUSTICE	UNIV. OF KZN	7
ANDREW MANSON	CRUSADERS HC	6
DANIEL SIBBALD	VARSITY COLLEGE	6
KEEGAN HEZLETT	VARSITY COLLEGE	5
KEEGAN GIBBON	KEARSNEY HC	5
KOVIN MOODLEY	CRUSADERS HC	4
MATT DE SOUSA	RIVERSIDE HC	4
JASON FLANAGAN	RIVERSIDE HC	4
CAMERON MACKAY	KEARSNEY HC	4
KEVIN AVERY	UNIV. OF KZN	4

THE INSIDE PULL PROMOTING LOCAL HOCKEY

theinsidepull • Following
Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

theinsidepull 🚨 BREAKING NEWS 🚨

Yours truly has teamed up with @strengthsociety_shilo because we want to make a difference and they love hockey 🔥 the men's and women's player with the most goals at the end of the season will each receive:

- R2000

- 6 Month free membership at Strength Society to the value of R4800

🙏 I know if I was @jamiedwyer01 or @degoedevea I would fly out and join a KZN Premier League team 🇿🇦 so who do you



117 likes

MAY 29

Add a comment...



...

IMAGE 8. theinsidepull c (2018)

Utilising social media in a similar way to @insidehockey and @theinsidepull can help SAHA increase awareness of its brand, educate users on the game of hockey, achieve

global publicity, strengthen their image as a governing body, target specific markets, ensure the understanding of their stakeholders needs and expectations, and engage successfully with their stakeholders. Thus, SAHA will be covering a number of their followers' needs that they are using social media to fulfil, as suggested by the Uses and Gratifications Theory. As discussed previously, it is important to ensure a variety of posts are posted on SAHA's accounts' timelines to ensure they are able to capture a variety of stakeholders and cater to their needs and expectations. Timely and interesting information needs to be posted on SA hockey channels to encourage followers to constantly check the pages for updates and content.

Due to SAHA being the national governing body of hockey in South Africa, it has very diverse stakeholders and, as discussed in the Framing Theory, all these sub groups will hold pre-existing interpretations or perceptions. This results in social media communication needing to accommodate all these stakeholder groups, as it is an all-inclusive communication channel. On similar reasoning, and as identified by the Uses and Gratifications Theory, all these users will have different needs when visiting any SA hockey social media platform. Due to these reasons, not every single post will excite and be perceived as relevant for every user. Hence it is important to ensure each page posts a variety of material that will cater to the entertainment, information, diversion, substitution for personal relations or for personal identification, and value needs that users will have. A goal of this relationship that SAHA should be aiming to establish with their online stakeholders will be to produce fans that are more engaged with the SA Hockey teams both online and in real life with the intent to translate these online interactions to the increase of consumption of the game in terms of more spectators in stadiums and more hockey on TV with more viewers watching. It is important for SAHA to utilise their social media platforms to provide their stakeholders and the public with a desirable brand that they want to be a part of, making hockey the sport of choice to participate in as well as spectate.

6.5 Implementation Tactics for SAHA's Social Media Use

Based on the temporal dynamics of social media, it is important to monitor and post on social media in the upcoming months to tournaments to create hype as well as to

gauge how stakeholders are reacting to the tournaments. In a similar manner to the way in which @insidehockey (2018) implements player/team take overs, the SA Hockey team accounts would benefit from posting stories to their Instagram account of tour life and training camps to give their followers a glimpse into the life of the players that they look up to. By monitoring the number of views, comments and likes on these posts and stories it will enable social media managers to assess the success of the content and analyse stakeholder values and expectations. This will allow informed decisions to be made in order to optimise the immediate experience of stakeholders as well as ensure future tournaments are more enjoyable for them as they will feel involved in the process even if the tournament is held on international ground.

South African Hockey can utilise their social media platforms in a similar way to that of @theinsidepull (2018) by posting about interesting events at regional and provincial tournaments and games as well as posting or reposting interesting events that are occurring in the overseas hockey communities. Pavelka (2014) further indicated that audiences are also likely to be interested in celebrity news. Celebrity news events can be incorporated into the South African Hockey social media feeds by reposting hockey celebrity posts. As we see in the post below, Arthur Van Doren is considered a world-renowned hockey celebrity after winning Player of the Year for 2017; reposting a post like this can be entertaining and informative for the South African Hockey following as well as establishing rapport between the SA Hockey brand and the global hockey community by showing support for other members within the hockey community.



IMAGE 9. Arthur van Doren (2018)

Another attempt at creating engaging and entertaining content can be the inclusion of other sport codes news events and celebrities (Images 10 and 11). It will allow SA Hockey to become a part of the conversation and contribute to vibe and hype on other social media campaigns. This has the potential for SA Hockey pages to expose themselves and reach a more diverse user group and tap into the expansive and passionate sport community that occurs online. Due to hockey being a highly competitive and action packed sport, it is likely their fans are interested in sport in general. Athletes often post videos of themselves and their team mates' training, recovery sessions and unique skills videos. This can serve as inspiration to the followers of South African Hockey channels and due to the incorporation of various sporting codes, has the potential to attract a diverse following that are sport fans in general and not necessarily avid hockey fans.



IMAGE 10. Cricket South Africa (2016)



IMAGE 11. Springbok Sevens (2018)

The research findings for this paper indicate that the two-way symmetric communication model will best suit the public relations and social media efforts made by SAHA. Obvious implications for this strategy is that there is a need for a full time trained public relations practitioner that is integrated into SAHA. Based on the suggestions made by Noui, et al (2012) SAHA needs to ensure adequate budget and recruitment of qualified and motivated human resources to ensure public relations activities will be effective and relevant in order to form trusting relationships with stakeholders. A dedicated staff member is needed to manage social media content creation and uploads as well as monitor the social media presence SAHA has across all platforms. This will provide a more consistent organisational message and limits the possibility of a disjointed message being sent to online audiences.

One of the main goals Frontiers identified was to encourage fans to attend games and for those who could not attend physically, tune in to the broadcast. Social media has proved to be an effective tool to publicise events and create a hype surrounding it. The ease of sharing a post or clicking “interested” or “attending” to an event increases the number of users that are exposed to an event.

SAHA can benefit from implementing the findings of Aslan and Sendogdu (2012), whereby they suggest that leaders are able to influence the image of an organisation if these leaders behave ethically and in a favourable manner that appeases stakeholder's expectations. SAHA must ensure that all the players who are in the national squads, coaches, management staff and any other internal stakeholders understand that they represent the brand. These stakeholders could be classified as South African sports celebrities which can be commodified and become an integral part of the currency of hockey "business" and in the promotional culture of the sport (L'Etang, 2006). These internal stakeholders should be encouraged to take responsibility of the brand's image and behave in a manner that promotes the vision and goals of SAHA. Players should promote the events as much as possible on their own platforms and publicise that they will be attending or playing at the event. This would encourage people to go down and support their role models as well as reinforcing relationships between the players, fans and the SAHA brand. For publics to become more widely engaged with hockey, whether it is online or physically playing or watching the game, it is necessary for those involved in the game (management staff, players or the media) to communicate the desirable aspects of the sport and its teams, frequently and consistently. This goes to the very heart of communication theories which form the foundations of modern public relations. Young aspiring athletes are attracted to sports because they want to emulate and get close to the players that they admire. Most SA hockey players are experienced enough to coach young players, by doing this and encouraging the SA representatives to attend grass roots level and school tournaments, it provides SAHA with a cost-effective approach to relationship management as well as encouraging knowledge and skills sharing between the various levels of hockey.

Based on the Social Learning Theory, SAHA can implement strategies that will encourage people to respond in certain ways based on the users perceived rewards of responding in such a manner. By engaging with stakeholders online, and answering their queries in a timely and informative manner, users are more likely to use social media channels as a trusted and reliable source of communication with SAHA. By liking comments and posts and responding to them, other users might feel more inclined to comment based on the affirmation the other user has received. In terms of creating pages that are full of relevant, exciting and news worthy content, by sharing some of the players and user's posts, other users are encouraged to post their own

content in support of the South African Hockey Teams. This will facilitate growing the following on each page as well as create a conversation about the teams.

Using the findings of Hambrick and Pegoraro (2014) SAHA can implement the three types of hash tags in the following ways:

SAHA can use platforms such as Twitter to perform promotional activities by creating official *Marketing #s* which can be used as a branding element for specific events, tournaments or campaigns. The South African National Men's Hockey Team are currently working together to form a team brand identity centralised on a unique South African theme and to create a # to promote this identity and unite the team. The #AbeSizwe was generated to brand this identity, which they intend to use to promote unity amongst each other and their South Africans. The term encompasses a feeling of unity and working towards a common goal.

It is important for the social media manager to be aware of *Hijacked #s* in order to respond to any negative publicity and address the situation before the hashtag could potentially backfire on the organisation. Identifying hashtags that gain a lot of traction that are used by other social media accounts can also benefit SAHA by using the hashtag and joining in on the conversation.

Organic #s can be utilised by creating a vibey and close knit community amongst social media users. Being active on social media will allow a high interaction rate between SAHA and its online stakeholders. The more this network grows and strengthens, the more valuable and trusting the relationships will become. Hashtags that emerge from this relationship will become valuable in creating SAHA's brand identity.

If SAHA can effectively activate the above strategies and suggestions, they will ensure that their social media content is aligned with that of pages that are perceived to be successful in their attempts to drive engagement and have a wide reach. The social media pages and accounts associated with SAHA will have the greater potential to be considered trustworthy and have entertainment value amongst followers and stakeholders, which will in turn attract more followers as well as more engagement.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Limitations

The extent to how willing and or dedicated a sport's governing body or organisation is in adopting social media to develop and implement relationship marketing effects how efficient and effective their social media and public relations efforts are. The greater these sport organisations perceive the importance of social media the more likely they are to use it as a channel to accomplish organisational objectives of raising brand awareness.

One of the challenges identified through the field research was the internal struggle as to who holds possession of the accounts and who is responsible for content creation and sign off. A challenge arose when the coach of one of the national teams appointed a social media manager who had no affiliation to SAHA or Frontiers, the company contracted to procure sponsorship for the national hockey teams. The concerns with this from a Frontiers perspective included; not having direct access to this platform to deliver sponsorship expectations; when these sponsorship posts are needed to be made it will need to go through a number of channels which would delay the process as well as create a margin for human error and "freedom" for the external social media manager to post without knowledge of sponsorship expectation or other requirements and limitations.

Due to a number of internal stakeholders (including players, coaches, managers and members of Frontiers both old and present) having access to the account, it is difficult to track who was doing what on the accounts. Two scenarios are relevant to this limitation.

The first scenario deals with a rather controversial tweet made by a past player who is renowned for stirring the pot on social media being liked by the official South African Women's Twitter account.



The tweet suggested that the current midfield players were not up to par which understandably upset a few players. Due to the official South African Women's National Hockey Team's Twitter account liking the post, it left certain players in the team feeling that management and coaches agreed with the message the tweet intended. The players felt like it was an injustice for the official Twitter account to like the tweet because it suggests that their own brand did not have confidence in them. This scenario happened mid Women's Hockey World Cup and had the potential to have mental implications for players who were affected by the tweet. Due to multiple stakeholders having access to the account, it was not possible to identify the person who liked the tweet; however the tweet was unliked by a party that sympathised with the players.

The second scenario dealt with sponsored posts being removed from the Instagram pages of both the men's and women's teams. It is a legal requirement agreed upon by Frontiers and the sponsors involved to post and promote the sponsors brand on the social media platforms owned by SAHA. Sponsors became upset that their social media expectations were not being met by Frontiers and SAHA and created tension in the relationship which could threaten future sponsorship by current and potential sponsors. Again, due to the number of stakeholders who have access to the pages, it was not possible to identify who was removing the content. Having a large number of stakeholders that have access to these accounts opens up the possibility for a big margin of personal preference and opinion going in to one account.

To alleviate these limitations, the password should be changed on a regular basis and should only be given to a limited number of stakeholders. An official social media manager or team should be appointed by SAHA to ensure the process of content creation, sign off and distribution is stream lined, efficient and occurring throughout the year not only during tournaments.

Given the detail that went in to the literature review and theoretical framework in order to acquire an in depth and expansive understanding of how social media can be used as a tool to implement public relations strategies in various sectors, this research paper became very populated. The acute understanding of the definitions, roles, concepts and models of public relations and the theories of communication, relationships and stakeholder management, persuasion, social influence and conflict allowed the assessment of social media's ability to facilitate public relation strategies. With this in-depth knowledge and experience gained from this research, I would ideally like to develop a model or framework that will serve sporting bodies in the effective implementation of social media to achieve organisation goals and adding value to the social media experience of sport fans. This model would also incorporate how to gain and retain followers and how to maintain relationships formed with these followers. Time and length restrictions became a limitation with regards to developing such a model in this research, however this is a possible topic for a doctorate paper.

Another minor limitation that was identified was the small sample used to gather information regarding the number of participants in each sporting code. Due to time restraints, the sample consisted of a small number of all boy schools in the Durban area. The data collected was used to evaluate whether the findings of Mario Di Carlo and Hantău Cezar (2014) were relatable to South African sport and as a guideline to evaluate the popularity of hockey compared to other sporting codes but does not take in to account that the same student may play another sport and the data does not take in to account the total number of students at the school. However, for the purposes of this research and time restrictions, these two factors do not heavily influence the outcome of the research. Given more time and resources, the researcher would like to include both boy's and girl's schools from all provinces in South Africa, as well as establish a ratio between the number of students in the school who play sport and those who chose to play hockey.

This research also took a focus on Instagram with additional focus on Twitter. Future research should include a distributed focus on all channels in order to develop a model that includes all the social media platforms.

7.2 Recommendations

Based on information that has been gathered through the qualitative study, experience gained through the internship and being immersed in the industry, SAHA would benefit from the development and implementation of a Social Media Content Plan (SMCP). A SMCP is in essence a monthly planner which will indicate what content will be posted on what days and on what platform. This insures that social media engagement is not reactive but proactive and carefully planned to reach desired results.

Having an organised SMCP will assist SAHA with identify the key objectives for their social media strategy each month, namely engagement, information dissemination, growing, entertaining and building rapport with their followers. Identifying these key objectives will allow them to assess and measure the success of their social media efforts. SAHA should aim to post 1 post every 2 to 4 days while during tournaments they can increase their posts to 2 posts per day where relevant. Posting too often during off season could be perceived as too much irrelevant information being shared to their followers risking a rise in users unfollowing them. SAHA's weekly posts should include content of high-quality images that show case the game and spur passion amongst their followers. The copy that accompanies the image must be either informative or entertaining.

To increase engagement, Instagram stories can be used. With the many features that Instagram stories allow, SAHA can encourage engagement by using polls or quizzes in their stories. SAHA can incorporate "games" in their stories by asking followers to guess the player or adding emojis on top of the picture and hiding the ball behind one where they need to guess which emoji is covering the ball.

SAHA must recognise that engagement and timely, relevant information is what will grow their following and result in a trusting relationship being formed between their followers and their organisation.

7.3 Conclusion

There is an industry wide need for a social media development and activation framework across the sporting sector. Although there are many successful social media campaigns and pages that exist currently, this framework will serve as a guideline that will eliminate any guess work that is being done by many practitioners that are developing social media plans for sport teams. It has been identified that many sport teams do not have the same budget as corporate companies with regards to advertising and social media activation, however, they are still able to utilise social media platforms in a similar way that will encourage fan engagement and support.

This social media in sport framework will need to incorporate all the teachings of the theories discussed in Chapter 2 and 3, as well as incorporating tried and tested methods from previous activations in order to ensure that the framework is informed and geared at developing communication that will be effective with stakeholders. This communication needs to be activated in such a way that both the sport team/organisation and the followers/fans/ stakeholders perceive benefit from the interactions, allowing relationships to be formed and loyalty to be instilled in the stakeholders. If a sport team is able to effectively develop strong relationships and a good brand image, they are more likely to procure sponsorship for their team or sport.

The limited body of knowledge on this topic reveals a gap in the research market for scholars to explore and grapple with. The ever changing and fast pace development nature that occurs in the technological world ensures a constant need to research ways to improve how we can use its channels and platforms for communication that serves public relations functions; of relationship building, stakeholder management, persuasion and social influence and conflict management. Sport teams and organisations, such as The South African Hockey Association will benefit from such a framework as it will guide their social media activities instead of producing social media content that is reactive and is not conducive to continuous engagement between their brand, players and fans.

ADDENDUM 1



HOCKEY FANS – ACCESS TO TV SERVICES

All ages 15+

Access to Television: Free to air and Pay TV

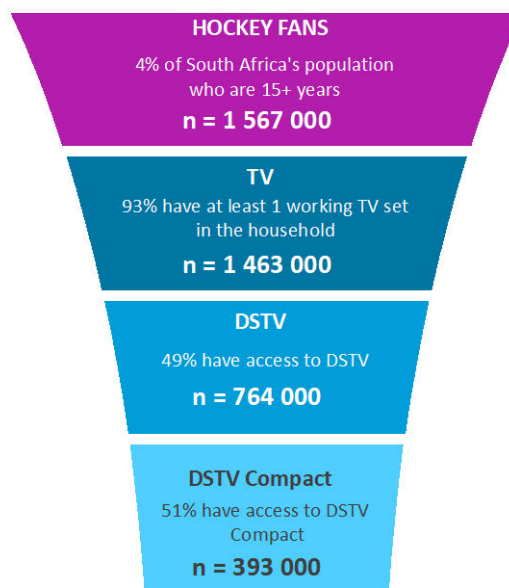
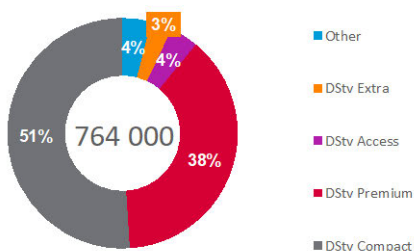
Have at least 1 working TV set in the household



Hockey fans with any access to DStv?



Type of DStv subscription



- Of the total South African population, 4% or 1.56m people describe themselves as interested in hockey.
- Of those 1.56m people, 93% or 1.46m have a working TV set. Only 49% or 764 000 who have a TV also have DStv.
- 51% of hockey fans have access to DStv via a Compact subscription.

Source: Branded AMPSB 2015. Hockey fans 15+

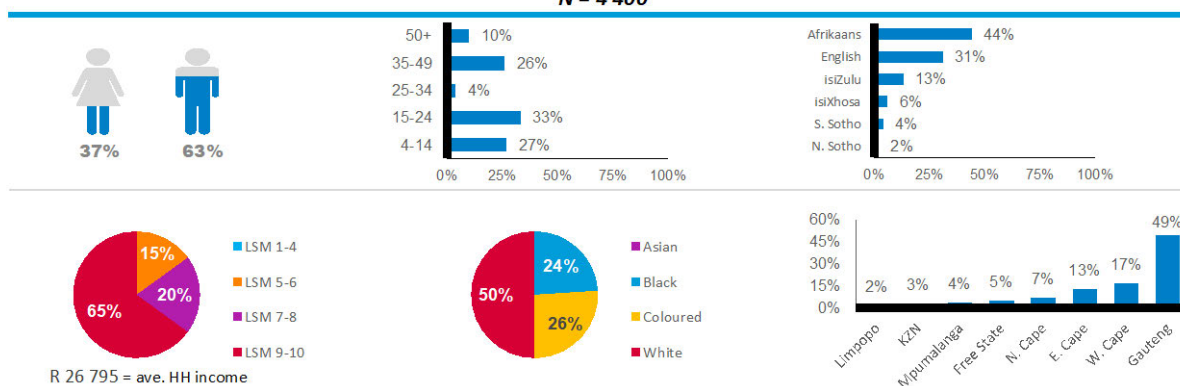
4

TV VIEWERSHIP PROFILES

Live TV coverage on : Men's and Women's Hockey combined

FIH HOCKEY WORLD LEAGUE – 66 GAMES

N = 4 400



COMMENT:

- The viewership profile is skewed towards male viewers predominantly residing in the Gauteng province.
- The age and language profiles are diverse. The age profile reports a low representation of viewers between the ages of 25-34 years of age while viewers up to 24 years of age account for 60% of the total audience.
- Afrikaans and English viewers account for 75% of the audience, however, viewers using any of the other official languages account for 25% of the audience.
- TV coverage on channels available to both Premium and compact subscribers also ensured a more diverse LSM profile.

Source: BRC TAMs 2017

16

APPENDIX

This section defines and explains the specialist terms used in this paper. A number of these words will be used throughout the paper and will be identified in the body of the text with a *. Please refer back to this section if you need a better understanding of the word in context.

Noises: refers to any type of disruption that has the potential to interfere with the transmission (sending) or interpretation (ability of the receiver to understand) of information from the sender to the receiver. There are different types of noise, such as physical noise (loud noises, inaudible messages), psychological noise (stress, lack of understanding of the message), semantic noise (specialist terms and jargon) and physiological noise (distractions such as being hungry, having a headache etc.) (study.com, 2018).

Publics/ Stakeholders: These two terms describe the individuals that interact, affect or are affected by an organisation's decisions and/or actions. Due to public relations being a highly influential phenomenon for both parties in the relationship, it is assumed that for an effective relationship to form between an organisation and its stakeholders, both parties must acknowledge that they have an equal influence and effect on each other. For the purpose of this research stakeholders will refer to individuals or groups that are affected by or affect the South African Hockey Association, namely players, supporters/fans, sponsors, management staff and technical officials.

Shareability/likeability: the ability and ease at which a post on social media is shared and/or liked by social media users. Posts with high shareability, appeal to user's values and beliefs, and are accepted by a wide audience who are willing to share, like and/or comment on the post.

Social media: a group of Internet based applications that exist on the Web 2.0 platform which give users the opportunity to interact and communicate between other users via electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, personal messages, ideas and other content

such as videos and pictures (Merriam-Webster.com, 2018). The social media platforms that this research will focus on are Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Timeline(s): for the purposes of this research, the phrase “timeline” is used to describe the social media content that an individual user chooses to like or follow so that it appears on their feed when they browse through the social media platform. It allows the user to customise their experience as the feed they are exposed to will be made up of content they have actively chosen to show up there.

Traditional media: relating to newspapers, radio, television and magazines.

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