

Developing policy guidelines for social media in public relations practice at selected NGOs in Gauteng

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on a constructivist grounded theory that investigated the use of social media in public relations in non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This thesis focuses on the development of the managerial policy guideline for public relations in non-governmental organisations. Social media has changed the nature of information more especially regarding its use and interpretation. Social media tools such as facebook have become almost omnipresent in daily life. Public relations practitioners have diverse, and intensive information needs to communicate and share information.

A literature study was conducted on this topic of social media to create the foundation for the study and to understand what other previous researchers have documented around the topic of social media in South African context. Regarding the empirical study, data was collected from an array of South African public relations practitioners working in non-governmental organisations by employing the grounded theory approach. The study used semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection strategy. This was used to get a better understanding of what the public relations practitioners were using the social media communication tool for and what the advantages of the technology were from an NGO perspective.

In total, nine interviews were undertaken, with participants from different NGOs. The findings provide the holistic view of public relations practitioners' use and experience of social media in NGOs. The main findings suggest that social media played a crucial role to promote the existence of the NGOs in the society. Categories of experience were constructed through a constructivist grounded theory analysis process. The results show that although South African NGOs communication technological environment has not matured as yet, there are already benefits that can be realised from using social media as a communication tool.

This study makes a contribution to the public relations knowledge, methodology and practice. This study provides insight into public relations experience of social media and with information in social media that will be of interest to other practitioners across a wide range of communication professions.

Keywords: Social media, public relations, grounded theory, non-governmental organisations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, the telecommunications laws are set by the Ministry of Communications and administered, regulated and enforced by the industry regulator, ICASA (Thornton et al., 2006). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (SA, 1996) guarantees the right to communicate. Section 16 (1) states, everyone, has the right to freedom of expression which includes freedom to receive or impart information or ideas. This aligns with the declaration of the Human Rights Council of United Nations General Assembly that access to the internet is a basic human right which enables individuals to exercise their right to freedom of expression (South African Government Gazette, 2013:2). The Telecommunications Act defines telecommunication as the emission, transmission or reception of a signal from one point to another using electricity, magnetism, radio or other electromagnetic waves (Thornton et al., 2006). Telecommunications Act (No. 103 of 1996) is aimed specifically at regulating telecommunications and the Internet. Thornton et al., (2006) indicate that the nature of telecommunications is that it is borderless. Lesame, Mbatha and Sindane (2012) state that the Internet is a field where the private sector and civil society each has a role as important as or sometimes more important than the government. The legislation above implies that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) must have policies and institutional frameworks that support the social media usage in South Africa as a rapidly growing trend. According to Government Communications Information System (GCIS) (2013), the plan provides a framework in making sure that the ICT goals are achieved.

Scott (2010) indicates that social media have not only become a global phenomenon with implications for the workings of public relations and the way people interpret news but have also emerged as critical avenues for public relations practice. Before the advent of social media technologies, traditional media used to be the dominant vehicle for public relations practitioners (Reiman, 2012). Since the rapid increase of new media technologies, social media have democratised communication landscape, making it possible for everyone to regardless of time and space, create and publish information (Graham and Dutton, 2014).

According to Flynn (2012), social media is a phenomenon that has transformed the interaction and communication of individual throughout the world. Shapshak (2009:4) writes that the phenomenal growth in digital communication and the rise of social media have revolutionised the way in which people communicate with one another and share information. Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012:129) states that social media is used for personal use to connect with old and news friends, build on existing relationships and gather information and community knowledge.

Globalisation and increased competition within the capitalist system, the advent of social media have revolutionised the way in which people and organisations communicate (Graham and Dutton (2014). Globalisation has changed our social and cultural relations, and communications technologies are a major driver behind such change (Seargeant and Tagg, 2014). The internet demonstrates a change in culture and participation within social networks (Thomas-Jones, 2010). The internet has not only facilitated communication and empowered individuals but is encouraging more conversation between organisations and their publics (Collins and Durnington, 2015). Social networking has become part of daily practice in users lives (Thomas-Jones, 2010). According to Collins and Durnington (2015) we live in a networked age, which means the rise of networked self.

Before the advent of new media technologies, traditional media used to be the dominant vehicle for public relations communication. This was largely done through newsletters, brochures, word of mouth, in-house publications, radio and television to disseminate information to their audience. Ever since the proliferation of new media technologies, social media sites have revolutionised the ways in which organisations do business by facilitating speedy, public, free, interactive electronic conversations and information sharing among employees, customers, executives and staff (Flynn, 2012). Such actions would contribute to organisations enhancing relationships with their audience.

Some competing terms have been used to highlight different elements of the changes that have taken place on the web over the last decade. Mandiberg (2012) state that social media as a phenomenon has been given many names but the most associated with is "user generated content". Mandiberg (2012) further point out that Henry Jenkins used the term "convergence culture", Jay Rosens used "participatory media", Tim O'Reilly is known for Web 2.0. According to Mandiberg (2012), these terms defines one separate aspect of social media phenomenon and does so from the specific point of view from different systems. As a result of these capabilities and latent potential, social media has been hailed as a powerful tool for public relations practitioners.

White (2014) argue that social media through its proliferation of information stakeholders have a real impact on the way stakeholders relate and do business. Non-governmental organisation has been drawn to social media platforms to get exposure, distribute information, engage and influence the public and influence the scope and depth of public debate. Studies conducted on social media have focused on aspects such as connecting with publics and raising awareness (Thomton and Sweetser, 2010). (Flynn (2012) is the view that social media is a communication channel and public relations practitioners must have clear goals to manage two-way communication. Written policies must be communicated to employees to protect the organisation from risks and challenges. Therefore, developing a managerial policy guideline for public relations in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as an internal and external communication is important to ensure that the channel is used correctly and that it can ultimately contribute to symmetrical communication model.

Reiman (2012) argues that social media have a real impact on the way public relations relates to public and their stakeholders. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have begun to use social media to reach out to its publics. These organisations have been drawn to social media such as facebook to engage and communicate with their publics. According to Wright (2014) facebook is the largest networking site in the world today (refer to Chapter 2, under section 2.7.3).

Based on the above, it is clear that social media have brought changes and enormous benefits to public relations practice in NGOs. Social media play an important role in promoting the organisation, improving employee loyalty, foster creativity and sustaining relationships with the publics. Given the above, social media usage in South Africa is a rapidly growing trend. It will soon be one of the most commonly used means of communication. Furthermore, social media usage complicates employment relations and employment laws. All these views above on social media, exacerbate the problem of not taking advantage of social media in NGOs. There is a lack of organisation-level research on social media implementation and use. The section to follow presents the background to the study regarding social media.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Breakenridge (2008) describes social media as anything that uses the internet to facilitate conversations between people. Brown (2009) claims that if an organisation aim to achieve success, social media must be a priority and that practitioners have to transform public relations strategies if they want to maximise the potential created by the internet. The internet

offers many advantages for public relations beyond traditional communication channels (Christ, 2005). The Internet can instantaneously impart information to a vast number of people and offers organisations new opportunities for building a relationship with stakeholders (Conway et al., 2007). Furthermore, Castells (2009) states that the internet has not only facilitated communication and empowered individuals but is now encouraging more dialogue between organisations and their stakeholders. Hanson (2007) indicate that internet search engines are now the principal portal of knowledge. Bagui and Parker (2009) believe the value of Internet is that communication is not one way but enables two-way interaction between an organisation and stakeholders. Grunig (1992) indicate that to achieve two-way excellence model, communication cannot be top-down (refer to Chapter 3, under section 3.6). Relationships are the foundation of social media and therefore enable two-way communication (Botan and Hazelton, 2009).

Lesame et al. (2012) agree with the abovementioned statements by pointing out that many people all over the world use the internet for a range of activities, varying from work to pleasure, to fulfilling curiosity. Much as the Internet has brought many benefits to society, so there are also negative consequences such as what people say on internet sites cannot be controlled. Therefore, people should be careful with whom they interact and what they say about themselves on the sites.

Solis (2011:5) claims that with the shift from PR to PR 2.0 "Monologue has given way to dialogue". Scott (2010) indicates that the internet has made public relations public again. Kent et al. (2002) go even further to state that social media is transforming public relations reconceptualising it in new socially-engaged ways.

Angelopulo and Barker (2013:225) state that until the significant growth in and use of the internet, the public relations main focus and function were to manage communication between an organisation and traditional media. With the introduction of new ways of communication via the internet and social media, the focus and function have changed, and the public relations practice is being forced to consider and engage with new technology.

Brown (2009), is the view that social media has changed the dynamics of public relations. Weber (2007) states that the communications world is dramatically moving in a digital direction and those who understand this transformation will communicate much more effectively. The purpose of social media is to enable people to engage in discussions, interaction in an open system (Scott, 2010). From a public relations view it is important that social media have

enabled organisations to communicate with different publics in a variety of new ways (Brown, 2009).

Against the background of this study, it can be stated that social media and social networking sites, such as facebook, have become a popular communication tool in NGOs. Some terms and concepts are used in the entire study. These terms lie at the core of the study. For the purpose of clarity, these terms are explained and defined below.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this certain research concepts are used throughout this study. Hence it is of importance that these concepts be defined to ensure clarity and the correct application thereof. Definitions of social media vary across disciplines. In this study, the researcher has adopted the following definitions which have been informed by the literature.

- **Social Media**

Social media is defined as internet based application that builds on ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Kaplan and Hanlein, 2010) (refer to Chapter 2).

- **Internet**

Graham and Dutton (2014) defines the internet as a network of networks connecting thousands of smaller networks and millions of users around the world (refer to Chapter 2, under section 2.5.4).

- **Social Networking Sites**

Social networks are online platforms where users create profiles, post content, share information, and socialise with others (Flynn, 2012). Kellerman (2014) add that social networking may be viewed as individual actions, coordinated with other people's individual action (refer to Chapter 2, under section 2.5.3).

- **Web 2.0**

Web 2.0 is the term used to describe interactive, internet-based communication and collaboration tools and technologies (Flynn, 2012). Web 2.0 is the business revolution in the computer industry caused by the move to the internet as a platform and an attempt to understand the rules for success on that new platform (O'Reilly, 2006).

- Twitter: A social media platform wherein user's microblog content in 140 characters or less. Users follow one another to create a feed of content.
- Public relations: is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and their publics (Wilcox, Cameron and Reber, 2015:35).
- Virtual world: An online community is continually manifesting as a computer-based simulated environment where users can interact with one another and virtual objects (Hickey and Essid, 2014).

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Studies conducted on social media have focused on the benefits and advantages of social media (Thornton and Sweetser, 2010). In a study conducted by Wright and Hinson (2010) found that public relations practice have recognised the international trends show that social media usage is being taken seriously. The same author goes further to indicate that social media usage is a rapidly growing trend, and public relations still use social media in a one-way communication model.

Erasmus (2012) states that there has been a lack of research on social media use and implementation. Waddel (2010) agrees by indicating that not enough research have been done from a South African context about the use of social media. Kent (2008), Flew (2007), and Weber (2007) further point out that there is a lack of empirical data on examining the increasing impact of social media on public relations practice. While there is very limited data related specifically to the use of social media in NGOs, social media continues to rise. According to the findings of the South African Social Media Landscape (2014) facebook has 9.4 million active users in South Africa. Based on above findings and the increasing popularity of social media sites, social media, in general, is the key platform for public relations in NGOs to enact everyday information experience. It is of concern that to date there is very limited information on the use of social media in NGOs. Also, there are few studies that consider public relations use of social media as a tool for communication in NGOs. Social media appear to have benefits as a platform for public relations to interact but at the time of the study commenced, there had been few empirical discussion on the impact of social media on public relations practice.

According to Grunig (2002), it is necessary to acknowledge that public relations are still viewed as an emerging function in developing countries such as South Africa. For example, developed

countries do not deal with the developmental challenges such as education, literacy, and adoption of social media online technology. Naudé (2004) claims that practitioners using the internet in their public relations efforts often do not use the interactive features of the medium to their fullest potential. From a South African perspective public relations is still learning to use the internet as a medium of communication and slowly learning to adopt and adapt, while developed countries use the latest technology to disseminate information and communicate with the wider community (Herger and Howell, 2007). It is of concern that however, that although most NGOs have accepted social media, the factors mentioned above are increasing social isolation.

According to Le Roux and Naudé (2005), different countries support different paradigms; therefore, it creates complexity to the discipline of public relations as different countries practice from different perspectives. Steyn (2004) indicates that European public relations academics support the reflective paradigm. The USA originated the relational paradigm. Research conducted in the United States of America by Shrerer (2010) indicate that organisations use social media such as facebook to increase outreach and maintain relationships with their audience. Steyn (2004) further states that South Africa need to develop its method or adapt the current globally used paradigms. Le Roux and Naudé (2006) point out that professionalism is another challenge for public relations. Public relations in South Africa can be seen as a large industry and far ahead when compared to other African countries. The Management Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) made huge advances in defining the role of public relations from a South African context. Despite this, public relations practitioners in South Africa face challenges of having to make strong statements on the importance of their profession and strongly defend the reason for using social media in the profession's existence.

Culture also plays an important role in public relations practice (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 2006). For example, in South Africa, public relations is perceived as spin doctoring and portrayed negatively in the media. Currently, there is a move toward creating more culturally sensitive ways of conducting public relations. Kent and Taylor (2002) indicate another worrying trend showing inappropriate and even unethical practices are being adopted in social media networks. Social media presents more challenges to the organisations; anyone can join these sites and make a comment; others have ulterior motives to damage the reputation of the organisation. It allows anyone to register on sites; it means the organisation cannot have absolute control over social media content. Also, it is of concern that with social media there is no current legislation dealing explicitly with social media. These factors above require a need to look to other statutes and to common law to determine social media law.

Cutlip, Center and Broom (2009) believe public relations is seen as a function that contributes to the greater good of society and the good organisational image. However, the function does not always deliver the promise (Skinner et al., 2010). According to Grunig and Grunig (2002), public relations is a unique management function that helps an organisation to interact with the social, political, and institutional components of its environment. More importantly, it is clear that public relations' major objective is to build and maintain relationships with the internal and external stakeholders. Social media not only allow the public relations to reach out but engage with publics and have a conversation, and it also provides an avenue to strengthen the relations. The challenge for public relations is to understand social media and to use the media elements to the benefit of the practice as well as to the stakeholders.

Angelopulo and Barker (2013) write that a significant number of NGOs does not have social media facilities because they are confronted with serious financial and capacity challenges. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that the money raised is used back to advance the mission of the NGO and not to enrich the managers or employees. NGOs work with tight budgets. As a result, they cannot pay employee salaries hence impacting adversely on low employee morale. Resources allocated to public relations and social media as a medium communication tool are often insufficient or not available at all. The statement above is supported by a report by SANGONet (2009) indicating that global recession has forced other NGOs to cut costs, scale down on activities or close down offices.

Kent and Taylor (2002) indicate that lack of government support is a challenge for NGOs. South Africa is faced with overwhelming development challenges such as education, health, poverty and many others, increasingly, government departments and agencies are incapable of responding to these challenges due to a lack of capacity, leadership, and corruption. According to Angelopulo and Barker (2013), public relations practitioners working in the development sphere can use their organisations' websites to build its image to interact with their different publics and stakeholders regardless of where they are and to set policy issues. Unfortunately, some NGOs usually do not have trained public relations practitioners to use social media to its full potential.

Given the abovementioned statements, it is evident from the communication studies of Wright and Hinson (2008, 2009 and 2010), that there is a need to develop a social media policy programme to protect the organisations from social media risks. Based on the statement above, it is, therefore, the view of the researcher that South African public relations practitioners in non-governmental organisations are facing the problem and the challenge of

providing knowledge to the content of social media. Given the above context and background, the study was guided by the following research questions.

To address these problems, this study seeks to investigate the following research questions:

How do public relations in NGOs communicate, what are the successes, failures and problems experience concerning social media as a communication channel?

- How does social media (such as facebook, Twitter, Blogs, news delivery sites, and content sharing sites) influence the traditional media?
- What policy guidelines are in place concerning social media?
- How does the literature contextualise the use of social media in public relations practice?
- What are the history and current status of public relations after the adoption of social media from a South African perspective?

It is from the above information that the objectives of the study are formulated, which includes general objectives and specific objectives.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

From the abovementioned problem statement, it is logical that the primary objective of this study is to develop a policy guideline for public relations practitioners in NGOs. A research study to develop a managerial policy guideline for public relations working in NGOs is very relevant; as such research has never been undertaken in NGOs.

The secondary objectives of this study were:

- To investigate what are the successes, failures and problems that public relations experience in selected NGOs in Gauteng concerning social media as a communication tool.
- To determine whether social media (such as facebook, Twitter, Blogs, news delivery sites, and content sharing sites) influence the traditional media.
- To propose a policy guideline for NGOs, public relations practitioners and other employees, with the intention to provide the potential benefits and risks associated with social media as a communication tool.
- To analyse from the literature the global perspective on how social media have impacted the public relations practice.

- To determine how the principles of symmetrical communication are implemented in social networking sites.
- To discuss the history and current status of public relations after the adoption of social media from a South African perspective.
- A qualitative approach is to be used because the field of study is still very new and little is known about South African NGOs' use of social media. A qualitative study enables the researcher to investigate why and how behind NGOs uses of social media.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology consists of literature and empirical research. This study will be conducted following qualitative research methods because the study of social media is a new and unexplored field of communication studies. This research applied constructivist grounded theory as the methodology for this study. According to Charmaz (2006), constructivist is a development of grounded theory which has evolved in the past decades. From the above it can be concluded that it is a methodology for the generation of new theory. On the other hand, there are characteristics common across qualitative grounded methodology. Glaser and Strauss (2006) indicate that the enquiry based on grounded theory is a concern with understanding the phenomenon. The same author further states that grounded theory employs inductive analysis and is focused on discovery. Babbie and Mouton (2012) agrees by indicating that qualitative research produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Salmons (2015:240) supports the discussion above by indicating that grounded theory involves analysing data to develop theory rather than testing a hypothesis. Charmaz (2006) suggests that grounded theory can be viewed as a method with different approaches reflecting differing epistemological and ontological backgrounds which help researchers to control the research process and to increase analytic framework of their work. Also, in grounded theory collection and analysis of data are done simultaneously (Charmaz, 2006:5; Glaser and Strauss, 2006). Charmaz (2006) further indicates that grounded theory involves theoretical sampling allows flexibility in the collection of data. Salmons (2015) highlight that it is theoretical sampling that differentiates grounded theory from other approaches. Birks and Mills (2011:2) indicate that grounded theory is an integrated and comprehensive theory that explains a process associated with a phenomenon where this theory is generated by the researcher. In essence, grounded theory entails developing abstract ideas regarding participants meaning of the world.

From the above, it can be concluded that grounded theory is more acceptable to enquiry concerned with the understanding phenomenon. Social media phenomenon has received little attention in the research literature. Constructivist grounded theory is particularly appropriate for this study as it allows for co-construction of theory by researcher and participants.

1.6.1 Literature study

A literature study focuses on the brief historical background of social media and its influence on the work performance of public relations practitioners in a non-governmental organisation. The literature study included textbooks, academic articles, conference papers, international journals in disciplines such as communication, marketing, media to name but a few sources. A wide spectrum of primary and secondary sources was consulted to acquire an in-depth understanding of the phenomena.

The following electronic databases were consulted:

- International journal articles;
- EBSCOHost;
- Emerald;
- Google Scholar;
- Sabinet Online;
- Unisa Online;
- Bizcommunity (South Africa's Leading Business to Business website on media);
- Internet journals;
- Library catalogues;
- Published papers, periodicals, newspapers; and
- Published dissertations.

The purpose of the literature study was to enable the researcher to identify the global perspective and the nature of social media and to critically analyse the current status of social media concerning public relations in South Africa. Determine the advantages and disadvantages of using social media in NGO. The literature provided the theoretical framework for an empirical study to investigate the social media as a phenomenon. From the above, in keeping with the grounded theory, it can be concluded that it is necessary to study the literature to establish a need for the research study and to identify the gap. Charmaz (2006) supports by adding that purely grounded theory suggests that it is the researcher's interest not to bring preconceived ideas and therefore promote for reading before or data collection.

1.6.2 Empirical Study

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2013), Bernard (2013); Babbie and Mouton (2012), interviews are the core ingredient of social research. An interview is a way of gathering data from one person at a time (Curtis and Curtis, 2011:29). Flick (2011); Charmaz (2010), indicates that conducting an interview is a principal way to collect data so as to learn about research participants' lives. One way of respecting research participants is through trying to establish rapport with them and building rapport starts from the moment the researcher makes contact with the participant (Charmaz, 2010:19). In-depth interviews were considered the most appropriate method of engagement with participating participants (Kumar, 2014). Through interview, the researcher obtains an understanding and wealth of valuable rich information regarding the phenomenon (Adams et al., 2007).

In-depth, semi-structured interviews are a common data collection method in grounded theory. Interviews are more acceptable to grounded theory as they allow the exploration of public relations practitioners experience and also provide an opportunity to describe the own experience in own words. Furthermore, Corbin and Strauss (2008) note that in grounded theory researchers employ semi-structured interviews which involve open-ended questions based on the phenomenon. A semi-structured interview was used to facilitate open discussion which allowed the participants to reflect on their experience. Semi-structured interviews were more of a conversation where the interviewer give guidance and direction for the course of the conversation. Interviewing allows the researcher to take control of data collection, on the other hand, it allows the participants to tell their stories (Charmaz, 2006:31). Semi-structured interviews complement flexibility that is characteristics of grounded theory. The role of the researcher is to tap into the meaning, the experience of the phenomenon under investigation. Through making use of grounded theory principles, a constructivist approach places importance on the participant's language, understanding, and meaning (Charmaz, 2006:32).

A constructivist approach to interviewing indicates the researcher to make an effort to probe deeper into the participant's experience of the phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006). Glaser in Birks and Mills (2011) encourage grounded theorist to engage with the literature format the beginning of the study. As indicated before interviews were used to gather data for this study. The interviews were collected during the months of September to November 2014. A letter as an invitation to take part in this social research study was emailed to all identified non-governmental organisation in Gauteng. Two weeks after the initial email letter was sent to the participants, a telephonic follow-up was conducted with organisations that had not responded. Information was given and meetings were convened in the NGOs offices. Interviews were

conducted in English to ensure effective communication to let participant feel at ease and to express themselves in a conversation.

The flexibility of grounded theory interviewing is built on the questioning strategy. The statement above is confirmed by Creswell (2013) by indicating that grounded theorists use open-ended questions to investigate more. In addition to the above, Creswell (2013:84) emphasises that grounded theorists should be grounded in data from the field, especially in the actions, interactions, and social processes of people.

The challenges that were experienced in completing the qualitative semi-structured interviews were that practitioners were extremely busy and therefore finding a suitable time for a research interview was challenging although they were keen to discuss the topic and experiences of social media. Each practitioner had a strong view on the experiences of social media; the researcher had to guide then practitioners to focus on the main issue of social media. Interviews provide a rich source of information, help clarify misunderstandings and are flexible when something unexpected happens or when further probing is needed (Kumar, 2014; Maree, 2012; Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Boeije, 2010).

Data recording requires the researcher to engage carefully with the participants. Curtis and Curtis (2011) note that the researcher is required to take notes and keep a record of what have been said during the interview. Creswell (2013) describes the use of interview protocol to streamline data recording to obtain multiple perspectives on the topic and diverse view. To ensure effective data transcription, interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, field notes, electronic Ipad, Smartphone with the permission from participants. Written notes were taken by the researcher during the interview for later examination (Maree, 2010). It should be kept in mind that the researcher becomes the observer and have to capture what was said by each participant and record verbal and non-verbal communication to describe and interpret experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Creswell, 2013).

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument and therefore no other person can replace or stand in the place of the researcher (Babbie and Mouton, 2012; Creswell, 2013; Maree, 2012). The researcher becomes part of the research process and indicates the methodology while it is difficult to be objective (Lincoln and Guba, 2011).

Based on the above, Charmaz (2006) suggests that reflexivity can assist to avoid difficulty and ensure questioning was appropriate and suitable for the participant. Charmaz (2006) is the

view that interviewing create a risk of forcing the data. However, reflexive draw out data which help grounded theory to a large body of information to analyse from.

The researcher is to observe and listen carefully to practitioners and to abide constantly by all ethical guidelines. In qualitative research, the researcher goes directly to the phenomenon and observes it in its totality to provide in-depth information (Babbie and Mouton, 2012).

1.6.3 Sampling

According to Creswell (2013) and Curtis and Curtis (2011), sampling within the qualitative paradigm aim to select participants who have experienced the phenomenon. The qualitative sample size is usually small (Kumar, 2014; Flick, 2011; Richards, 2011). A study of qualitative studies found the sample size varies from as little as two participants to as many as 20 or even more (Creswell, 2013; Maree, 2012, Babbie and Mouton, 2012). To obtain a realistic sampling frame guided by the need for data saturation, the researcher used a sample size of 10 participants.

The concept of purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research to select individuals and sites for study (Creswell, 2013; Babbie and Mouton, 2012; Maree, 2010:79). For the purpose of this study, a purposeful sampling will be used to select the respondents for semi-structured interviews. This type of sampling method will enable the researcher to select purposefully public relations practitioners who are information rich with experience to provide a thick description to provide the richness of meaning of communication (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). The aim of using qualitative sampling method is not to generalise (Flick, 2011). It must be noted that there are no fixed number of subjects that determine the size of an adequate sample. Creswell (2013:81) is the view that the decision on the sample size to be used is normally a matter of judgement than calculation and interview are conducted with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. In-depth interviews were considered the most appropriate method of engagement with participating practitioners. Interviews provide a rich source of information.

Based on the abovementioned aspects concerning sampling, it is clear that grounded theory employs theoretical sampling which comprises conceptual categories, refines and elaborate while allowing the researcher flexibility in the collection of data (Creswell, 2013; Gibbs, 2010). According to Glaser and Strauss (2006), theoretical sampling refers to the process by which the researcher collects, codes and analyse data. By the definition above of theoretical sampling, the researcher carefully developed abstract ideas about research participants

meaning, experience, action, and social world. Also, Charmaz (2006) suggests that theoretical sampling distinguishes grounded theory from other approaches. Above all, the key issue is that grounded theorist seeks to attain theoretical saturation. Creswell (2013:89) indicates that theoretical saturation occurs when no new categories emerge, in essence, the researcher gather enough information to develop fully (saturate) the model. With this discussion above, the role of the researcher is to develop theory.

1.6.4 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis emphasise preparing, organising, writing analytically (Maree, 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2001). Qualitative data analysis requires analytical skills and the ability to capture data through immersion in the interview (Babbie and Mouton, 2012). Jensen (2012) describe data analysis as a transition. Creswell (2013) regards data analysis as 'phenomenological reflection' of essential meaning. According to Charmaz (2005), grounded theory data collection and analysis are simultaneously informing each other. Based on this, it is a crucial aspect of grounded theory. Maree (2012) is the view that data analysis is a challenge which requires that data has to be analysed and used to substantiate a point for it to become evidence. Kumar (2014) states that data analysis requires skill, open mind, innovation, perception and creativity by the researcher. However, a major challenge about data analysis is that data is collected from a small number or people who experienced the phenomenon. Above all, data is analysed, results inform the direction of further data collection. Furthermore the researcher return to the field to gain richness of data until theoretical saturation is reached.

Data generation takes place between the researcher and the participants while co-constructing meaning through interaction (Creswell, 2013). Aleson and Karreman (2011) point out that phenomena are complex, dynamic and difficult to observe. To achieve analysis process, the researcher code initial interviews during observation later write memos to reflect on the interview process for themes to emerge. Meaning was obtained by comparing empirical findings (interviews and observation) with the information from the literature study (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher then describes, interprets and relates the essential common experiences of the participants and the meaning attached to them. Data is generated with the aim of obtaining themes, codes, categories and significant quotes (Saldana, 2013). Coding is the process of organising the material into segments of text before bringing meaning to information (Creswell, 2009; Saldana, 2013). In this study meaning is obtained by comparison of the findings with information extracted from the various literature.

Based on the abovementioned discussion the researcher through data collection and analysis wrote memos to reflect and explore emerging themes. Also, the researcher also used the constant comparative method process to analyse and code data. This method allowed data to be compared with other data. This statement is further supported by Creswell (2013:86), indicating that this process of taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories is known as the constant comparative method of data analysis.

1.6.5 Strategies employed to ensure quality data

Lincoln and Guba (2008) indicate that trustworthiness is a concept that is used within the qualitative paradigm. Corbin and Strauss (2008) highlight that research must have a solid presence provide insight, show sensitivity in order to be regarded as being quality. Corbin and Strauss (2008) further point out that quality findings have an innovative, thoughtful and creative element (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:301). Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify four necessary components of trustworthy as follows:

- credibility (the researcher's interpretations are credible to the respondents);
- applicability (the study of social media may be useful in another context);
- dependability (changes over time are taken into account as technology evolves);
and
- confirmability (the data can be confirmed by someone other than the researcher).

Babbie and Mouton (2012:276) writes that to increase trustworthiness, researchers are encouraged to be transparent in the discussion of methodologies, capturing and revealing essential details of what they did and why. The qualitative researcher focuses on an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. Based on the above, the researcher has taken all the necessary aspects related to trustworthiness into consideration. The researcher explained in detail methodologies, the process, flexible research methods, and the researcher remain as open as possible to pursue new areas of interest.

The component of credibility is closely linked to data and method triangulation. Triangulation means asking different questions, seeking different sources, and using different methods (Babbie and Mouton, 2012). The credibility of qualitative data is associated with people or the sample that was identified with the aim of being studied in the field (Maree, 2012). The focus is to obtain information through prolonged engagement with participants. Data will be obtained from the public relations practitioners in an NGO, furthermore from the questionnaire, included

open-ended questions. Above all the researcher in this study applies qualitative analysis for data to be obtained.

According to Lincoln and Guba (in Babbie and Mouton, 2012:276), since there can be no credibility without dependability, the credibility argued in the above paragraph should, therefore, be sufficient to accept that the research findings in this investigation are also dependable.

Confirmability of the qualitative data indicates that findings are the product of the focus of inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher (Babbie and Mouton, 2012:278). According to Babbie and Mouton (2012:278) indicate that one needs to leave an audit trail to enable the auditor to determine if the conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations can be traced to their sources and if they are supported by the inquiry.

As far as transferability is concerned, the results are presented using thick descriptions as is usually done in qualitative research (Maree, 2012). The aim was, therefore, to emerge in the participant's reality. Qualitative research seeks to provide an understanding from the participant's perspective rather than generalising findings across a population (Creswell, 2013). However, this is achieved through thick description.

The quality of data in this study required the researcher to conduct member checking to ensure the accuracy of findings from the participants, which contributed to the trustworthiness of the study (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). This approach involves taking data interpretations back to the participants so that they judge the accuracy and credibility of the study (Creswell, 2013:252).

Based on the abovementioned, it is clear that inquiry based on grounded theory is focused on the discovery of processes (Creswell, 2013). The purpose of grounded theory is understanding phenomena (Glaser and Strauss, 2006). The same author also points out that the strategy is more specifically on the development of theory. This statement is further supported by Charmaz (2005:508), indicating that grounded theory involves developing abstract ideas about research participants, meanings, action and social worlds. Above all, this allows the understanding of phenomenon which leads to the development of theory.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Creswell (2013) defines ethics as the 'moral principles, norms or standards' which guide moral choices. Some ethical considerations need to be kept in mind when doing social sciences research. The most important principles that guide this study are as follows:

- Before conducting the study the researcher was aware of the need and process of obtaining permission from the Faculty of Economic Sciences at the Potchefstroom Business School before conducting any form of research (Maxwell, 2005).
- Voluntary participation is crucial. Participants should have a choice to participate in the research, as they do not require the research, and it disrupts their routine. All participants are to be involved on a strictly voluntary basis. Electronic participants (online interviews) are to be informed by email that their participation was voluntary and have a right to withdraw at any time (Maree, 2012, Corbin and Strauss, 2008, Creswell, 2013; Babbie and Mouton, 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). In this study, the respondents were free to choose to participate or not.
- Informed consent. The researcher did not pressure the participants into signing the consent form but disclosed the purpose and importance of obtaining appropriate consent as a form of respect (Lincoln, 2009; Trochim and Donnelley, 2008). The researcher obtained permission before recording or taking photographs and making a video in the field as a form of respect for their rights to be treated with dignity.
- Confidentiality and anonymity (Babbie and Mouton, 2012). All participants were to be informed in writing that their participation will be confidential and anonymous to build trust and pursue the research in a professional manner (Maree, 2010; Flick, 2002).
- Researchers' objectivity, honesty, and integrity. The researcher was committed to transparency and was interested about the NGOs' charters, norms, culture, gender, religious and other aspects that need to be respected to be truthful and professional (Creswell, 2012, Mertens and Ginsberg, 2009). The abovementioned statement clearly shows that the researcher had to be aware of the Electronic Communications Act (2002) regulations collection, processing or disclosure of information. Telecommunications Act (No. 103 of 1996) is aimed specifically at regulating telecommunications and the Internet, which regulates the provision and use of the

Internet (Lesame, 2012:46). In the case of literature, it is common practice in constructivist grounded theory to undertake only a limited literature study, especially at the commencement of the research project. With this literature study, the researcher maintains the integrity of the initial literature study to be transparent about the prior knowledge the researcher had of the literature before data collection. It is for this reason that the literature study serves to provide a summary of the key existing literature to contextualise the study and identify gaps in relevant research to date.

- In analysing the data, the researcher respected the privacy of participants and reported on multiple perspectives (Trochim and Donnelley, 2008, Leedy and Ormrod, 2001; Saunders et al., 2007; Flick, 2002; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). In reporting data, the researcher furthermore undertook to abide by the ethical principles and guidelines of Harvard and North-West University guidelines to ensure the integrity of the research study (North-West University, 2009).
- Above all, the researcher should have personal integrity. The reader of a research report should be able to believe that what the researcher says happened, really happened. Otherwise it is all for nothing. Babbie and Mouton (2012) state that researchers should be at all times strive to maintain integrity, falsifying data to make findings agree with research question is unprofessional, unethical and unforgivable. It should, therefore, be stressed that confidentiality, trustworthiness, and personal integrity prevail.

1.8 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The research makes a contribution from a methodological perspective. This first chapter introduced and provided context for the study. This chapter described the research problem and presented the research questions. The methodology for the study, qualitative constructivist grounded theory is explained and the rationale for its selection is provided. The researcher in this study focused on the individuals and their experience on social media. The contribution the research makes to new knowledge and the study's limitations are discussed. Furthermore, the key terms are defined, and the thesis structure is outlined.

Although social media is relatively new in non-governmental organisations, social media provides new opportunities for public relations practitioners in NGOs to connect, to share, educate, to obtain and create information. Studies conducted on social media highlight the advantage of social media in NGOs as connecting, creating awareness and most importantly

fundraising (Curtis and Curtis, 2011). Given the above, it is evident that this study facilitates an understanding of the nature of public relations experience in social media. Also, this study is of benefit to public relations practitioners in NGOs, as it will assist them in making informed decisions on how to control and make use of social media to communicate, interact and build relationships with stakeholders.

The key findings from this research study reveal that social media is a new form of technology adopted by NGOs. Furthermore, the findings reveal that social media such as facebook is the most popular platform in NGOs engagement. The most important benefit of using social media in NGO lies in its ability to reach a large audience. The study also reveals that the experiences in social media is complex for public relations in NGOs. Above all, the research has resulted in the development of a new grounded theory in social media.

1.9 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In undertaking the research, there are some areas where the study experienced limitations. These areas are stated below:

- A limitation that is prominent in this study is the use of a single method approach to data collection. The researcher used interviews as a method of data collection. The theme that runs throughout the entire document are the voiced experiences of public relations practitioners. The research was based on public relations practitioners often non-governmental organisations located in Gauteng. The analysis was limited to one single sector to obtain as many similar stories as possible.
- The design characteristics of this study made it impossible to gain access to other provinces. As a result, this study is limited to the Gauteng province, between Pretoria and Johannesburg. The NGOs were purposively based on thematic and sampling reasons.
- The results of the study are limited to NGO participants as the sample used was too small.
- The study is only focussed on the sample of respondents exclusively from Gauteng. This study will focus on development NGOs in Gauteng. This is a limitation in the sense that the findings of the study cannot be generalised. The study did not seek to generalise results but to understand peculiarities related to social media use in the NGO in Gauteng.

- There is very limited documented data on how social media is used in non-governmental organisations. The focus of the study is on the contribution of practitioners to organisational performance using social media which could differ per role performed.
- The language barrier exists during interviews as a result of different racial groups. The English language is a second language for most of the participants. The researcher used English to conduct interviews because it is the recognised business language in South Africa.

1.10 CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter 1: Introduction - This chapter has presented an overview of the study. It has highlighted the background and the problem of the study. It has also briefly outlined the context, approach, limitations, and contributions that explored the experience of public relations in social media.

Chapter 2: History and global perspective - This chapter focus on the history and global perspective of social media. It provides an overview of research on the role of social media. The focus is on contextualising the study by looking at the history and global perspective.

Chapter 3: Current status of public relations and use of social media from South African context – This chapter provides an overview of research related to public relations. The role of social media in public relations.

Chapter 4: Research methodology and design- This chapter describes the methodology used for this research study. The methodology provides an overview of grounded theory, the history, development and its evolution. The researcher highlight the research strategy and design followed in this study. Specific attention is given to the empirical part of the study that constitutes qualitative research data collection and analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5: Presentation, analysis and interpretation of the findings – This chapter attempts to make sense of the data that were collected by reporting, analysing, and interpreting it. This chapter presents the new grounded theory by outlining themes and categories.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations – This chapter summarises the main findings of the study, draws conclusions and make recommendations. This chapter also summarises all the findings and provides the main contribution of the study as an integrated whole namely a policy guideline (model) for public relations practitioners in a non-governmental organisation. The findings from this study are presented in two chapters. In Chapter 5: presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the findings. Chapter 6 presents the model and new grounded theory. In conclusion, the researcher explore the contributions this study makes to the theory of public relations and also suggest directions for further research.

1.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This first chapter set the scene for the study on social media. The overall perspective of this study was presented. The primary objective and the secondary objective were presented and the research method that was used to reach the specific objectives were discussed.

This first chapter introduced and provided context for the study. This chapter described the research problem and presented the research questions. The methodology for the study, qualitative constructivist grounded theory is explained and the rationale for its selection is provided. The researcher in this study focused on the individuals and their experience on social media. The contribution the research makes to new knowledge and the study's limitations are discussed. Furthermore, the key terms are defined, and the thesis structure is outlined. The research objectives and the research methodology, sample and data collection techniques were explained in detail. In the next chapter, a detailed literature study explores the concept of social media from a global perspective.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was an introduction that included amongst others the orientation of the study. This chapter pays attention to the history and evolution of social media from a global perspective; the move from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 will also be discussed. The definitions of major concepts will be discussed and the distinction between social media versus new media will be highlighted. This chapter provides a theoretical information of issues related to the significance of social media in public relations to gain a deeper understanding of the topic under discussion.

Globalisation, as described by Hill (2009), is the shift towards a more integrated and independent world thereby merging historically distinct and separate markets into one huge global marketplace. Castells (2009) is the view that the rise of the computer-mediated communication in the 21st century, communication patterns have changed, and people have shifted from face-to-face, landline telephone, and postal communication to digital communication that enables users to stay online all the time. The explosion of wireless platforms in the last decade has distributed the power of the Internet everywhere (Graham and Dutton, 2014). Wright (2014:7) notes that social media is a new ever evolving tool that can help expand our knowledge and our reach and help us innovate and collaborate in bold new ways. Rettberg (2014) states that social media is mainstream that describes online many to many communication. According to Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012), it is impossible to ignore the influence of social media on our society. While it took traditional media such as radio and television more than a decade to reach 50 million users, it took facebook less than nine months to reach 100 million users (Patel, 2010).

The Minister of Communications Faith Muthambi in South Africa in her 2015 speech reaffirmed the role of ICT as an enabler of economic growth as a strong support to push people away from the information gap (Muthambi, 2015). Information and Communication Technologies

(ICT) are powerful tools for sustainable socio-economic development (Billon et al., 2009:596). In the context of a global knowledge, it is important for developing countries to lay good foundations for building capacity to acquire and create knowledge and technology in order to take advantage of the opportunities offered by globalisation and at the same time to address emerging global challenges (Lesame et al., 2012:73). According to the SANGONeT publication (SANGONeT, 2010), there are many constraints facing the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in their adoption of ICTs. Most NGOs are not aware of the opportunities and potential of using ICTs. Many do not have access to computers or community telecentres. NGOs often cannot afford the computer and other equipment required and do not have the necessary training to use them.

Angelopulo and Barker (2013) point out that before the advent of the new technologies, traditional media used to be the dominant vehicle for communication. Graham and Dutton (2014) notes that before social media there were many ways for individuals to communicate asynchronously, such as via letters, starring in film or television, being on an audio recording, sending email, instant messaging, and chatting on a bulletin board. Wilcox et al. (2015) indicate that social media is also a major contributor to the rising mobile enabled content. The same author further indicates that millions of consumers now use their smartphones and tablets as their primary source of news and information. Graham and Dutton (2014) write that the biggest impact of social media has been in the area of breaking news, and it contributed to the speed up of the news cycle, and this has increased pressure on traditional media. Graham and Dutton (2014) further notes the difference between old media and social media, the difference with social media is that the social network does not merely emerge from the person who is communicating with (or to) whom, instead the network defines who can and does access each other's content.

Skinner et al. (2010) support the aforementioned statement by pointing out that before the advent of social media in public relations, traditional messages were disseminated through brochures, newsletters, flyers, annual reports that were written and crafted by the public relations practitioners in the organisation for a specific audience. Wright (2014) notes that professionals are also harnessing the power of social networking tools to nurture, retain, and engage talent and staff. Skinner et al. (2010) indicate that the internet has not only facilitated communication and empowered individuals but is now encouraging more conversation, dialogue between organisations and their publics. Mark Zuckerberg founder of facebook summarises the power of social media in saying "By giving people the power to share we are making the world more transparent" (Baumann, 2011; Brynstoneson et al., 2011:3).

Kim et al. (2009) are of the view that organisations such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) show an online presence and used social media to reach a large number of people. Kim et al. (2009) indicate that people have joined networks like facebook and Twitter and have incorporated them into their daily lives. As a result, communications between individuals have changed in a fundamental way. Social media is used for personal use to connect with old and new friends, build on existing relationships and gather information and community knowledge (Al-Deen and Hendricks, 2012). Skinner et al. (2010) argue that social media add value to the performance of public relations. Skinner et al. further mention that for public relations in South Africa to improve their social networking proficiency they would need to be proficient in using information communication technology. Non-governmental organisations have been drawn to social media platforms by reaching their publics especially using facebook. According to Wright (2014:48) companies are now using social media to share content, improve brand awareness, increase traffic to the websites, engage with customers and colleagues, grow their marketing contacts while decreasing their expenses, improve their companies reputations address problems and provide solutions as well as provide feedback. It must be understood that there are important risk factors to consider when executing a social media strategy. Given this, it is clear and necessary for organisations in non-governmental organisations to plan for social media communication strategy.

In the section below, a general overview of the history and global perspective of social media is given, followed by the key milestones and the move from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0.

2.2 HISTORY AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

According to Dominick et al. (2000); Neuman (2010); Macnamara (2010) the history of the Internet began in the 1960s during the cold war between the United States and the former Soviet Union. Kellerman (2014) states that the Internet was originally invented in the US in 1969, as the ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) network, a network that constituted an experimental alternative communications system for telephone services, developed for a potential replacement of the telephone system in case of nuclear disasters. White (2014:126) is of the view that the history of the original internet designers was a military one and initially was to establish an advanced research project to give the freedom to develop innovative ideas. Kellerman (2014) add by stating that originally internet was experimented through a network connecting security headquarters with universities, followed by the emergence of academic networks. The Internet has grown explosively, now reaching over a billion people, given a very generous definition of “reach” and changing the way we live and think (Neuman, 2010:142). Graham and Dutton (2014) note that with 2.5 billion Internet users

worldwide and over 6 billion subscribers of wireless devices, humanity is almost fully connected.

The first researchers who worked on the concept that later became known as the Internet were: J.C.R Licklider, his visionary ideas about a 'library of the future' and a 'galactic network' of computers led to his appointment as first head of the Information Processing Techniques Office (IPTO) of the Defence Department Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA, later known as DARPA) (White, 2014:126). Licklider certainly envisioned a future of networked computerised communication systems that exceeded the limited, military-inflected scope of ARPA's mission (White, 2014:126). In 1960, Licklider had written a paper entitled 'Man-Machine Symbiosis' in which he speculated on how computers could be used to enhance human knowledge through the use of networks of information (White, 2014: 126). After that Licklider later passed his ideas to Ivan Sutherland, Robert Taylor and others. Meanwhile around the same time in 1960, Paul Baran at the Rand Corporation envisioned packet switching in decentralised communication networks to avoid network "decapitation." Baran's idea was to develop a structure that could allow information to find its way through the network. His idea was rediscovered by Davies et al to build a packet switched ARPANET linking all the ARPA laboratories across the country (Neuman, 2010:143).

The launch of the Soviet Union of Sputnik satellite in 1957 signalled to the USA that it needed to take a drastic action to avoid falling significantly behind in the race to develop the newest military technologies (White, 2014). The ARPANET's initial purpose was to permit ARPA (Advanced Research Projects Agency) as a means of giving the nation's leading scientific researchers the freedom to develop innovative ideas to counter this threat (White, 2014:126). Much of the ARPANET protocol development was carried out by the Network Working Group (NWG), made up mainly of graduate students (Wright, 2014). The Network Working Group was formed as a standard entity to govern the growing network. Robert Kahn and Vin Cerf initiated an internetworking project and became known as the fathers of the Internet. With many others, they developed and extended the ARPANET's Network Control Programme into the more powerful Transmission Control Protocol and Internet Protocol (Kellermen, 2014:16).

ARPA turned its attention in the early 1960s to the development of communication networks, as early as 1956 the Soviet Union had built a computer network to coordinate Moscow's air defences (Barbrook, 2007:150-152). The idea of the Internet was mainly to have direct communication across the Atlantic Ocean (Coetzer, 2009). Arpanet (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) was based on packet-switching technology which was successful for sending and receiving electronic mail (Ivala, 2000; Lesame et al., 2012:3).

The expansion of the Internet has been one of the most significant developments for media in the twenty-first century. The Internet has been fundamental to many new media and the concept of "Web 2.0" suggests a second generation of the World Wide Web (Gorman and McLean, 2009). The Internet is a data network interconnecting computers around the world (Noll, 2007:118). The initial purpose of Internet was to provide a method of rapid information exchange for research and defence purposes (White, 2014). The intention was to create a decentralised system of linked computers so that information could be rerouted if any part of the network was damaged or ceased to function (Gorman and McLean, 2009:237). The first network was named the Advanced Research Programme Agency Network (ARPANET) (Kellerman, 2014:14). ARPANET's main goal was building a command and control network that could survive a nuclear war (Neuman, 2010:151). In its early days the Internet was used by computer experts, engineers, scientist and librarians for interacting and collaborating via electronic mail (Lesame et al., 2012). The origins of the Internet lay in a national security project based on military and strategic concerns and therefore considered the first phase of Internet development (Lesame et al., 2012).

In the 1980s, the network moved into the second phase of development and further away from its original military strategic purpose. Internet emerged as a means of linking research and academic institutions with the spread of computers. In the United States the National Science Foundation took over the Department of Defence role, established five supercomputing centers around the country, linked them with its own high-speed network, NSFNET, and encouraged research institutions to form regional networks, producing the basic structure of the Internet with its multiple layers of networks (Gorman and McLean, 2009:237). The email was used for the first time for communication within and between university departments (Lesame et al., 2012).

In the mid-1970s, a communications technique called transmission control protocol (TCP) was developed which allowed many networks to understand one another and to exchange data over the Internet. This evolved into the transmission control protocol/Internet protocol (TCP/IP). All computers and networks have to use this communications protocol to connect to the Internet (Lesame et al., 2012). This new protocol made it possible for messages (Packets) to be exchanged (switched) across different computer networks (Schickinger, 1998:70). Glister (1994:18) states that the applications of TCP/IP are as follows:

- A file transfer protocol (FTP) which is used to transfer files or data from one computer to another;

- An e-mail protocol to send messages from one computer to the same computer or another computer or several other computers; and
- A remote login facility (Telnet) that is used to access or retrieve e-mail or files from a distant location, country or city.

Packets are electronic envelopes in which data are placed. TCP provides the transport protocol and ensures that the data that are sent are complete and error-free when they are received as the destination (Lesame, 2012). IP provides the routing mechanism (Whiteley, 2000).

The work of Tim Berners-Lee at the European Laboratory (CERN) led to the introduction in 1991-2 of the World Wide Web. Berners Lee developed Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), software (the World Wide Web) to view HTML documents, and the Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) a new protocol for distributing information via the Internet (Gorman and McLean, 2009). Berners-Lee the inventor of the Web (World Wide Web Consortium) and MIT Laboratory for Computer Science, these organisations work together to ensure the growth and expansion of the Internet (Dominick et al., 2000; Macnamara, 2010:239). According to Web inventor Tim-Berners-Lee (2014) calls for the internet to be recognised as a human right. Which means guaranteeing affordable access to all, ensuring internet packets are delivered without commercial or political discrimination and protecting the privacy and freedom of Web users regardless of where they live (Web Index, 2014).

According to Tim Berners-Lee Web, 1.0 is fairly well understood as the WWW of documents, images, and videos. Web 2.0 has become a term widely used to refer to the WWW as a portal or platform for a wide range of user-driven activities from the provision of user-created content up to self-publishing and the use of social network sites (SNS), such as facebook, Twitter and others (Graham and Dutton, 2014:361). Nevertheless, Kellerman (2014) notes that Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 are used interchangeably because of their interdependent nature. However, Graham and Dutton (2014) refer to Web 3.0 as Semantic Web, which is coined by Berners-Lee and others in 2001. According to Graham and Dutton (2014) Semantic Web signifies the era in which it is an attempt to have a successor to the WWW that knows what the objects it contains means, and so can reason about them and assist humans so as to provide much more useful services. Berners-Lee and other American researchers argued that if a web-like structure of knowledge or data could reason about itself in the right way, it could provide far more intelligent services (Graham and Dutton, 2014:362).

According to Graham and Dutton (2014) in 1993, the National Centre for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA) at the University in the US created a software called Mosaic. Mosaic was the first of the Internet tools now known as web browsers. The first commercial web browser was Netscape. Powerful corporations became involved in the commercial exploitation of the Internet. Microsoft as a good example, established by Bill Gates in the 1970s. Microsoft developed computer languages such as BASIC, FORTRAN, COBOL and Pascal and in 1980 entered into an agreement with IBM to supply software as well as developing the disk operating system (DOS) (Gorman and McLean, 2009). In the late 1990, Microsoft released its Internet Explorer, which competed with Netscape. Today, there are many browsers available to Internet users, including Mozilla Firefox, Google Scholar, Google Chrome, and Safari.

An intranet is a website designed for use by the employees of an organisation. An intranet can be used to replace physical documents such as staff manuals, internal telephone directories and notices (Lesame et al., 2012). The advantage is that it is readily available and can be easily updated. Extranet is used in business to business trading (electronic commerce) and require customers to have an account. The access is limited to account holders using a password system. From the 1970s technological change made possible, by socio-economic-political, and ideological context provided opportunities for the emergence of new media (Gorman and McLean, 2009). The potential threat to existing media emerged in the form of subscription television services (pay TV) delivered by cable or satellite. The great cable-television success story of the 1990s was Ted Turner's Cable News Network (CNN), founded in 1980 as an advertising supported, twenty-four-hour service devoted entirely to news. It offered live coverage of events as well as regular programming devoted to international news, business and sports news, health issues and entertainment news. CNN sprang into prominence as an influential global news provider during the Gulf War of 1991 (Gorman and McLean, 2009).

The mass media that developed between the late nineteenth century and the 1970s, the newspaper and magazine press, radio broadcasting, the film industry, television broadcasting are now often referred to as "traditional media" or "mainstream media" (Gorman and McLean, 2009:230). Van Dijk (2006:50) identifies the second communications revolution as;

- the introduction of the computer;
- the revolution in microelectronics;
- the dawn of the information society; and
- the advent of new media networks which support the flexibility, efficiency and productivity of the organisation.

Broadband has been described as the “fastest Internet ever” is one of the revolutions in communications which also has always been a key issue for government around the world as it has the potential to revolutionise business, improve economic development, increase productivity and can help establish an information society and attract foreign investment (Poon, 2005:1). Telecommunication networks connect cities, rural areas and many countries through telephone communications. Telecommunications networks is a broad term for a wide range of technologies including radio, telephone, television and data networks (Thornton et al., 2006). Gorman and McLean (2009) indicate transformative impacts of new media are seen as liberating and democratizing, empowering citizens, promoting tolerance, global understanding, and a global civil society. Waters (2007) furthermore indicate that information and communication technologies (ICTs) are a powerful tool to boost economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa. Lesame et al. (2012) support Waters by indicating that ICTs increase efficiency, provide access to new markets or services, create new opportunities and give poor people a voice. In addition to this Salmons (2015) observe changes in ICT tools and communication types by stating that the use of these tools and the ways people think about them are changing and further state that online collaboration, disintermediation, and online privacy are three elements that exist. According to Salmons (2015) collaborations exist and are evident across the World Wide Web where organisations, NGOs collaborate electronically to complete projects and solve complex problems. Graham and Dutton (2014) add that it is well-known in the history of technology that any revolutionary technology is met with fear by the population at large. Wright (2014) note that change is never easy, yet we live in a world that is changing every single day.

Based on the discussion mentioned above, it is clear that the development of new communication technologies and their increasing implementation, as well as the ways in which organisations are communicating with all their publics, have changed. It is evident that it is critical for public relations practitioners in non-governmental organisations to be aware of the benefits of the internet and how it has enhanced communication in organisations. It is clear that publics are being influenced by social media. Building a strong social media presence requires consistency. The following section will provide a snapshot of the types of social media and how they are being integrated into an essential strategy. There was, however, need to explore and provide insight into the types of social media. These platforms should not be seen as separate entities but rather as part of modern communications. The following section aims to give an outline the key milestones of social media.

2.3 KEY SOCIAL MEDIA MILESTONES

- 1969** CompuServe was the first major commercial Internet service provider for the public in the United States. Using a technology known then as *dial-up*, it dominated the field through the 1980s and remained a major player until the mid-1990s.
- 1971** The first email was delivered.
- 1978** Two Chicago computer hobbyists invented the bulletin board system (BBS) to inform friends of meetings, make announcements and share information through postings. It was the rudimentary beginning of a small virtual community. Trolling and flame wars began.
- 1994** Beverly Hills Internet (BHI) started Geocities, which allowed users to create their websites modelled after types of urban areas. GeoCities would cross the one million member mark by 1997. There were 38 million user Web pages on GeoCities before it was shut down for United States users in 2009. Yahoo, which opened as a major Internet search engine and index in 1994, owns GeoCities today and offers it only as a web hosting service for Japan. More than 1,500 Web servers were online in 1994 and people were referring to the Internet as the Information Superhighway. EarthLink started up as an online service provider.
- 2000** In the world of business and commerce, the dot.com bubble burst and the future online seemed bleak as the millennium turned. Seventy million computers were connected to the Internet.
- 2001** Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia and world's largest wiki, was started. Apple started selling iPods.
- 2002** Friendster, a social networking website, was opened to the public in the U.S. and grew to 3 million users in three months.
- 2003** MySpace is another social networking website, was launched as a clone of Friendster.
Apple introduced the online music service iTunes.
- 2004** facebook, another social networking website, was started for students at Harvard College. It was referred to at the time as a college version of Friendster. Podcasting began on the Internet. Flickr image hosting website opened. Digg was founded as a social news website where people shared stories found across the Internet.
- 2010** facebook's rapid growth moved it above 400 million users, while MySpace users declined to 57 million users, down from a peak of about 75 million. To compete with facebook and Twitter, Google launched Buzz, a social networking site integrated with the company's Gmail. It was reported that in the first week, millions of Gmail users created 9 million posts. Apple released the iPad tablet computer with advanced

multimedia and Internet capabilities. The Democratic National Committee advertised for a social networks manager to oversee President Barack Obama's accounts on facebook, Twitter and MySpace. It was estimated the population of Internet users was 1.97 billion. That was almost 30 percent of the global population.

2011 Social media were accessible from virtually anywhere and had become an integral part of our daily lives with more than 550 million people on facebook, 65 million tweets sent through Twitter each day, and 2 billion video views every day on YouTube. LinkedIn has 90 million professional users.

2012 Ever more people are connecting to the Internet for longer periods of time. Some 2 billion people around the world use the Internet and social media while 213 million Americans use the Internet via computers while 52 million use the Web via smartphone and 55 million use it via tablets. People also connect to the Internet via handheld music players, game consoles, Internet-enabled TVs, and e-readers.

Based on the abovementioned social media milestone information, it is very clear and evident that, the best and worst part about communication is that it evolves, develops and expands. The way we see the world today will be completely different to how we might see the world in another ten years to come. Communication methods, tactics, policies might change drastically in years to come. All the significant milestones mentioned above are of specific importance to guide us and see clearly that nothing remains the same forever. Social media is a reality.

The following section will briefly explain the theory behind the process of Web 1.0 and its evolution into Web 2.0 as part of the objectives, as well as the resulting influence on public relations.

2.4 THE MOVE FROM WEB 1.0 TO WEB 2.0

The shift that occurred like the web in the early years of the new millennium, the move from the idea of Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 and the rise of social media saw an explosion in online interactivity and user participation (Seargeant and Tagg, 2014:2). According to Gorman and McLean (2009:241), Tim Berners-Lee pioneered the first World Wide Web (Web 1.0) and had argued that it does not refer to an update in technical specifications but rather to changes in the ways the Web is used. Boler (2008:39) indicates that Web 1.0 is a remarkable transformation that occurred in the way people communicated, and it also had a momentous influence on business. Macnamara (2010:33) is the view that the Web was never intended to be about delivering content to passive audiences, but about shared creativity. Sergeant and Tagg (2014:2) elaborates that the web was no longer a place where you went predominantly

to consume content and information, but it became a place where you participated, a dynamic space that was shaped (both intentionally and inadvertently by your actions and contributions.

Flew (2008:7) however points out the four unique features of the World Wide Web which initiated its rise to popularity during the 1990's:

- The introduction of multimedia capabilities, video, music, graphics, data and text, could be integrated into webpages.
- It was based on hypertext principles. This allowed for widespread networks of information to be available across the Internet.
- Hypertext principles gave rise to the creation of web browsers which gave users easy access to wide databases of information. (the creation of web browsers such as Marc Andreessen and Eric Bina's Mosaic and Netscape's Netscape Navigator as the forerunners of modern web browsers such as Google and Yahoo!).
- The creation of Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) and Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) allowed reasonably simplified methods to write source code for the World Wide Web.

Macnamara (2010:33) indicates that Web 1.0 applications involved one-way push of information from producers to users with little or no opportunity for users to comment, give feedback, or contribute content. Cormode and Krishnamurthy (2008) support the statement above, by indicating that Web 1.0 resources allow users to view and consume information from the web but without necessarily sharing or interacting with the contents.

According to Anderson (2007) Web 2.0 however, refers to sites with user-generated content such as videos, music, blog text, and photos. Shapshak (2009); O'Reilly (2005) write that Web 2.0 has allowed users to interact with the web and with other users and has permitted the consumer to become actively the creator of the content. Seargeant and Tagg (2014) highlight that one of the results of the rise of social media sites such as facebook is that they have transformed the ways in which people can interact.

The term "Web 2.0" was made popular by Tim O'Reilly, Web 2.0 emanates from a conference organised by Tim O'Reilly and MediaLive International vice president and Web pioneer, Dale Dougherty in 2004 that discussed interactive Web applications (O'Reilly, 2005). Tim O'Reilly (2005) emphasised that Web 2.0 is a new way of thinking more than technologies, even though developments such as RRS (Really Simple Syndication) and search engines are

important enablers (Macnamara, 2010:35). Web 2.0 as it is used today, refers to the second generation of Internet-based services (information and applications) that are open for collaboration and high levels of interactivity without requiring computer programming skills (Macnamara, 2010:33). According to Tim O'Reilly Web, 2.0 is the business revolution in the computer industry caused by the move to the Internet as a platform, and an attempt to understand the rules for success on the new platform (Lesame et al., 2012:25). Mandiberg (2012); Flew (2008) furthermore described the concept of Web 2.0 as important to understanding new media after the dot-com bubble burst in 2001 it marked a turning point for the web. According to Sergeant and Tagg (2014:4) Web, 2.0 indicates a new stage in the ongoing development of the Web. Web 2.0 is an evolution of the Web (Bagui and Parker, 2009). Important to Web 2.0 are ideas of participation and interactivity, sharing of data, content, and platforms, encouragement of innovation through such sharing and networking with software to support these activities (Gorman and McLean, 2009:242). Web 2.0 applications include blogging, podcasting, forums, Wikis, various source initiatives as well as Interfaces/ APIs to facilitate user innovation of web application hybrids or "mashups" (Macnamara, 2010:34; Gorman and McLean, 2009).

In a much-quoted essay titled 'What is Web 2.0' O'Reilly says a central principle of Web 2.0 is harnessing "collective intelligence" (Mandiberg, 2012). Merholz (2005) state that Web 2.0 is about relinquishing control, it's about openness, trust and authenticity. The key characteristic of Web 2.0 applications is that they allow and actively encourage use contribution, interaction and full production and distribution of user-generated content (Gorman and McLean, 2009).

Macnamara (2010:34) and Lesame et al. (2012:6) identify some of the key underlying information and communication technologies (ICT) of Web 2.0 as:

- Open source software (Future Exploration Network, 2007) allow users to create a blog and write and post a blog;
- Public Web sites offering users pre-formatted online spaces, usually for free such as YouTube, MySpace, facebook, Bebo, LinkedIn;
- RSS (Really Simple Syndication) which is a method of distribution that works through aggregation software that can be programmed to find automatically and retrieve content a user wants; and
- Search engines such as Google, Yahoo.

In exploring the seven principles of core competencies of Web 2.0 Mandiberg (2012) summarises them as;

- Services, not packaged software, with cost-effective scalability;
- Control over unique, hard to re-create data sources that get richer as more people use them;
- Trusting users as co-developers;
- Harnessing collective intelligence;
- Leveraging the long tail through customer self-service;
- Software above the level of a single device; and
- Lightweight user interfaces, development models and business models.

Bagui and Parker (2009:2) summarises Web 2.0 as a phenomenon, a technological and human trend which is driven by technological evolution, with people embracing web technology.

From the above, it can be concluded that Seargeant and Tagg (2014) suggest that technology is fundamentally changing the way information is distributed, that information in Web 2.0 flows in a new faster way. On the other hand, Macnamara (2013) point out that Web was never about delivering content instead we are moving away from the landscape where accessing information is a process but enter the time when is networked. The discussion above is clear that the development and evolution of Web 2.0 have not only changed the way individuals and organisations use the internet but has significantly impacted the way organisation in which public relations practitioners engage individuals and represent their organisations. In essence, public relations need to be aware that what we conceive in the social media platforms is changing, as are our ways of experiencing it.

This section aimed to create an understanding of the term Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 and provided some explanations for the differences between the two applications and the roles they fulfil in communication. In the following section the major concepts of social media will be discussed, and after that the broader concept of social media will be explained.

2.5 DEFINITIONS OF MAJOR CONCEPTS

Certain concepts are used throughout this research thesis. Hence it is of paramount importance that these concepts be defined to ensure clarity and correct application thereof.

2.5.1 Social media

Graham and Dutton (2014:349) defines social media as possessing three characteristics: the affordance of user-generated content, the ability for individuals to directly engage with other individuals and content, and the ability to select and articulate network connections with other individuals. Wright (2014) explains the meaning of social media by referring to facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Blogger and Google Plus, You Tube, Instagram, Pinterest, and My Space. Seagant and Tagg (2014:4) indicate the essence of social media, as a focus on the facilitating of participation and interaction, with the result that the content of what is developed and shared on the internet is as much a product of participation as it is of traditional creative and publishing/broadcast processes. Seagant and Tagg (2014:4) furthermore state that the expectation, therefore, becomes that this content is less regulated, more fluid, and more diverse and that the dividing line between private and personal communication and publishing or broadcasting can be increasingly blurred.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Daugherty et al. (2008:1) on the other hand also define social media as user generated content created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and primarily distributed on the Internet. Graham and Dutton (2014) indicate that social media encompasses social-networking platforms, content aggregation sites, and various forms of interactive media. Mayfield (2008) furthermore define social media as a group of new kinds of online media which share most or all of the following characteristics; participation and engagement, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness. Wright (2014) indicates that social media allows the ability to watch and observe thought leaders who are present in the space and see what they are reading, sharing, discussing and see who they are interacting with. Wright (2014) further states that social media is a window into a world of information, unlike any other platform. Wright and Hinson (2010) confirm that it gives PR professionals the opportunity to connect, with other peers, in any region throughout the world. Reiman (2012: 80-81) states that the benefits of using social media for communications are to broaden it to reach new audiences, to deepen relationships with existing audiences, to wage campaigns and to respond quickly to events, as well as to raise funds in ways that were not possible before with traditional media channels.

Wright and Hinson (2010) define social media as web-based information created by people with the intention of facilitating communication. Shapshak (2009:4) indicate that social media is about individuals sharing content, insights and news. Solis (2007) share the same

sentiments and has described social media as online tools that people use to share opinions, ideas, insights, experiences, and perspectives. According to Stokes (2009), social media is media (from written to visual to audio to audiovisual) that are designed to be shared. Weber (2009) is the view that social media can be defined as online places where people with a common interest can gather to discuss issues. Based on the above discussion, there is a little difference between traditional media and social media. In traditional media, public relations connect and build relationships with editors to disseminate information. In social media, the public relations connect and build relationships with the diverse public to distribute information. Furthermore, the difference is communication from a sender to receiver, which includes one-to-one communication between two consumers, one-to-many, and many-to-many people (Al-Deen and Hendricks, 2012:163).

Wright and Hinson (2010) refer to social media as web based applications. Stokes (2009) refer to these forms as platforms, Mangold and Faulds (2009) referred to social media as the new hybrid element of the promotion mix while Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) refer to these forms as user-generated content. Seargeant and Tagg (2014:5) indicate Boyd and Allison (2007) provide a technically focused definition of social media as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, (3) view and transverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Kellerman, 2014:128).

Cromity (2012) indicate social media as media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques on the web such as feeds from blogs, status updates, wikis, discussion boards, and other forms of web technology. Wright (2014) writes that social media refers to online content or methods to create, share, or build on such content through social means. Hill et al. (2014) suggest that social media should serve as a two-way interaction between people, which may be classified as one-to-one, one to many, or many to many.

The figure 2.1, below illustrate that there are many other social media tools and platforms which perform various functions.

THE CONVERSATION PRISM

Brought to you by Brian Solis & JESSIE

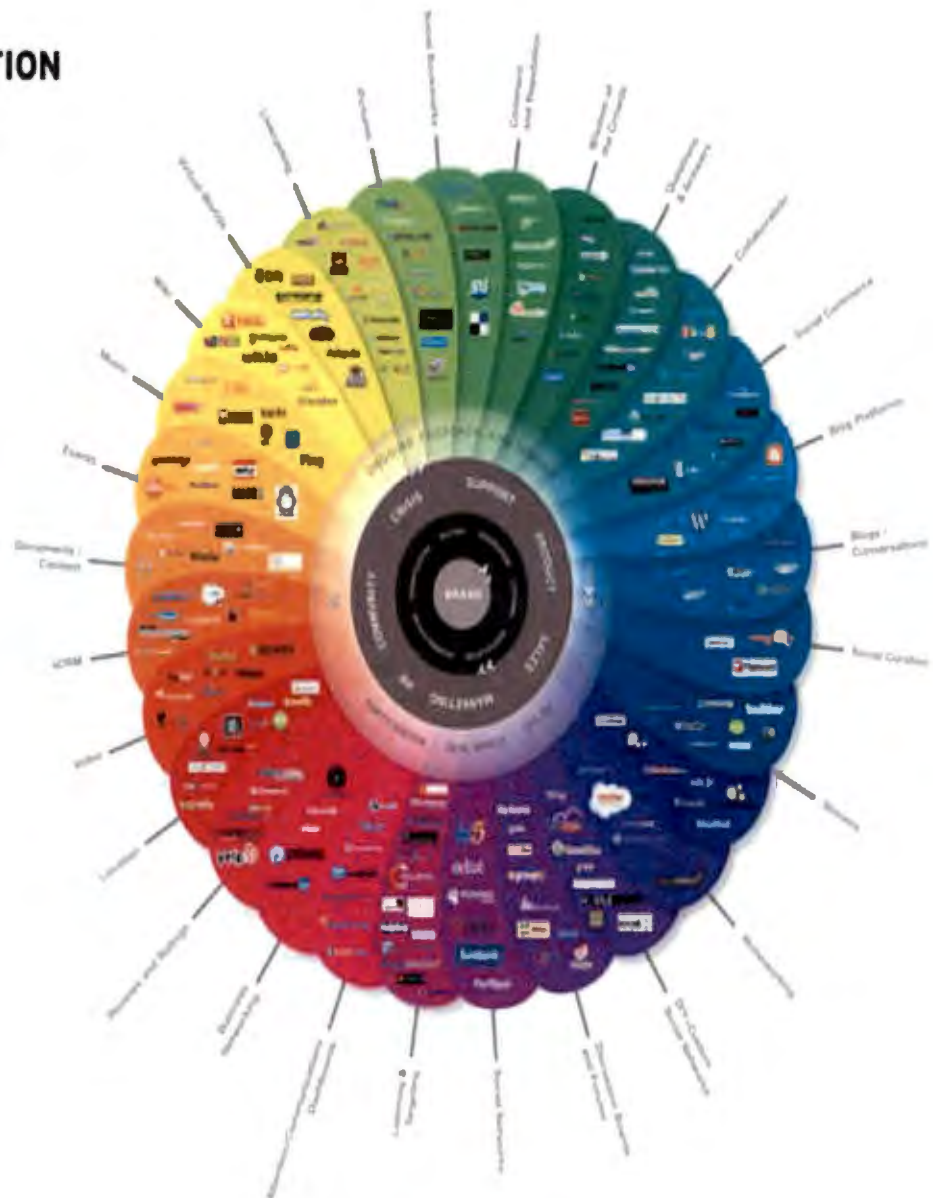


Figure 2.1: The Conversation Prism of social networking and other related platforms (Solis, 2010:20).

The above knowledge presented in this study provides the practitioners with the necessary background information on various social media platforms.

Breakenridge (2012) on the other hand state that social media encompasses all the online technologies that people collaborate on, including their opinions, and experiences as well as sharing different perspectives. Solis (2010) further defines social media and identifies six functions that social media must fulfil as:

- a platform for the socialization of media;
- the online tools that facilitate conversations;
- Connections between friends, peers and influencers;
- Collaborations and the redistribution of influence;
- Compassionate; and;
- Words, pictures, video, audio and also experiences, opinions news, and insights.

Taking all of the above into consideration, the similarities that can be extracted from these definitions are social media free, open, public, and afford the opportunity for everyone to access as well as contribute to information anytime anywhere. Such increased access to information and communication with anyone has contributed to the need for the development of managerial policy guideline for NGOs. Another interesting aspect of social media that Wright (2014) touches upon is it's back and forth communication, as social media is engaging with people, whether near or far, in ways that have never been done before, its pervasive and invasive.

Given the above, it is clear that the similarities are that social media is any website that allows people to connect and engage others, without editorial filters and it is content generated by online users. Solis (2007) has described social media as an online tool that people use to share opinion, ideas, insights, experiences and perspectives. Social media is used for personal use to connect with old and new friends, build on existing relationships, and gather information and community knowledge. Rettberg (2014) however, notes the difference between these social media terms is that it can be regarded as online many to many communication that facilitates the user generated content during social networking sites (Blogs) interactions between users. Wright (2014) indicate that social media is the great enabler of communication. Of major concern is the degree of lack of embracing social media communications in NGOs, lack of using social media to share content and improve organisation awareness, lack of increase traffic to their websites and engage with the public.

Drawing from the definitions provided by Shapshak (2009), Mayfield (2008) and Solis (2007) in a sense, social media in the study's context is defined as online applications where one socialise to facilitate information sharing, knowledge distribution and opinion exchanges with friends, and family. From the above discussion, it becomes clear that organisations do not only need to understand the intrinsic qualities of social media thoroughly but need to adapt their communication strategy as technological advancements have forever changed the ways in which organisations interact with their publics. This section aimed to create an

understanding of the term social media and provided some explanations and the role it fulfils in society. The following relates new media to the origin of the digital technology.

2.5.2 New media

Logan (2010:5) defines new media as digital media that are interactive, incorporate two-way communication and involve some form of computing as opposed to old media such as the telephone, radio, and television. Lesame et al. (2012:4) describe new media as an integration of communication and technology in industrial production and information dissemination fields.

Gorman and McLean (2009) identify that two strategic issues are relevant to the new media in the form of two waves. The first wave included video, new ways of delivering television (via cable, satellite, direct broadcasting by satellite) on a subscription basis (pay television), CD-ROMs, various forms of multimedia, advanced facsimile machines, electronic books and videotext networks. The second wave has been dominated by the extraordinary growth of the Internet and the World Wide Web, continuing digitisation, the development of wireless access, and ongoing technological developments. In line with the definition given by Logan (2010) and modern thinking involved about the process, the concept of 'new media' has also been replaced with the idea of newness. Flew (2002) believe that to understand better "new media" is to equate newness with what has been recently developed. For example, email, blogs, podcasting, wikis all embrace new media applications. Gorman and McLean (2009) furthermore indicate that new media acknowledges the importance of context, it captures the important fact that old and new content can be accessed in many ways. On the contrary, Bolter and Grusin (1999:270) write that what is new about new media is therefore also old and familiar, that they promise the new by remediating what has gone before.

Lesame et al. (2012) state that new media are digital in nature and are often employed by communicators or media institutions to communicate to audiences. Lesame et al. (2012), furthermore, state that through the process of new media, social media sites will offer organisations new opportunities to establish and cultivate relationships and engage. Lister et al. (2009:13) ask what sets new media apart, simply put, new media are ubiquitous and affect everyone. Logan (2010:5) makes a distinction between "old" and "new" media, by indicating that old media is part of mass media and new media is an exception of the Internet and the World Wide Web. On the other hand, Logan (2010:7) state that "new media" is digital, and are linked and cross-linked with each other, and the information is immediate and easily processed, stored, transformed, retrieved, hyper-linked, and most radical of all easily searched for and accessed. Lister et al. (2009:82) support the abovementioned statement by

indicating that new media offer a wealth of opportunities, as it enables the user to attain characteristics of connectivity, convergence, the network society, wired culture and interaction.

As is evident above, new media has become the key word in accessing information and sharing experience. Lesame et al. (2012:19) furthermore indicate that at the centre of all new media is digitisation, convergence, interactivity, hypertextual dispersal, and virtuality. The same author indicates that the internet is widely considered to be the best means of describing new media as well as to understand the characteristic displayed by social media. From the above, taking the similarities into considerations, the conclusion can be drawn that new media allows anyone it does not matter where you are located as you can have access to the internet. New media makes real distance and space irrelevant.

2.5.3 Social networking

Social networking is the term used to describe the act of engaging in two-way communication while social network brings together people with a common interest (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010:61). Kellerman (2014:128) confirms that the definition of social networking websites, as defined by Boyd and Ellison (2007:211) has been generally accepted as the leading accepted definition of social networks as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public role within a bounded system, as it promotes the notion list, other users, with whom they share connection and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others with the system. Graham and Button (2014) indicate that social networking sites on the internet, which have spread at an accelerated pace have become the social spaces where people meet, socialise, retrieve information, express themselves, work, shop, create, imagine, participate, fight, and shape their experiences. Lesame et al. (2012:11) agrees with the statement above by pointing out that social networks are the term used to describe the act of engaging in two-way communication. Weber (2009) mentions that social networks are applications where people with common interest or concern come together to meet, express themselves and communicate. Mayfield (2010) also write that social networking focuses on the human aspect and provides a forum for users to express themselves creatively.

Graham and Button (2014:211) support the statement mentioned above by indicating that social networks rely on human communication and the internet allow people to communicate. Brynstoneson et al., (2011:3) point out that social networks bring together people with common interests, help build relationships and communication is two-way between, for example, employees and managers. Kellerman (2014) add to this observation by stating that social

networking may be viewed as individual actions, coordinated with other peoples, individual action, and aided by the distributed mechanism that is provided through information technology over social media platforms.

Boyd and Ellison (2007) agree with the statements above by pointing out that the difference between traditional content and the social networks is that the content is socially constructed, and the exchange of information is purposeful interaction. Boyd and Ellison (2007), furthermore, point out that participants are not necessarily “networking” or looking to meet new people, but they are primarily communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network. Thus in short, the goal is not to be a passive consumer of information but to be attentive in the world where information is everywhere. Based on the abovementioned discussion concerning social media, it is clear that public relations practitioners need to be aware of information as it flows by and pick the most relevant and insightful. Boyd (2010) add that in social media people consume social information alongside productive content. Furthermore, Boyd (2010:30) based on the above suggest that people consume what stimulates their mind and senses in a way it is the content that stimulates reaction.

Seageant and Tagg (2014) is the view that online social networks operate in a context where some important factors have altered the nature of social reality and kinds of communities that people form, where distance is no longer an issue of importance as it was in the pre-internet age. Tsatsou (2014) indicates that social network can be defined as the patterns of relationship that people contract through interaction, be that socialising, communicating for work purposes or through shared interests or experiences. Seageant and Tagg (2014) argue that social networks such as the internet are providing new avenues for public opinion, time has similarly been changed with communication being instantaneous to almost any destination without difficulty or prohibitive expense. Kellerman (2014) state that social networking has been viewed as a leading component of the wider trend of online networking. Seageant and Tagg (2014) indicate that the key features of social networking sites (SNS) are how they facilitate different types of social organisation around shared interest, ambient affiliation, and or the extension of offline groups and how particular patterns of group interaction develop as a result.

Boyd and Ellison (2007) state that social network consists of the following three elements, namely constructing and presenting a member profile, establishing links with other members and viewing and searching the network link of members. Hill et al. (2014) support Boyd and Ellison’s statement by indicating that social networks have a strong capacity to enhance relationships and drive awareness on organisations activities, thereby enhancing interaction

and involvement. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) asserts that social networking sites are platforms that allow users to connect by creating personal profiles, inviting and have access to those profiles and conveying emails and instantaneous messages between each other.

From the abovementioned discussion, Boyd and Ellison (2007) suggest that technology is fundamentally changing the way information is distributed, and that information flows in new ways. Furthermore, the same author suggests that we are moving away from the landscape of information that is processed but argues that information is networked, and that based on this move information is improved. From the above, the most fundamental distinction between social media and social network taking the similarities into considerations, the conclusion can be drawn that social media and social networks are interchangeable as every encounter can affect the organisation image.

2.5.4 INTERNET

Barker (2004) indicates that the Internet is a system of computers that are linked to each other through a vast array of networks consisting of telephone cables, satellite communication, and other optical fibre lines. Fuchs (2008:121) also indicates that The Internet is the network of computer networks that works based on the TCP/IP protocol. Livingstone (2005:1) further defines the Internet as a decentralised, global communications network mediated by the conjunction of computers and telecommunications. Skinner et al. (2010) write that it is important to realise that The Internet should not be seen as separate entities but rather as part of the interconnecting mosaic of modern communications. Lesame et al. (2012:37) define the Internet as a network of networks, connecting thousands of smaller networks and millions of users around the world. Where control of information, communication and collaboration activities is decentralised and transferred to the user (Tsatsou, 2014:2).

Marethea (2014:5) expands the idea of the internet by highlighting that it can be accessed around the clock from remote locations, allowing users to obtain news and information anywhere they can acquire an access signal. Logan (2010) point out that The Internet, has a huge impact on communication. Athique (2013); Brogan (2010), also support the view that the Internet has the potential to change the nature and diversity of communication.

According to Botan and Hazelton (2009), there are four important changes in the characteristics of communication. The first important change is the move from few to many communication to many-to-many communication (Botan and Hazelton, 2009). Business, non-profit organisation to name a few are establishing their presence online because technology

exists to do so also because the public use the technology as a communication medium (Reiman, 2012). The Internet provides a wider variety of information because of the low cost of the technology empowers almost any individual with the ability to disseminate information. Marethea further indicates that vast amount of data can be transmitted globally at incomprehensible speeds from a theoretically infinite amount of available online space. As a result of this technology organisations and individuals are competing for attention in the online space. From the Expectancy Image Gap perspective, this often means that smaller organisations can create communication systems and campaigns that make them look like larger competitors creating larger expectations than they can meet (Botan and Hazelton, 2009). In this instance, NGOs can use social media to position themselves in the open market.

A second major change in the characteristics of communication is the shift from producer-driven communication to receiver-driven communication (Botan and Hazelton, 2009). Castells (2010) agrees with the statement mentioned above by stating that a core issue of change since the advent of computing is the shift of power. Graham and Dutton (2014) add that the internet empowers networked individuals. New communication channels include text messaging, email, intranet, facebook, Twitter, YouTube and more. Social media provide opportunities for users to engage in self-presentation of identity (Al-Deen and Hendricks, 2012:4). Everyone can create and share information using social media as a vehicle to distribute information.

According to Botan and Hazelton (2009), a third major change is that communication is becoming more access driven. Botan and Hazelton (2009) further state that it is driven by the audiences accessing the Web to get information. Graham and Dutton (2014) point out that human communication is important as the web has become the tool of choice. Lastly, Botan and Hazelton (2009) highlight the characteristic of communication change as the emergence of online communication which means the organisation has able to break down segments. The ultimate goal of communication is targeted messages to reach the right audiences.

In spite of the above, Botan and Hazelton (2009) note that the Internet is here to stay, it will affect many aspects of society and business, more especially the characteristics of communication have changed significantly. Organisations may be forced to offer access to services or incorporate technology into their communications. It is also the best place to present the organisations online business persona, achievements, and expertise to the internal and external public (Solis and Breakenridge, 2009:166).

The following discussion investigates at the information society and what it entails.

2.5.5 INFORMATION SOCIETY

Van Dijk (2006); Lesame et al. (2012) describes information society as a society in which information has become the dominant source of productivity, wealth, employment and power. Kellerman (2014) notes that information society has placed a special emphasis on the production, processing, transmission and consumption of information. Castells (2002) indicate that the impact of information technologies upon human societies is great that now we think of economic relations, nation-states and communities themselves taking the forms of networks. Graham and Dutton (2014) indicate that the concept of post-industrial is called information society. Graham and Dutton (2014) furthermore state that Castells concept focused on network society. Athique (2013) writes that information society is the successor to the industrial society where information in the form of ideas, concepts, and innovation has replaced hard labour. According to Graham and Dutton (2014:2), broad theoretical perspectives on the societal implications of the information age were provided by the Bell's (1974) concept of a post-industrial "information society". Williams (1982) stated the concept of the "communication revolution" while Castells' (1996) focused on the "network society". Graham and Dutton (2014:2) further state that social media is a great tool for the organisation the core issue of technical change since the advent of computing is on the shifts of power and if it empower or disempower networked individuals.

The term information society has shifted from the production of goods to the production, processing and distribution of information. Lesame et al. (2012) mention that information is treated as a commodity that can be traded for a fee. Woodhill (2011) believes that knowledge has become the most important raw material of our time. Pillkahn (2008) elaborates further that knowledge about technologies, knowledge about markets and consumer, knowledge about the complex relationships are among the many variables in our environments and knowledge about relevant future trends.

According to Woodhill (2011), the following seven characteristics of information society can be added in this regard:

- **Knowledge displaces skills** – fundamental importance of guiding process over physical actions;
- **Mechanical archives** – complete automation of information processes;
- **Social life as data** – unprecedented collection and collation of information on human activity;

- **Purposeful knowledge** – value is extracted from the application of information rather than its meaning or essence;
- **Continuous innovation** – configuration of data in new forms becomes the basis of knowledge production;
- **Competitive velocity** – the accelerated speed and efficiency of information techniques constitute an advantage in all fields of activity; and
- **Exponential change** – the primary goal of the information revolution is the total transformation of human affairs.

From the above it is evident that public relations practitioners are living in an information society where it is imperative to make use of information from the media. Social media is, therefore, critical means that an organisation can use to listen to publics, stakeholders, donors, volunteers among others. The section below outlines the purpose and discusses some important issues regarding social media.

2.6 THE PURPOSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Graham and Dutton (2014:138) state that one of the biggest impacts of social media has been in the area of breaking news, where an amateur with a camera routinely closer to the story than professional journals. Graham and Dutton (2014:138) further state that social networks like Twitter and YouTube have exposed news stories that otherwise might have stayed hidden. Social media has become an essential tool for public relations Reiman (2014). Wright (2014) add to this by stating that social media is the great enabler of communication, as this will ensure that social media allow the practitioner the ability to watch and observe who are present in the space and see what they are reading, sharing discussing and see who they are interacting with.

According to Universal McCann (2008), social media often refer to online applications, platforms or media that aim to facilitate interaction, collaboration and content sharing. Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) indicate that social media enable organisations to connect with the public online and establish relationships, this not only allows the individuals to receive information but also empowers them to take part in the creation and distribution of content. Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) furthermore mention that the most profound characteristic of social media is their dynamic and flexible, participatory nature. More importantly, social media encourages the building of communities, allowing groups of people with common interest to interact with one another, and enables communication to form quickly and effectively (Safko

and Brake, 2009; Immediate Future, 2008; Mandiberg, 2012). Immediate Future (2008) also mentions that most social media thrive on their connectedness, which usually links to other social media, websites, resources and people. Mandiberg (2012) points out that networked technologies allow us to extend our reach, to connect across space and time to find people with shared interest and gather socially. In this light, the purpose of social media is to enable people to engage, communicate, have dialogue and interact through an open system. Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) agree and share the same sentiment by indicating that Internet tools such as blogs, YouTube, Flickr, and facebook allow the average person to create content that can be shared with a worldwide audience. Also, Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) further mention that to personal interaction and entertainment value, social media have become a powerful tool in the arsenal of public relations professionals. Social media have changed the way society communicate, learns, and conducts business. In essence, the purpose of social media is to enable people to engage in discussions based on interaction through an open system.

2.7 TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Google

Skinner et al. (2010) indicate that Google is currently the most important tool that public relations have to find and aggregate information, monitor information exchange and to communicate electronically through its services like Gmail, chat, and video chat. There are more than 7 billion people in the world, and more than 2.4 billion of them used the internet worldwide (Wright, 2014). According to Wilcox et al. (2015), there will be 3 billion Internet users worldwide by 2016, more than 40 percent of the world population. Wilcox et al. (2015:359) propose that statistics and projections are worth noting as a reference point. They state that two million searches are done on Google every minute, about 2.8 million e-mails are sent every second, and an average office worker spends about 13 hours a week using e-mail, Wikipedia, if made into a book would be 2.25 million pages,

Skinner et al. (2010) further indicate that Google offers an array of services spanning information retrieval, database, distributed systems, human-computer interaction, artificial intelligence and data mining. Some of the characteristics of Google Web as mentioned by Wilcox et al. (2015:359) that enable public relations people to do a better job of distributing a variety of messages are:

- Information can be updated quickly without having to reprint brochures and other materials. This is an important element when it comes to major news events and dealing with a crisis.
- The Web allows interactivity; viewers can ask questions about products or services, download information of value to them, and let the organisation know what they think.

- Online readers can dig deeper into subjects that interest them by linking to information provided on other sites, in other articles, and other sources.
- A great amount of material can be posted. There is no space or time limitation.
- It is a cost-effective way to disseminate information on a global basis to the public.
- You can reach niche markets and audiences directly without messages being filtered through traditional mass media gatekeepers such as editors.
- The media and other users can access details about an organisation 24 hours a day from anywhere in the world.

The abovementioned characteristic of Google meant that the Web has become a major source of information. The days of just posting press relation on websites are gone. Today public relations have an extensive website to promote their services by providing photos, annual reports, and multimedia presentations. Scott (2008) supports the above statement by indicating that one of the coolest things about the Web is that when an idea takes off it can propel a brand or a company to instant fame and fortune. More particularly businesses are now turning to social networks to keep up with clients, customers and their employees (Wright, 2014).

Based on the abovementioned information of Web characteristics it is clear that public relations should use the website as a distribution system as the public can access the information anywhere. If a public relations practitioners want to influence their publics positively to do business with the respect NGOs, they need to build a strong social media presence which requires consistency and building relationships that earn trust, transparency, openness, with the different stakeholders.

2.7.2 Blogs

Wilcox et al. (2015:365) is of the view that Blogs have become mainstream media and that they used to be called weblogs because they were websites maintained by an individual who wanted to post their commentary and opinions on various topics. Rettberg (2014:5) explains the meaning of Blog by referring it to a cumulative process, where most posts presuppose some knowledge of the history of the blog, and how they fit into a larger story. Rettberg (2014) further indicates that there's a very different sense of rhythm and continuity when you follow a blog, or a group of blogs over time compared to simply reading a single post that you've found through a search engine or by following a link from another website. Weber (2009) defines a blog as an online journal that can be personal or corporate, where people can post ideas, images and links to others websites. Hill et al. (2014:8) indicate that blogs are periodically

updated sites managed by an individual or group to provide information or opinion on a range of topics. However, Anklam (2009) describes blogs as a learning activity that has a solid social media foundation, which means that a blogger can connect with diverse people. Mutum et al. (2010) indicates that blogs are interactive, and claims that they allow visitors to leave comments and even message each other via widgets on the blogs and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites. Flew (2008) writes that the term blog refers to both the online artefact created and to the act of maintaining such online resources, or blogging. Hill et al. (2014) point out that blogs are interconnected, and writers may read and link to other blogs, providing links to others in their entries. Mazur (2010) sums it up by pointing that blogs are referred to as the blogosphere, interconnected blogs are social media in their own right, with social communities and cultures of their own. The statements above are confirmed by the information in Technorati defining that 'Blog' is the idea of individuals freely being able to publish online (Rettberg, 2014). Twitter was founded in 2006, facebook launched in 2004, in 2008 the term 'social media' was adopted and rapidly entered the mainstream as a broad category that describes online many to many communication (Rettberg, 2014:13). Rettberg (2014:13) goes even further to state that blogs still form the backbone of social media, as far more people are on facebook or another social media platform than there are bloggers. Rettberg (2014) emphasises that much of what we do in social media is at root a form of blogging. Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) support the statement above, by indicating that one of the most important features of a blog is the reader's ability to interact with the author through comments. On the contrary, Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012:279) state that because blogs sites are open for comments from anyone, concern is that it is rumor-mongering rather than solid reporting.

This section aimed to create an understanding of the term 'Blog' and provided some explanations and the role it fulfils in society.

2.7.3 Facebook

In the past, organisational communication has flowed mainly through face to face interaction, newsletters, brochures, memos, telephone, and television but in recent year technology has changed communication channels (Reiman, 2012; Graham and Dutton, 2014). Web 2.0 technology gave rise to many social networking sites such as Google, facebook, Twitter, Blog, YouTube, and Instagram to enhance their social media engagement (Wright, 2014). These new social media has also penetrated the organisations and provided the public relations practitioners with possible new ways in which to communicate with the different external publics such as stakeholders, volunteers, and donors.

Skinner et al. (2010) describe facebook as a popular social networking website that allows users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues. Wright (2014) confirm by stating that as of December 2012 facebook was the largest social networking site in the world with more than a billion people monthly active users. In website analytic firm a study by Alexa (2012) found that facebook was the most popular site in the world and on average, users typically visit facebook for 25 minutes with 48 seconds spent of each page view (Wright, 2014). Wilcox et al. (2015) add by stating that facebook launched in 2004, now has more than 1 billion users worldwide or one out of every seven people on the planet. There are 10. 5 million photos uploaded to facebook every hour (Wilcox et al. 2015).

Hill et al. (2014) on the other hand indicate that facebook is a website launched in 2004 and social networking service with almost 1 billion active users as of 2012, making it one of the most popular sites on the Internet. Lesame et al. (2012) agree with this notion that facebook is a social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, families and co-workers by facilitating sharing of information. However, Reuben (2009:3) describes facebook in a comparable way and divides facebook into six primary components: Status updates, networks, personal profiles, groups, applications and fan pages. Seageant and Tagg (2014:2) furthermore indicates that one of the results of the rise of sites such as facebook is that they have transformed the ways in which people can interact. Pauley and Emmers-Sommer (2007) point out that maintenance of relationships online has become common. Hill, Dean and Murphy (2014) further indicate that facebook users and their friends comprise virtual communities linked by shared interest or opinions. Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) supports the abovementioned statements by indicating that facebook offers a virtual reality where users can display, identify and find other like themselves. Nemmi (2006) is of the view that while online social networks differ from face-to-face social networks in important ways, they nonetheless function as a viable channel for interaction.

According to Zuckerberg (2012), facebook was created to make the world more open and connected, and to bring people closer together. facebook was launched at the start of 2004 for a closed community of students (Wright, 2014). facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg and his college roommates Eduardo Savoring, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes Brynsteson (DeBoer-Moran and Rinkoff, 2011:3). Initially, the site was only available to Harvard students but was soon expanded to other Ivy League institutions (Williams and Gulati 2007:50). Later it expanded to include students from other universities in the USA before being opened to high school students. Mark Zuckerberg summarises the power of social media is

saying “By giving people the power to share we are making the world more transparent (Baumann, 2011; Brynstoneson et al., 2011:3). Arthur and Kiss (2010) note that facebook is currently considered the largest online social network. Wilcox et al. (however note that it is referred to as the King of social networks. From a South African perspective, according to Goldstuck (2015) by March 2015, facebook had 1.44 billion monthly active users, of whom 120 million were in Africa, and that figure had grown by 20% in six months.

From the above it is clear that in the context of this study, facebook will be viewed based on how it can be used to improve two-way communication within public relations practitioners in NGOs, which in turn should lead to increase levels of employee and public engagement. Since NGOs are relationship-driven organisations, facebook offers new dialogues and interact ways of harnessing communication. facebook should, therefore, be an appropriate internal and external communication channel to engage the public in NGO.

2.7.4 Wikis

Wilcox et al. (2015) writes that Wikis are a collection of web pages that enable anyone who accesses them to provide input and even modify their content. Lesame et al. (2012) support the above definition by writing that Wikis are a self-organising website, in which anybody is allowed to edit the website simply by clicking on the button labelled “Edit”. Kolbitsh and Maurer (2006:191) agree with the above definition by Lesame by indicating that Wikis are self-organising in which the existing pages can be edited by anyone in which anyone can add new documents at any time. Lesame et al. (2012:28); Lamb (2004) note that the word ‘Wiki’ means ‘quick’ in the Hawaiian language, and therefore explains that Wikis are primarily driven by the process of reading and editing quickly. Cunningham (2003) in Wilcox et al. (2015) furthermore state the essence of a Wiki as:

- They invite all users to edit any page within the website using a basic Web browser
- They involve visitors in an ongoing process of creation and collaboration.

All of the above information suggest that successful public relations practitioners should be aware of the changed communication landscape and adapt to new tactics of listening and allow dialogue with the public. Given the above, there are much more social network platforms than the more popular ones that are described in this study. The following section aims to give a detailed information of the characteristics of social media.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

2.8.1 Interactivity

Van Dijk (2006) define interactivity as multidimensional concept about interpersonal communication and the facility whereby the individuals can communicate directly with each other regardless of the time and space. Flew (2002:21) refers to the interactive nature of new communication technologies as the key advantage of new media. On the other hand, Lister et al. (2003) indicate that interaction stands for the new powerful sense of user engagement with the media text, a more independent relation to sources of knowledge, individualised media use and greater media user choice. Flew (2002) further state that Interactive media are those that give users a degree of choice in the information system, both regarding choice of access to information sources and control over the outcome of using that system and making that choice. Jin and Villegas (2007) point out that interactivity provides multiple options, such as various controls and choices there are feedback and two-way communication. Shrimp (2003) is the view that interactivity allows users to select the information they perceive as relevant to build relationships in a two-way communication. According to Lesame et al. (2012), social media is the prime example of the interactive nature of new media, and they rely heavily on networks. Lesame et al. (2012) state that networks are an important aspect associated with the relationships between organisations and the publics. Wilcox et al. (2015) indicate that a unique characteristic of the Internet and the World Wide Web, which traditional mass media do not offer, is interactivity between the sender and the receiver. Wilcox et al. (2015) further point out one aspect of interactivity is the “pull” concept as the user actively searches for sites that can answer specific questions. Through “pull” the user actively pulls information from the various links that are provided. In contrast, the concept of “push” is associated with traditional mass media such as radio, TV and newspapers, as are news releases that are automatically sent to the media. However, a well-designed and consistently managed website encourage questions and feedback by giving an email address that the user can click on to send a message.

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that interactivity is commonly seen as the unique fundamental characteristic of social media. For interactivity to be made possible, public relations practitioners should engage, interact online, and have a relationship with the public. Public relations practitioners need to be aware that providing an email address or another way of contacting the organisation is a good strategy but tends to damage an organisation’s reputation and credibility if the practitioner does not respond to the public promptly.

2.8.2 Digitality

Sullivan (2013:216) define digital media as those media that translate the content of media be it images or sound into digital code. Flew (2002), cited in Lesame et al. (2012:10), indicates that digital media content combines and integrates data, text, sound, and images. This form of data is, distributed increasingly through networks using broadband, fiber-optic cables, satellites and microwave transmission systems. Castells (2002) argue that it is important for people to understand and formulate strategies to have more control over technology because digital technology can increase the capacity of networks, the reader is given the opportunity to become more of a producer.

Athique (2013:17) is the view that digital is used to capture two essential aspects, knowledge and meaning are 'information listed' via binary code. Digital technology is associated with the emergence of the new online economy in contrast to the old off-line economy (Choi, 2005). Analog and digital are used to differentiate between quality and capability in technical circles (Lister et al., 2009). According to Lesame et al. (2012) digital divide not only refers to the gap that exists between the wealthy and underprivileged but also to the digital and ICT gap that exist between developed and developing the world. Words such as knowledge economy, information economy, and global information highway are ideological and used to describe information in modern societies (Garnham, 2000). Lister et al. (2009) state that internationalisation of the world economy would not have happened without the high-speed digital communication.

2.8.3 Virtuality

Lister et al. (2009:35) associate virtuality with virtual worlds, spaces, objects, environments, realities, selves and identities abound in discourses about new media. They further cited virtuality as a feature of post-modern cultures and technology advanced societies in which many aspects of everyday life are technologically simulated (Lister et al., 2009:36). Cyberspace is the online world, the Internet world where communities meet (Lesame et al., 2012). Shield (2003:46) is of the view that in the digital era the meaning of 'virtual' has changed, and it is synonymous with 'simulated'. Lister et al. (2009:35) write that virtuality is associated with discussions on the internet, immersion, third generation technology, transformation and convergence of older media as in digital, video and computer animation.

2.8.4 Convergence

Lesame et al. (2012) define convergence as the merging of different technologies and consequently the convergence of services. Lesame et al. (2012) furthermore indicate that convergence is one of the new words of the new media explosion while multimedia is a product of convergence. Lister et al. (2009) point out that convergence has two other meanings in the context, first is the merger of media corporations in an attempt to provide a horizontal integration of different media products across a range of platforms. Secondly, convergence is occurring in the minds of the audience mentioning that it is “we who converge” moving freely across a range of media platforms making connections and making meaning of a fragmented media landscape. As a result of a converged platform, the change has provided a unique situation where the role of the practitioner as a procedure and public has also merged. Castells (2010) has argued that networks have become the dominant organisation principle in society. It is not the rise of new technologies that has produced this change, but rather their convergence with historical evolution from economic globalisation and new social movements (Graham and Dutton, 2014).

2.8.5 Dispersal

Lister et al. (2005) indicate that the dispersal quality of new media refers to new media have segmented audiences. New media messages are produced and distributed differently than those of old media. Media audiences select which media to use and consume depending on what is offered by each medium (Lesame et al., 2012).

2.8.6 Hypertextuality

Lister et al. (2009:26) define hypertext as a work that is made up of discrete units of material, each of which carries some pathways to other units. However, Whiteley (2000) states that hypertext provides a way of linking textual information created by a different scientist on different computers. Lister et al. (2009:25) make a connection between the navigational, explorative and configurative aspects of interactivity and hypertextual. Flew (2002) point out that hypertextuality is the language of the Internet. It has changed the role of the reader as it provides new potential for research and content production (Lesame et al., 2012:12).

2.9 ADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

According to Wilcox et al. (2015), the advantages of social media can be outlined as follows:

- **Widespread broadband** – the worldwide adoption of the internet has taken less time than the growth of any other mass medium. The established ones keep expanding, and new networks such as Pinterest and Instagram have become overnight sensations. Websites have become more interactive, giving public relations professionals' valuable feedback from consumers and the general public. The Web has become a major source of information for public relations. Social media platforms, such as facebook, wikis and blogs, are used by executives due to their ability to deliver immediate value for their organisations. Graham and Dutton (2014) agree by stating that social media is complementing rather than replacing traditional media. Wright (2014) also comments on the importance of the advantages of social media, stating that it allows people to engage with one another, whether near or far, through conversation on websites, mobile apps, links to articles and videos, graphics, charts, research, music, games, films and other content housed online.
- **Cheap/free, easy-to-use online publishing tools** – If done well, the visitors return to a particular website, firstly because is high-quality content. Secondly, it is easy to use, quick downloads, and frequent updates. Ultimately this can lead to a culture of sharing knowledge and expertise. In contrast to traditional media, social media platforms are used as an easy and flexible way to integrate social media into the business strategy. It is important to for a website to be attractive and well-designed. To attract first-time users for the first impression. One of the main benefits of social media is that social networking sites for communications can help reach a new audience and build to deepen relationships with existing audiences, to wage campaigns and to respond quickly to event as well as to raise funds (Reiman, 2012) as noted in definitions of major concepts regarding social media in Section 2.2.1 of this chapter.
- **New distribution channels** – from a public relations perspective, a website is a distribution system in cyberspace. Organisations, for example, use their websites to market products and services and post news releases, corporate backgrounders, product information, position papers and even photos of key executives or plant locations. Graham and Dutton (2014) supports the statements above by pointing out that social media has contributed to a speed-up of the news cycle.

- **Mobile devices such as camera phones** – A new breed of apps such as WhatsApp is gaining popularity as new messaging systems but SMS, like email is still an effective public relations strategy. Non-profits have effectively used text messaging for providing information and fund-raising. It is very important that the public relations understand and be aware that the ultimate aim of social networks and other social media platforms are only beneficial if there is a suitable active user. Wright (2014) adds by stating that social media engagement has made the world smaller by bringing the collective knowledge of policy makers, influencers into one space in the palm of hand.
- **New paradigms** – In the past, organisations have been able to control the information flow. Today, public relations firms for example often have extensive websites to promote their services by profiling their expertise and providing case studies of campaigns for clients. If social media is used correctly, opportunities are created to market products and services, as real-time reporting can be directly linked to online campaigns. Other approaches might be page links where potential customers can learn about the organisation. One of the benefits of social media according to the founder of facebook, Mark Zuckerberg is that by giving people the power to share we are making the world more transparent (Brynsteson et al., 2011:3) as noted in the introductory comments regarding social media in Section 2.1 in this chapter.

Based on the above discussion of advantages of social media, it is logic and proper that the disadvantages of social media is discussed and outlined in the following section:

2.10 DISADVANTAGES OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Van Zyl (2009); Graham and Dutton (2014) furthermore points out that the disadvantages of social media is as follows:

- **Threatened by new technology** – a management's inability to grasp their potential financial returns, unresponsive corporate cultures and less than enthusiastic leadership. Organisations are threatened by new technology because they lose expertise and power lie in the expertise. If this knowledge is shared on social media, the company loses power. Graham and Dutton (2014) write the way in which social media is affecting news relates to its role in distribution and discovery where it is beginning to rival research regarding importance to news organisations. Graham and Dutton (2014) elaborate that users come across a news story through a social network like facebook while young people are almost twice as likely to discover a news story

through social media rather than search marks and he refers to this as a generational change.

- **Loss of control** – The concerns relates to the management of information in organisations. Hierarchical organisations management is used to control tightly the flow of information to its stakeholders. In contrast, social networks allowing employees to obtain information from many sources, not necessarily within hierarchical structures. The use of social networks allows employees to add or edit content, thereby bypassing the traditional hierarchical structure. Van Zyl (2009) indicates that the produced knowledge from employees may not be as reliable as that from experts and it may lead to misinformation. Graham and Dutton (2014) state that one critic of social media has argued that the “Cult of the Amateur” is undermining the quality of information and threatening traditional journalism. Wright (2014) note that the thing about social media is its real time and companies cannot control the message. Wright (2014) further state that people either embrace it or shy away from it especially in a crisis situation you cannot control what’s being said but you have to be present to do so. It is for this reason that Reiman (2012) advises that organisations focus their efforts on preparing for the unexpected, and establish a proper chain of command for crisis communication.
- **Confidential information** - Another risk noted by many organisations relates to confidential information. Van Zyl (2009:914) state that unguarded comments or links created by an employee in a social network can lead to a loss of confidential information. It has the potential to leave the company with financial damages, legal liability, and embarrassment. Wright (2014:83) also note that the benefits of social media use far outweigh the risks, which include not only damage to reputations but the risk of data breaches, intellectual property loss, privacy violations, noncompliance with record management regulations and the introduction of viruses, spyware, and malware into the enterprise.
- **Inconsistent message** – Van Zyl (2009) acknowledges and accepts that the risk of dissatisfied customers criticising and complaining about a company is a reality. It creates a negative public image. Thus it is out of control of the organisation. The reality, however, is that inconsistent message can lead to a situation where it becomes difficult for individuals to keep their personal and professional networking separated. Reiman (2012) point out that one of the most important factors to consider when executing a social media strategy is who the organisation chooses to manage their social media

platforms. Choosing the right people is a critical layer of risk management, as it is important to select someone with good writing skills, good analytical ability, a strong level of internet awareness and good judgement Reiman (2012).

- **Time-consuming** - It is speculated that time social media will have a negative impact on employee productivity. This concern manifests itself in the fear that employees will spend too much time with social networking activities and not with their work.

Based on the abovementioned advantages and disadvantages of social media, it is evident that organisations including NGOs should take a global look at their communications system and thoroughly address the notion that engaging in a social media strategy requires a significant commitment of resources such as those related to time, labour and risk. Tretenham (2011) supports the statement above and state that one of the disadvantages of social media sites such as facebook and Twitter is that organisations have much less control over the platform itself. This lack of control leads to a general sense of reluctance from organisations to participate in the social networks. However, Wright (2014) suggest that benefits of social media must be weighed in and taken into consideration before the organisation decides not to use these platforms. Tretenham (2011) further note that blogs, social networks is a shift in communication which enable real-time transmission of feedback. Wright (2014) agrees with the statements above that the correct implementation, knowledge and understanding of all aspects of social media will lead to a well-managed organisation that engages actively on social media to fulfil their worthy ambition. In light of the above, it is evident that social media tools were capable of facilitating the dialogue and transfer of knowledge. However, there are challenges that needed to be overcome. Public relations is in an excellent position to benefit from all advantages that social media can offer. Social media enables us to change the nature of events in the future.

Previous research such as Wright and Hinson studies on social media for public relations have examined aspects including the link between digital media. A study of previous research are as follows; social media to create dialogue (Matthee, 2011); online public relations (Hallahan, 2013); digital public relations (Yaxley, 2012); interactive online communication from a South African perspective (Naudé, 2001), social and emerging media (Wright and Hinson, 2013); interactive online communication (Kelleher, 2009), use of social media in stakeholder relations (Kilonda, 2013), application of social media in the South African public relations industry (Erasmus, 2012), social media as a communication tool (Seje, 2014), website public relations (Sommerfeldt, Kent and Taylor, 2012); social media in enhancing investor relations in South Africa (Lujiza, 2011), investigating social media usage patterns in the stakeholder (Lazier,

2010), expectations on the use of facebook (Reyneke, 2013). However, some scholars claim that new technologies are leading to the death of public relations (Botan and Hazelton, 2009, Kanet and Fine, 2010). On the contrary, the internet is helping to enhance the effectiveness of the public relations profession. This implies that these new technologies can be used in public relations to raise the profile of an organisation thus increasing awareness and ultimately create a favourable image for the organisation.

In spite of the above, it is evident that social media offers a unique opportunity for organisations. By embracing web 2.0 technologies to connect with the public's NGOs, public relations are making an intelligent decision to use social networking sites. Social media tools are the key for the organisation to know that its voice can be heard above the noises that invade communication modern life. The critical thing to remember is to join the conversation in an equal way, not as a leader or a spectator but as a collaborative participant.

The following section will consider some of the main criticism of social media. Some of the criticism of social media is made by the researchers who fear that the quality of the public and academic discussion is undermined.

2.11 CRITICISM OF SOCIAL MEDIA

According to Keen (2007) and Carr (2010), social media critiques and the ubiquitous use of Internet are potentially damaging to our thinking, our culture, and our society in general. The statement above is confirmed by Lister et al. (2009) in paragraph (2.3.1) stating that new media are ubiquitous and affect everyone. Keen (2007) and Carr (2010), furthermore points out that the critiques can be outlined as follows:

- **The growth of technology** – It is true that some people feel that the encroachment of technology into every aspect of their life has potentially damaging implications. Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) agree with this statement by highlighting that technological development is affecting other areas of society as well. Traxler (2007) supports the above authors that new forms of art, employment, language, commerce, deprivation and crime as well as learning are emerging from the transformed discourse and knowledge created by mobile, personal and wireless devices.
- **Privacy** – As social media is built on the culture of active personal and professional disclosure. There are concerns about how this is changing the interface between public and private space. Salmons (2015) refers to privacy in the research as steps taken to

safeguard interviewees' right to integrity. Wright (2014) also note privacy concerns as a serious issue on social media that need to be taken into consideration before an organisation decides to participate in online discussion. Graham and Dutton (2014) state that many people worry that big data, social media of everyday practices enable companies to tap into the personal information of internet users in ways that violate privacy and data protection. Another interesting aspect of privacy that Graham and Dutton (2014) touches upon is cyber-bullies, trolls or fraudsters. Graham and Dutton (2014) further point out that governments around the world are debating whether and how best to govern the internet issues around child protection, cyber crime, and national security. Given this, it is very clear that the issues of policy will be increasingly important to the future of social media.

- **Banality** – Many social media tools are based on the exchange of many small bits of information such as status updates or the sharing of links. These short form individual contributions have led to the charge that social media is trivial in nature and suitable only for entertainment rather than professional research.
- **Peripherality** – many researchers stress that social media is still peripheral in research, and this leads some to argue that it is therefore not worth engaging.
- **Loss of an authoritative authority** – It is common knowledge that traditional publishing aims to provide a filter for quality whereas social media allow everyone to publish anything that they have to say, this inevitably means that it is more difficult to identify which contributions are valuable or authoritative.
- **Information overload** – Social media have dramatically increased the amount of publicly available information. Keen (2007) and Carr (2010) mention 24 hours of video are added to YouTube each minute.
- **Work/life balance** – Social media has the potential to extend your working day and blur the distinction between work and other aspects of your life. Keen (2007) and Carr (2010), indicate that researchers may need to think carefully about boundaries, particularly if they are using mobile devices. Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) are of the view that social media is part of our society's everyday activity and emphasise the sharing of resources by which like-minded groups organise and coordinate their activities, maintain relationships, and interpret the world.

Based on the abovementioned discussion, it is evident that the power of communication has shifted to the public. Wright (2014) supports the above statement by stating that the internet is a means to an end, not just to find information, but to analyse it, discuss it and extract meaning. In essence, the discussion indicates that in executing social media, considerations such as the variety of benefits of engaging with the public exists. However, there are also disadvantages to consider, and it is critically important that organisations understand both sides of the coin when a social media strategy is planned and implemented in an NGO. Instead of trying to control social media use, researchers state that organisations should integrate these new tools to expand knowledge as well as improve business strategy.

Given the above, it is further critical to understand that the criticism may be valid in some cases but not necessarily in all. It has been established in the literature that social media covers a wide range of tools such as facebook and Twitter and different ways of using them. The purpose of this chapter was to argue that social media is good, if used carefully and are likely to be beneficial to the public relations to facilitate positive connections with the NGO communities.

2.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The literature and theoretical contextualization were done in Chapter 2. Social media relates to the history and global perspective of this research. Chapter 2 dealt with the meaning of what is meant by the term social media. This chapter it also examined social media tools that may be useful for this study. This chapter 2 recognised that each of the social media networks is unique and functions differently to deepen the relationship. Also, this chapter also examined a range of social media strategies that public relations can use as a guide to deal with online information.

The literature study used in this chapter reveals that limited research and literature exist regarding social media adoption and it is even worsted with regards to the field of public relations usage and more especially addressing the social media policy. Concerns about the risks associated with the use of social media is echoed by some authors. Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) recognise the risk of posting negative comments on social media website, but Keen (2007) and Carr (2010), believe that organisations are doing themselves more harm by trying to exercise control of technology.

This Chapter 2 concluded by identifying that it is impossible to ignore the influence of social media in our society. The interactive nature of social media tools has transformed media

messages from one-way communication to facilitating dialogue. It is clear that organisations are being influenced by social media. It is of utmost importance that if the public relations in NGOs want to influence the public positively to do business with their respective organisation, they need to build a strong social media presence. Building a strong social media presence requires consistency. It requires public relations actual engagement with the different publics, building relationships that help earn the public trust of the organisation (NGOs).

The literature cited in this chapter has demonstrated that social media allow people to connect, share information, and ideas with others through the internet. The internet has many important and necessary benefits. It is fast, convenient and informative. In many ways it makes people's lives much simpler. It is important that people use the internet wisely and for the right reasons.

CHAPTER 3

CURRENT STATUS OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FROM A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, a global perspective of social media was focused on by investigating the driving forces behind technology and definition of social media was subsequently provided. It was established throughout the history of the Internet, that new technologies evolved quickly and that networked technologies gain value from the individuals who apply these technologies. In this chapter, the current status of social media usage in public relations from a South African non-governmental organisation (NGO) perspective will be explored. For NGOs, however, social media can prove to be a much more difficult tool to adopt. Limited resources, money, and knowledgeable staff can severely hamper an organisation's ability to create and execute an effective social media campaign. Also, the Grunig and Hunt model will also be examined and discussed. In the Excellence study by Grunig and Grunig (2002), these authors promote a two-way symmetrical model, which is based on empirical research, to understand a different perspective of practitioners on social media. Although all four models are practised today in varying degrees, the ideal model is the two-way symmetrical model. Veric et al. (2014), however, confirms Grunig and Hunt two-way symmetrical model to be the most widely accepted communications model in public relations.

Graham and Dutton (2014) indicate that the explosion of wireless platforms in the last decade has distributed the power of the Internet everywhere. Wright (2014) state that social media sites have become so tightly woven into our lives and technology advancements have forever changed the way in which we interact with one another. Wilcox et al. (2015) agree with this statement, noting that social media is pervasive and invasive, engaging with people near or far in ways that have never been done before. Seargeant and Tagg (2014) observe that sharing, connecting, commenting and relationships are the building blocks of social media.

According to Madia and Borgese (2010), public relations and social media relations have evolved with the advent of social media. Waddel (2010) indicates that social media is one of the most exciting things to happen to public relations. Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) is also

of the opinion that social media have become a powerful tool in the arsenal of public relations professionals. Breakenridge (2008) agrees, stating that social media is but one of the many tools currently available to public relations practitioners as part of the supposed "PR 2.0" movement. Observation made by Solis and Breakenridge (2012) resonate with those of Breakenridge (2008), stating that the essence of Web 2.0 social media is that it put the public back in the public relations. Angelopulo and Barker (2013) suggest that public relations functions as a specific application in the broader field of organisational communication. Waddel (2010) allude that social media helps public relations build more relationships across a wider landscape, and enables them to maintain ongoing, quality relationships with influencers, media, customers, and partners regardless of where they are. Wright (2014) add that social media is a new ever evolving tool that can help expand our knowledge and our reach and help us innovate and collaborate in new ways.

Adding to the above, Wilcox et al. (2015:358) state that the use of social media can bring about fundamental changes to society and therefore we are already witnessing new emerging forms of organisations that would simply not exist without social media. Wilcox et al. (2015:360) further expounded that the world needs sensitive communicators and facilitators who can explain the goal and aspirations of individuals, organisations and government to others in a socially responsive manner. Communication, according to Angelopulo and Barker (2013) is the glue that holds the organisations together. Angelopulo and Barker (2013) however, clearly state that communicating is not just about disseminating information to the public, but is about two-way communication where the organisation truly values the public's input. Sitten in Reiman (2012) indicate that social media has become an essential part of the communications toolkit for companies of all sizes. Head (2011) notes that online social networks, such as facebook, and Twitter have become a common part of many people's lives. According to Wright (2014:7), social media is any website or mobile application that allows people to connect and engage others in direct dialogue without editorial filters. The same author further writes that social media allows people to engage with one another, whether near or far, in ways that have never been done before through conversation on websites and in mobile apps, links to article and videos, and other content online. Reiman (2012:80) further notes that success of this kind requires more than just a facebook account or Twitter feed instead communication success requires a new approach to communications thinking.

Reiman (2012) rightfully states that it is common knowledge that the use of social media has become so pervasive in society. Warr (2008:1) supports the abovementioned statement by indicating that computer-mediated engagement is so prevalent that we are now entering what has been described as "the era of social networking". Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) indicate

that social media have changed the way society communicates, learns and conducts business. Brown (2009) agrees by indicating that social media is the new form of communication, which have changed the way society communicates, learns, and conduct business. Furthermore, Warr (2008) explains this phenomenon by referring to social media that it encompasses collective intelligence, participation, collaborative creation, and borderless distribution. As has become apparent, the use of social media has added a new dimension to the old media. Reiman (2012:81) add that since social media platforms differ from traditional communications tools in their dependence upon direct and indirect interaction with friends, followers, and constituents, the use of these platforms more closely resembles a service interaction than a broadcasting medium. Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) write that the interactive nature of social media tools has transformed media messages from one-way communication to facilitating a dialogue both locally and internationally. Reiman (2012:8) further adds that users are demanding more reciprocal relationships with the groups to which they subscribe and seek two-way interactions that provide them with value. The realm of social media is about collaboration, users generating content, sharing and most of all is about connecting (Stokes, 2009:337).

This theoretical and literature research in the current study is to define and operationalise public relations as a discipline. Chapter 3 furthermore, creates a landscape for public relations communication strategy. It must be understood that there are important factors to consider when executing a social media strategy. It is necessary for non-governmental organisations to plan for social media communication strategy. Social media must be implemented with diligence and dedication to ensure that each organisation gains the necessary benefits that can improve communication and help employees distribute information, work together, and solve problems rapidly. Also, possible problems must be foreseen, and addressed with proper treatment to ensure that the voice of the organisation has enough capacity to do well in the all-important job of interacting and engaging with a growing audience, demanding and giving the online community.

The following section highlights common social media tools and platforms most noteworthy in the social networking world to provide context to the technology we have available to public relations today to communicate.

3.2 DEFINITIONS OF COMMON SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS AND PLATFORMS

The following common social media tools are used extensively in this research study. The challenge of finding the best social media tools is that there are so many out there, with each one being a little different than the other. These platforms have been chosen because of their prominence in the world of social networking. The next section feature list of the most common tools, broad-based tools available and most likely used in non-governmental organisations.

3.2.1 Online public relations

According to Marlow in Angelopulo and Barker (2013:364) online public relations is defined in the same way as traditional public relations but it is conducted via the Internet and online services in a strategic manner, and can reduce barriers between an organisation and its internal and external publics. Angelopulo and Barker (2013:364) posit that online or digital refers to media such as the Internet, the World Wide Web, and commercial online services like CompuServe, tools like websites, SMSs, blogging social networks and the WWW.

3.2.2 PR 2.0

Solis (2008) describes PR 2.0 as the realisation that the Web changed everything, inserting people equally into the process of traditional influence. Solis (2008) further indicate that PR 2.0 is the understanding and practice that communications is a two-way process and incorporates the tools, principles, strategies and philosophies that for reaching, engaging and guiding, influencing and helping people directly in addition to the traditional cycle of PR influence.

3.2.3 Web 2.0

Brynteson et al. (2011) states that social media sometimes is referred to as Web 2.0 which is furthermore characterised by principles of accessible, participation, interaction, conversation and reciprocity. Patricios (2009:22) elaborates that Web 2.0 consist of user-generated content that exists on mobile or online networks that enable community engagement. Tim O' Reilly (2006) define Web 2.0 as the business in the revolution of computer industry caused by the move to the internet as platform, and an attempt to understand the rules of success on that new platform (Flew, 2008). It is accepted that Web 2.0 originated with the ability of users to produce and consume information on the internet, which is in contrast to Web 1.0 where the owner of the site predominantly produce the content (Flew, 2008). Nevertheless, Mandiberg (2012) notes that the term 'Web 2.0' and 'social networking' are often used interchangeably as they are interdependent in nature.

3.2.4 Content Sharing

The sharing of information, photographs, music and videos via the Internet has become common ground. Common content sharing sites include YouTube, Photobucket, Video and Flickr (Madia and Borgese, 2010:226). Wright (2014) state that YouTube was created in 2005 by Steve Chen and Chad Hurley and quickly became the internet TV station. White (2014) note that billions of people all over the world create, share and watch videos. YouTube reports that 48 hours of video are uploaded every minute to the site, resulting in nearly eight years of content uploaded every day (Wright, 2014).

From the above it can be concluded that within the broad field of social media there are some tools available for public relations, content sharing sites that are listed above. The practitioners should have a holistic understanding of people engagement with information, taking into account the interrelations between people and their environment.

3.2.5 Virtual World

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) postulate that virtual world allows people to choose behaviour more freely and to live (in the form of avatars) in a virtual world similar to their real life, in this instance the example is the Second Life. This statement is further supported by Brynteson et al. (2011), indicating that in these social virtual worlds players create a new life for themselves online, sometimes spending a making real money in these fantasy worlds. Wright (2014:164) explains the meaning of second life as an online multiplayer role-playing environment where people construct avatars to represent themselves in a 3-D virtual platform. Wright (2014) further state that Second Life has grown from being used for the sometimes-risqué purpose to being used for functional business needs. Which implies PR professionals can use to train employees and encourage organisations to use to interact with the audience.

Based on the above discussion, Wright (2014) suggest that in the community context of PR virtual world is still in its infancy, although PR practice is beginning to embrace and integrate social media in their discipline.

3.2.6 Social Networking sites

Facebook, MySpace, Classmates.com. These sites allow users to share and exchange thoughts, events, ideas, articles, and other content. Typically, members have to accept your request to be their "friend" (Brynteson et al., 2011). Scott and Jacka's (2011:154) definition of

social network supports this, stating that these sites are the platforms that enable like-minded people to connect, create, share content and join in conversations that are relevant to their interest. A study conducted by Waters et al. (2009) indicate that NGOs are using social networking sites to support their public relations activities. However, very little is known about how NGOs are taking advantage of social networking sites as a communication channel.

3.2.7 Social media press release

An interactive press release distributed via e-mail or social media vehicles such as podcasts, Skype phone numbers, Twitter posts and blogs. The social media press release centres on providing media with access to timely content in a variety of formats (Madia and Borgese, 2010:233).

3.2.8 File-Sharing Communities

Brynteson et al. (2011) state that Photobucket, Flickr, these communities come together around common interests and share their files. Brynteson et al. (2011) note that Flickr users share photographs and have built a common library of millions of images. Wright (2014) indicates that Instagram was founded by Kevin Systrom and Michel Krieger in 2010, users can upload and change their photos by choosing a filter to transform the look and feel of the shot into memory to keep around forever. Wright (2014) further noted that Instagram has more than 30 million members in its community, Facebook purchased it in April 2012 for 1 billion. The main objective of content communities is the sharing of media content between users.

Based on the above discussion, it is evident that new technologies have had a profound influence on public relations. It is clear that social media provides a channel for individuals to engage and communicate with each other. Irrespective of the origins of social networking, it is evident that it has become a worldwide phenomenon that is discussed in modern academia. Social media cannot be avoided; they are tools to be leveraged in public relations and practice. In this regard, each social media site discussed above has become richer in content and interactivity and each has brought more mechanisms for self-expression and provided an ability to share, create, and engage, with people of similar interest. It is, therefore, essential in the next section to provide an overview of the definition of public relations in its intricate nature.

3.3 DEFINING PUBLIC RELATIONS

More than a century ago, the First World Assembly of Public Relations Associations was held in Mexico City (1978) where public relations as the art and social science practice was defined. Social media was analysed and its trends and consequences were predicted while counselling organisations' leaders and implanting a planned programme of action to serve both the organisation and the public's interest were discussed (Skinner et al., 2010:4). Later this definition became more distilled, with public relations defined as the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders (Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) 1998:1; Skinner et al., 2010: 4). Angelopulo and Barker (2013:226) confirms that the definition of public relations, as defined by PRISA (1998) has generally been accepted as the leading accepted approach to implementing public relations initiatives as it emphasises the notion of public relations as a management function with communication as a means to manage perceptions and strategic relationships.

Angelopulo and Barker (2013:225) notes that the key to public relations is the process of influencing public opinion by establishing and maintaining effective relationships between an organisation and its publics. Davis et al. (2002) adds by stating that public relations are an art and science, of analysing trends predicting their consequences, counselling their organisational leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve the interest of both the organisation and the public. Bates (2002) further defines public relations as a management function that seeks to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on which the success depends. Wilcox et al. (2015) indicate that keywords that are used in most definitions that frame today's modern public relations are:

- **Deliberate** – public relations activity is intentional, it is designed to influence, gain understanding, provide information, and obtain feedback from those affected by the activity.
- **Planned** – public relations activity is organised. Solutions to problems are discovered and logistics are developed, with the activity taking place over a period. It is systematic, requiring research and strategic thinking.
- **Performance** – effective public relations is based on actual policies and performance. No amount of public relations will generate goodwill and support if the organisation has poor policies and it unresponsive to public concerns.

- **Public interest** – public relations activity should be mutually beneficial to the organisation and the public; it is the alignment of the organisations self-interests with the public's concerns and interest.
- **Two-way communication** – public relations is not just disseminating information but also the art of listening and engaging in a conversation with various publics.
- **Management function** – public relations is most effective when it is a strategic and integral part of decision making by top management. Public relations involves counselling, problem solving, and the management of competition and conflict.

As suggested by the abovementioned definition, public relations are part of the wider corporate strategy of an organisation and are a way of increasing credibility and value in an organisation. Public relations implement a wide range of discipline to create value and disseminate information in a believable way in the media. The elements described above are part of the process that defines and position today's public relations landscape. PR News (2012) promotes the ways in which public relations functions stating that as the management function evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organisation with the public interest and plans and executes a programme of action to earn public understanding and patience. Angelopulo and Barker (2013) ratify to state that public relations represents the public face of an organisation and can have an unparalleled impact on its credibility and image. Glover, in Wilcox et al. (2015), believes that clear and consistent communication helps organisations achieve their goals, employees to work to their potential, customers to make informed choices, and society to form fair judgements of organisations and issues.

Public Relations Society of America (PRISA) (2012) added another key ingredient by defining public relations as a communication strategic process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and their publics. Bates (2002) adds to this by stating public relations as the management function seeks to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationship between the organisation and its publics. This statement is supported by Cutlip, Centre and Broom (2009), indicating that public relations are about managing the organisation-public relationship. On the other hand, Seitel (2011) points out that public relations are interpreting the public's opinions, views, concerns to management while, on the other hand, it seeks to interpret the policies, philosophies strategies, decisions and actions of management to their different stakeholders. Skinner et al. (2011:6) indicate that public relations are a very critical and important factor to management function regarding effective and efficient delivery of policy changes. Phillip and Young (2007) is the view that public

relations involve conveying information to internal and external audience and also trying to receive information from a range of stakeholders.

Extracting from the previously stated definitions, public relations in this study will be defined as deliberate, planned performance, public interest, two-way communication and strategic management function.

3.3.1 Normative model of public relations practices

The literature (Cutlip, Center and Broom, 1999; Grunig and Hunt, 1984) on public relations as an emerging profession has emphasised the practice as a management function in the organisations (Botan and Hazelton, 2009). Grunig and Grunig (2002) supports the above by indicating that public relations are a unique management function that helps an organisation interact with the social, political and institutional components of its environment. According to Wilcox et al. (2014) public relations has expanded from its traditional functions and now exercise its influence on the highest levels of management. Wilcox et al. (2014) further state that in a changing environment, faced a variety of pressures public relations is not seen as publicity and one-way communication but as a complex and dynamic process of negotiation and comprise with some key audiences which are called publics.

Botan and Hazelton (2009) add that the key normative issue emphasises that for public relations to earn a place in strategic planning is required to bring scarce and unique expertise. This can help improve the morale, productivity and creativity of public relations. Dozier et al. (1995) point out that public relations cannot function at a strategic level alone but need mutually beneficial relationships to achieve strategic goals. The organisation that encourages two-way communication by using different channels of communication and new technology create a win-win situation. Botan and Hazelton (2009) add that organisations with excellent public relations have clear policies and this lead to increased employee engagement and satisfaction. Grunig et al. (2002) emphasise that two-way organisation is an open system, all views are valued, innovation and creativity are valued, information exchanges freely between the management and employees, the responsibility for actions and these open negotiations. The value of public relations can be determined by measuring the quality of the relationships the organisation establishes within its environment.

Conclusions drawn in the research by Grunig and Grunig (2002) and by Grunig et al. (1995) maintain that the principles of excellent public relations are:

- Public relations serves both a strategic management role and a technical role;

- Public relations helps to shape the underlying conditions of organisational excellence regarding the organisational culture and structure;
- Public Relations is empowered by the dominant coalition of the organisation;
- Public relations is two-way and symmetrical; and
- The value of public relations is determined by measuring the quality of the relationships the organisation establishes within its environment.

Social media have become a powerful communication tool that can be used to promote the organisation and its services as well as to manage stakeholder relationships.

3.3.2 THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION MEDIA

Grimes (2008) defines traditional media as those companies that create, produce and distribute information and entertainment content which pre-date the commercial business of the Internet. The older or traditional media can be thought of like the old way of doing things (Lesame et al., 2012). Traditional public relations is usually expensive (there are production costs of printed material such as brochures, newsletters and so on). In addition, it can also be very time consuming (corrections, revisions printing and reprinting), it frequently has a “hit or miss” quality depending how successful the target audience was reached or not (Angelopulo and Barker, 2013:364).

The two major underlying differences between traditional media and new media are the different flow of communication and the speed at which it flows (Anderson, 2009). Public relations also make a distinction between media namely controlled and uncontrolled media. Controlled media includes media where the public relations practitioner has a say over the content of the message (Rensburg et al., 2002:145). On the other hand, the term uncontrolled media means that the practitioners do not have any direct control over media content (Rensburg et al., 2002:145). The abovementioned statements are supported by a table below comparing social media with traditional media (Stokes, 2009). Comparing social media to traditional media is probably the most useful way of defining what exactly this means, which demonstrates in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Comparing social media to traditional media

Traditional Media	Social Media
Fixed, unchangeable	Instantly updateable
Commentary limited and not real-time	Unlimited real-time commentary
Limited, time-delayed bestseller lists	Instant popularity gauge
Archives poorly accessible	Archives accessible
Limited media mix	All media can be integrated
Committee publishers	Individual publishers
Finite	Infinite
Sharing not encouraged	Sharing and participation encouraged
Control	Freedom

Source: Stokes (2009:124)

In spite of the above, Stokes (2009:335) note that the Internet, and the software developed to run on it, has made it simple for anyone to publish and distribute media, and it has also made it simple for anyone to access the content that has been published. Duhe (2007) indicate that the speed and interactive nature of social networks such as facebook are very useful to for creating and maintaining relationships. Scott (2009:13) note that the Web has transformed the rules and therefore public relations practitioners need to transform their strategies to make most of the Web-enabled ideas. Social media can provide a channel where the organisation can build relationships with the publics (Solis and Breakenridge, 2009:166).

The next section will be narrowed to examine social media particularly concerning strategic communication.

3.4 SOCIAL MEDIA AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Strategic communication, as defined by Hallahan et al. (2007), is the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission. One of the elements that Steyn (2000) proposes as a key consideration for strategists is that public relations should be involved at the top management level, providing strategic information on the stakeholder's environment through the use of research techniques such as environmental scanning, issues identification and analysis. Wright and Hinson (2010) study also highlight the emergence of the Internet and social media as an important element that has had a tremendous impact on the practice of

public relations. Kent and Taylor (2002) insights concur with those of Wright and Hinson (2010) but add further that social media is transforming public relations and reconceptualising it in new socially-engaged ways. Social media is a term used to describe a range of online networking tools, in building relationships of mutual benefit (Reiman, 2012). Scott (2010) indicate that social media have created a demand for real-time, two-way communication programmes that engage publics and evolve based on the conversations. Reiman (2012) furthermore indicate that because of social media's ability to connect people, social media have become essential to public relations as tools for communicating with strategic publics. Solis (2008) highlight that with the shift from PR to PR 2.0 "Monologue has given way to dialogue".

Research conducted by Wright and Hinson (2009) indicate that many strategic communicators have embraced social media as an important tool to enhance issues management, environmental monitoring and two-way communication. Scott (2009:11) notes that social media is constantly changing and is transforming the public relations function. Scott (2009:13) goes even further to indicate that the Web has transformed the rules, and these need to transform PR strategies to make the most of the Web-enabled marketplace of idea. This sentiment is repeated by Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) who report that the rules for social media is constantly changing and there is considerable uncertainty on how to employ these tools from a strategic perspective. In spite of the above, Wright and Hinson (2010) observations, therefore, highlight the need for public relations to perceive social media positively on strategic communication. An organisation practises a strategic communication the practitioner use environmental scanning to examine the organisational goals, relevant publics and identify problems and opportunities (Botan and Hazelton, 2009:110). The practitioners use research to set goals, segment audience as it is at the core of strategic communication for direction and strategy. Using two-way symmetrical communication the practitioner build relationships with the public as strategic communication is putting the receiver first (Botan and Hazelton, 2009). Furthermore, Grunig et al. (2002) indicate that not only is practising symmetrical communication model more effective to attain organisational goals but is the most ethical way in dealing with strategic communication.

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that public relations are moving towards a relationship management practice instead of following a normal communication management approach. Strategic management is one of the elements of public relations just described as part of the process that defines today's public relations. Therefore, public relations do not only need to understand how to use social media thoroughly but need to change the mindset and be willing to adapt their communication strategy and approach if they want to use social media

as a strategic communication tool. Furthermore, Apple founder the late Steve Jobs suggested that one does not have to understand how technology works to use it and in contrast, the more obscure the function of any technology is for the user, the better it adapts to their daily behaviour (Reiman, 2012). In this regard, social media offers additional opportunities for public relations practitioners to create and cultivate relationships as well as engage their publics. It is important that the organisations applies strategic view of social media and chooses the right tools to implement the strategy as discussed above.

To understand the phenomenon that is social media, the next section will provide the brief overview of the relationship between social media and public relations in general.

3.5 IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON THE PRACTICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Brynteson et al. (2011) indicate that social media is not about new technology but propose that it is the convergence of social, economic, technological and global forces in the 21st century. Mandiberg (2012) state that social media have accelerated the rise of distinct cultures and led to phrases like 'open source'. Furthermore, open source is closer to how human creativity has always worked (Mandiberg, 2012). The excessive use of social media by the public has placed a huge burden on the public relations profession (Flynn, 2012). Brynteson et al. (2011) highlights the emergence of new online technologies and trends that have implicated the new paradigm shift which includes, the world is shrinking, and the world feels more complex, fear and loathing of traditional media, physical adeptness and the expectation of connectivity in the new Millennial Generation. Furthermore, Brynteson et al. (2011) state that one of the implications of the rise of social media is an organisations loss of control over their message. This lack of control might lead to a general sense of reluctance from organisation to partake in social media activities (Reiman, 2011).

As discussed in Chapter Two, social media is broadly defined as a range of online tools that facilitate individuals and groups of people to connect and interact, create and share information (Reiman, 2012). The realisation of the above statement is confirmed by the forms of social media such as facebook, Twitter and Blogs that are constantly evolving (Al-Deen and Hendricks, 2012:277). Brown (2009); Scott (2010) notes that social media sets the new landscape for two-way communication in public relations which allows the organisation to distribute information to the public without relying on mainstream publications and communicating directly with the public. Scott (2009:10) indicates that the Web has changed the rules, today's organisations are communicating directly with buyers. Breakenridge (2008) adds to this by stating that social media as the new platform for communication where social

networking sites have become an integral part of practitioners, where practitioners can identify current issues, get informed about these issues and integrate their online participation.

Scott (2010) state that social media have created a demand for real-time, two-way communication programmes that engage publics and evolve based on the conversation. The most prevalent characteristics of social media according to Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) is that it is accessible and has the ability to connect people, social media have become essential to public relations, as tools for communicating with strategic publics. Wilcox et al. (2015:368) indicate that social media has changed the landscape of public relation in three ways:

- **Listening and two-way dialogue** – which forms part of overall today's practice where social media has provided an opportunity to put truly the public back into public relations by providing a mechanism for organisations to engage in real-time, one-on-one conversations with stakeholders.
- **Organisations perform and behave** – which has to do with day-to-day performance because society expects greater transparency and accountability. Communication must be more authentic and credible.
- **Social media is fully integrated** – which comprises a major tactic in almost every public relations programme or campaign.

The abovementioned discussion means that it is critical that public relations encourage to be transparent in their online communication when advocating their organisation cause. Public relations in NGOs use social media to make their management function more efficient, interacting with volunteers, supporters, identifying sponsors and donors regarding their activities (Waters, 2009). Boyd and Ellison (2007:211) supports the abovementioned statement by indicating that social networking sites as the Web pages provide users with the opportunity to create their public profile and add friends to their list so that both parties could build connections with each other. Social media allows public relations to communicate with public virtually automatically (Al-Deen and Hendricks, 2012:130). Skinner et al. (2010) are amongst authors who refer to social media as a trend, stating that public relations use social media tools for building relationships than just disseminating information to the public. Wright and Hinson (2009) study also reveal further insight, by noting that social media has a pivotal role in public relations strategic communication as an important tool to enhance two-way communication. Scott (2012) supports the above observation by stating that social media have become an increasingly important communication channel for building a connection between companies and the public.

In this regard, Brown (2009) indicates that social media is reinventing the public relations profession and practitioners have to adapt their strategies and tactics as media have evolved. Wright and Hinson's (2010) study suggest that public relations must strive, within its capacity to perceive social media positively on strategic communications. Some scholars such as Macnamara (2010); Lo and Waters (2012); Kanter and Fine (2010) assert that the invention of social media is leading to the death of public relations. On the other hand, on the contrary, Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) write that social media has put the power of mass media into the hands of all. In essence, Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) argue that the advantage of social media is that it may help the organisation to strengthen relationships as social media is more personal, and conversational compared to traditional media.

Breakenridge (2008) is the view that social media is a significant platform for PR 2.0 and a fundamental feature of two-way communication. Solis and Breakenridge (2009) writes that Web 2.0 social media "put the public back into the public relations." According to Cinman (2008:49), social media, social networking and Web 2.0 all refer to a collaborative, interactive environment. While Solis (2008) believes that the interactive environment ultimately extends to benefit organisations with the shift from PR to PR 2.0 "Monologue has given way to dialogue." The abovementioned statement mean that the power has now shifted to the digital content creator that can use social media to spread influence across the globe (Solis, 2010). Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) agree adding that the power has been shifted away from the organisation and has instead been transferred to individuals and communities. Taking into consideration this clear shift in power, Solis (2008) further indicates that public relations are experiencing a renaissance and should rather embrace, participate and encourage using social media instead of pushing or disseminating information to the public.

From the above discussion, it was gathered that numerous factors influenced the rise of social media. The influence of social media was explored with the conclusion drawn that social networking has enhanced the scope of public relations communication, accentuating the need for practitioners to adopt the two-way participatory approach. The main insight obtained was that although social media can result in a variety of organisational benefits, there is potential dangers and difficulty that need to be considered by public relations practitioners before a social media strategy is implemented in a non-governmental organisation context.

Given the above, it is evident and clear that public relations are indeed in distress, few studies have examined how public relations perceive social media, and that the adoption, use, enhancement are still a great cause for concern. The challenges and lessons learned from other countries will be discussed below.

3.6 BEST PRACTICES CONCERNING INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE TENDENCIES

Studies conducted in the USA and Europe have indicated that social media and information communication technology can facilitate many development activities including education, marketing, advertising, communication and public relations (Hudson, 2006). These studies also reveal (Macnamara, 2010; Fry, 2014; Avery et al. 2010) that social media new forms and communication media offer opportunities to improve and transform public relations. Lo and Waters (2012) report also found that social media is a confirmed global phenomenon. Lo and Waters (2012) state that Web technology enables non-profits to have important conversations with interested publics, including donors, supporters clients and volunteers. Furthermore, Macnamara (2010); Fry (2014); Avery et al. (2010); Lo and Waters (2012) found that the most popular sites among the practitioners researched were facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, You-Tube. The statement above confirms the popularity of social media as reported by Wright and Hinson studies (2009). Most claimed that public relations practitioners are knowledgeable about social media and this is contrary to Wright and Hinson studies (2010) found that these lack of research is still emerging in the field of public relations. Furthermore, also contrary to the findings of Theaker (2008), European Public Relations and Research Association (2007) and Kent (2008) indicated a lack of social media knowledge and skills in public relations. Additionally, Macnamara (2010); Avery et al. (2010) noted in discussions that practitioners cited conversations, dialogue, engaging stakeholders, listening and building community as important attributes of social media. Lo and Waters (2012) suggest that non-profit organisations must stay abreast of technological change as the internet's role as an information source continues to grow.

Flynn (2012) indicates that these principles of best practice on social media use can be summarised as follows:

- Social media and web 2.0 content, use and records create increased exposure to legal, regulatory, security, productivity records management, public relations and other potentially costly risks.
- When managed strategically social networking and web 2.0 tools can facilitate speedy and successful two-way communication with customers as well as creative and constructive collaboration with co-workers.

- When managed effectively, employees' personal use of social media can enhance workers' overall satisfaction with and commitment to their jobs.
- The most effective way to manage social media risks is to implement social media rules and policies, supported by comprehensive employee training and enforced by best-in-class technology tools.

It is clear that once the abovementioned criteria have been taken into consideration, public relations in an NGO should be in a good position to determine the intended guidelines and should feel free to adjust them as necessary and adapt them as appropriate for particular business and industry needs. Macnamara (2010) writes that apart from the principles mentioned above the important requirements in using social media were cited as transparency, disclosure, honesty, ethics, and measurement.

In light of the above, the lessons learned from the developed countries is presented in this literature chapter to provide the background from which social media can be understood and analysed. It is evident that the development of Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has encouraged considerable changes in the way public relations is practised today and the introduction of social media plays a significant role in this new development. In summary, globalisation, has taught practitioners to navigate the social web as equal producers and participants.

The next section will discuss the study's main theoretical underpinning, namely the Grunig and Hunt Model (1984).

3.7 GRUNIG AND HUNT MODEL

There are comparatively few studies (Lane (2003); Avery and Sweetser (2010); Matthee (2011) that have investigated Grunig and Hunt (1984) model behind the use of social media, as it is a relatively new phenomenon. A study by Veric (2014) that focused on social media as a tool, revealed that two-way symmetrical model of public relations proposed by Grunig and Hunt (1984) reads like a manifesto. The same authors state that the model promises the transformation of our society into a non-hierarchical transparent community. Matthee (2011) agrees, stating that Grunig and Hunt (1984) model serve as a catalyst for conflict resolution. Matthee (2011) continues, stating that the aim of this model encourages two-way communication that leads to mutual understanding and corporation. Furthermore, this model is based on a free exchange of information that is used to alter attitudes in both the organisation and its publics (Matthee, 2011).

It is evident that based on the two abovementioned viewpoints on Grunig and Hunt (1984) model by Veric et al. (2014) and Matthee (2011) that they agree by indicating that the four models are practised today in varying degrees, the ideal model is the two-way symmetrical model. The symmetrical approach is characterised by an open system. It uses communication to manage conflict with strategic publics (Botan and Hazelton, 2009).

All four models are the most familiar models in public relations practice (Matthee, 2011). Naudé (2004) significant study has focused on the interactive nature of Internet by applying two-way symmetrical model of communication in 10 South African NGOs. The two-way symmetrical model describes a model of public relations that is based on research and that uses communication to manage and improve understanding with strategic publics. Two-way communication model is relevant for this study as social media by its nature are based on the flow of two-way communication. Therefore, the selection of these models makes sense to examine the four models of public relations put forward by Grunig and Hunt (1984). The research and theoretical contributions of Grunig and his co-researchers are some of the most valuable in the field of communication. In essence they made use of research in their practices and use different processes to achieve different outcomes.

3.7.1 The press agency/publicity model

This model is characterised by one-way communication. According to Angelopulo and Barker (2013:229), it emphasises the importance of persuasion and a philosophy of publishing to defeat the opposition at all cost. The model is used as a way of persuading desired publics to act as the organisation wishes. The press agency model describes public relations programmes as simply aim to seek favourable publicity for the organisation (Grunig and Hunt 1984). Angelopulo and Barker (2013) further indicate that within the model research is not a requirement and therefore the truth is not a priority.

3.7.2 The public information model

Grunig and Hunt (1984) indicates this model was developed as a reaction to attacks on large organisations. The public information model was conceptualised to improve on the simple concept of one-way communication (Botan and Hazleton, 2009). The public information model is characterised by one-way dissemination of information (Angelopulo and Barker, 2013). The public information model is also a one-way distribution of information, not necessarily with the persuasion intent. According to Lattimore et al. (2009), this model is still practised in government, educational institutions and non-governmental organisations, practitioners practising this model choose to write good things about the organisation. On the other hand,

the information is fact-finding content, truthful and accuracy is very important (Angelopulo and Barker, 2013:229).

It is evident that based on the two abovementioned models, both the press agency and public information model, are one-way linear models of public communication, which describe communication programmes that are not based on research and strategic planning. The press agency and the public information model are imbalanced in that they both try to change the behaviour of the publics to benefit the organisation.

3.7.3 The one-way asymmetrical model

According to Angelopulo and Barker (2013) the one-way asymmetrical model use social science theory and research to help persuade publics to accept the organisations view point. Botan and Hazelton (2009:153) indicate that the purpose of this model is to provide information to manipulate and influence the public to accept organisational views. An asymmetrical worldview assumes that the organisation will always know best and its internal and external stakeholders will benefit by cooperating with the organisation (Botan and Hazelton (2009). This model proved to be the more sophisticated than the previous two models by using research to develop messages. Grunig (1992:92) indicates that these messages are most likely to persuade strategic publics to behave as the organisation's want. Angelopulo and Barker (2013) further indicate that communication in this model is driven by the formulation of objectives, which provide the criteria for regular evaluation of progress to establish whether these objectives have been reached. The model does not aim to use research to find out how the public feels about the organisation, but it employs social science to persuade in achieving short-term behaviour change.

It is clear from the above that an organisation that functions according to asymmetrical worldview uses a closed system, those that have power in the organisation are only a few, there is a stable culture that does not want to change, managers view the organisation from their perspective. Based on this, this type of system is not a favourable environment for practising two-way communication using social media. Two-way communication with the public is not encouraged.

3.7.4 The two-way symmetrical model

The purpose of the two-way symmetrical model is to achieve mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics (Angelopulo and Barker, 2013). The symmetrical approach is characterised by an open system. It uses communication to manage conflict with strategic public (Grunig and Dozier, 2002). The two-way symmetrical model uses research in an attempt

to achieve dialogue and to ensure mutual understanding (Botan and Hazelton, 2009). Angelopulo and Barker (2013) further state that communication is two-way, with balanced effects. Botan and Hazelton (2009) emphasise that this model uses research, listening and dialogue to manage conflict and build relationships with the strategic publics. The organisation is not isolated, innovation and creativity are valued. It produces better long-term relationships with publics (Botan and Hazelton, 2009). Important in this study is the two-way communication model for public relations to build relationships between the organisation and the publics.

Grunig and Dozier (2002) indicate that two-way symmetrical model still appears to be an ideal normative model for public relations practice. According to this model, public relations practitioners serve as mediators between an organisation and its publics. Grunig and Hunt (1984) on the other hand defines two-way symmetrical model by stating that it is a two-way communication model that uses communication to negotiate with the publics, resolve conflict and support mutual understanding between the organisation and the publics (Botan and Hazelton, 2009:47). Two-way symmetrical attempts to achieve balance by adjusting the relationship between the organisation and the publics and by focusing more on dispute resolution to negotiate mutual beneficial relationships (Grunig and Dozier, 2002). Grunig and Grunig (1992) sees the two-way symmetrical model as not only the most ethical communication approach to public relations but indicate that it is the most effective model for meeting organisational goals. This approach can give the organisation a competitive advantage in dealing with problems before it becomes a crisis. Kent and Taylor (1998) supports the statement above by Grunig by writing that technology in itself can neither create nor destroy a relationship, Kent and Taylor (1998) further indicates that is how technology is used and applied that can affect relationships between an organisation and its publics. Botan and Hazelton (2009:154) is of the view that two-way communication means that the public relations functions act as the eyes and ears of the organisation as well as its voice. Grunig and Dozier (2002) add that a symmetrical organisation implies that management and employees are in two-way communication with each other. This can help improve the morale motivate employees which in turn can improve productivity.

From the abovementioned discussion it is evident that almost everything the public relations carries out is rooted within the four models of Grunig (1984). The excellence study has shown that public relations are a unique management function that helps organisation interact with the social components of its environment (Botan and Hazelton, 2009). Each of these four models plays an important role in the development of public relations. It is also evident that based on the abovementioned four models of public relations by Gruning (1984), new media technologies help the use of the principles of social media which is two-way communication.

Grunig (1992) argues that organisations should set up structured systems, processes and rules for two-way public relations. Therefore, this means that two-way symmetrical communication must provide the necessary procedures for dialogue to take place. Public relations who are skilled in two-way communication and are knowledgeable of the organisation and its publics should be capable of using this two-way communication model in line with social media to build relationships.

It is clear from the above discussion that social media fundamentally allow for two-way communication. It is also clear that no public relations practitioner can afford not to incorporate social media technologies like facebook and twitter to enhance their public relations efforts in NGOs. The two-way symmetrical model enables people to share ideas and obtain something from the experience. This is an ideal way to communicate and technology has made it easier than ever before. Two-way communication helps the public relation in the organisation to engage with the public by connecting with them online and thereby building relationships. Given the fact that social media is interactive tools, they facilitate a two-way dialogue between an organisation and their public, engaging them in an interactive, open system, active, maintain relationships and continuous communication. Non-organisational communication should take advantage of new web technologies to encourage two-way communication. The interesting finding of in both symmetrical and asymmetrical values are intertwined in a mixed motive where organisations and publics seek good enough solutions to conflicts (Dozier et al., 1995). The two-way model suggests that organisations gather information from relevant publics and use that information to balance the good of the publics with the activities of the organisation.

This study sought to understand how Non-Governmental Organisations in Gauteng (Johannesburg and Pretoria) use social media to communicate with their stakeholders. The study also sought to explore how social media are integrated into the communication strategy of public relations in NGOs. It would, therefore, be important to understand what the current situation is so that an accurate analysis can be done. The following section will look at the situation in South Africa with regards to social media usage.

3.8 THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION WITH REGARDS TO SOCIAL MEDIA

The South African Government Gazette (2009:7), asserts that the South African government should approve the building of an information society and also address public access to ICT facilities. The United Nations World Summit described the information and communication technology infrastructure as the foundation to compete globally to close the digital divide gap

(WSIS, 2007). The South African Department of Communications (2010), agrees with the summit above recommendations that South Africa is among those countries that should roll out Internet services to most citizens with its boundaries as most South Africans are still without Internet access and therefore do not use the internet and are not benefiting from it. A stated intention in The National Development Plan (NDP) is that Broadband infrastructure is central to achieving the goal of digital inclusion, enabling affordable access to ICTs by all (citizens) and providing sustainable connectivity. The National Development Plan is the country's vision of what our country would be in the year 2030, posits priorities which seek to reduce inequalities in our society, poverty and unemployment (Government Communications Information System (GCIS), 2013). This plan provides a framework that was collaboratively developed by the government and South Africans (GCIS, 2013). The government and ICASA are to support and strengthen the capacity to regulate to ensure sustainable provision of ICT services. The real challenge for government is making sure that the ICT goals are achieved and not just indicated on public documents (Lesame et al., 2012). The Minister of Communications, Faith Muthambi, stated the following in the debate on World Communication Forum 2015: "the sea change is driven by social media and the power of the Internet. Information sharing has become all pervasive be it on facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype or numerous other platforms" (South African Department of Communications, 2015).

A stated intention in the national broadband policy is to mobilise the capabilities and resources and energy of both the public and private sector, together with the civil society, to connect South Africans to each other as well as to the continent and the world. The purpose of the policy is to provide a vision and long-term strategy that can be implemented immediately, to catalyse broadband connectivity in South Africa. Lesame et al. (2012:206) indicate that these policy changes can be interpreted as government attempts to provide universal access to telecommunications services to ensure public access to ICT, promote the democratisation of society and flow of information. This statement is further supported by Swanepoel (2002:360), indicating that policy constitutes sets of national or desired goals, which can also be employed as evaluation criteria of other proposals in this instance policy and national ICT development. Swanepoel (2002) further point out that broadband policy remains an overwhelming challenge in government to enable people to communicate and transact anywhere and anytime. According to Lesame et al. (2012:218) government have an important role to play in deploying national broadband networks and developing policy aimed at deploying ICT networks. South African Government Gazette (2009) states three key principles that need to be addressed for the link between broadband and economic growth:

- Broadband must reach a critical mass of South Africans
- Access to broadband must be affordable

- Demand-side skills must be developed so broadband services can be optimised for personal and business use

The abovementioned broadband objectives mean that broadband is crucial for creating an information society. At the highest level, this policy gives effect to the constitution of South Africa by creating the conditions in the digital age “to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person”. In doing so, enable equality in the rights, privileges and benefits of citizenship including freedom of expression and association in the Bill of Rights (South Africa broadband policy, 2013). This aligns with the declaration of the Human Rights Council of United Nations General Assembly that access to the internet is a basic human right which enables individuals to “exercise their right to freedom of expression” (South African Government Gazette, 2013:2). According to the Deputy Minister of Communications Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, the National Integrated ICT Policy Green Paper is an important milestone in constructing a platform to use modern technologies to address developmental gaps (South African Government Gazette, 2014).

Based on the abovementioned policy, it is clear that the policy reflects the Government of South Africa’s commitment to creating an enabling environment for the rollout of broadband infrastructure and the production of the associated content, applications and services. South African broadband policy (2013) point out that the removal of administrative bottlenecks and lowering hurdles will greatly accelerate the rollout of wired or wireless broadband. All three principles mentioned above are of importance to guide the effective and efficient broadband delivery service. Despite this take-off in broadband, Lesame et al. (2012) writes that the Former Minister of Communications, Yunus Carim indicated that South Africa broadband penetration remains poor compared to that of other lower-middle-income countries. Former Minister of Communications Carim further indicated that South Africa has lost its status as the continental leader in broadband and internet, and the last two decades has seen the steady decline in global ICT indices. The current Minister of Communications, Faith Muthambi (2015) supports the abovementioned statements by indicating that too many people in our nation are being left behind because they have no access to the vital information that could change their lives. She further stated that communicators need to remember that they are in a developmental agenda, citizens of this country needed to be empowered to have a meaningful contribution in developing our country and growing our economy (Government Gazette, 2015).

3.9 THE CURRENT STATUS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND NGOS IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to Barnard (2009), South Africa has a below average social media penetration level and that there are a series of issues that contribute to this below average performance. Barnard (2009) indicates that non-governmental organisations in South Africa, are still in distress and are facing many challenges. The same author indicates that many NGOs are confronted with serious financial and capacity challenges, many have had to scale down their activities while at the same time South African NGOs are faced with development challenges such as education, health, poverty, lack of capacity and leadership and corruption result in slow or no service and also, lack of meaningful support from the government is a concern. The significance of social media for South African NGOs according to Barnard (2009) have been proven by the 5th Annual (SANGONET) (ICTs) for Civil Society Conference. World Wide Worx implemented the projected on behalf of SANGONET and surveyed more than 800 NGOs throughout South Africa. The study established that South African NGOs are in the process of leveraging technology, but still not realising its full potential.

Barnard (2009) further indicates that issues such as financial support, education and training and access to ICT are the greatest factors constraining NGOs. This sentiment is repeated by the SANGONET study (2009) conducted by World Wide Worx report, preliminary findings of the 2009 “state of ICTs in the South African NGOs sector” that the following trends have been identified:

- Many NGO has little internal ICT capacity and infrastructure;
- Very few are interested in ICT issues to the same extent as their interest and or involvement in development issues such as housing, gender, human rights and education and so forth; and
- Very few NGOs specialise in ICT issues as their primary and/or secondary issues.

Based on the above NGO trends, the study puts forward that although people working in the NGO sector are already utilising social media for personal use, most NGOs have not yet integrated social media use into their integrated communication strategy (Barnard, 2009).

According to World Wide Worx (2010 and 2011) Internet use, via broadband connections and cell phones, has steadily been on the increase amongst South Africans. World Wide Worx further states that the increase in Internet usage enables the convergence of services, like voice, video and text, which used to be offered separately by mainstream media. The 6.9

million South African using the Internet at the end of 2010 jumped to 8.5 million number of South African Internet users (Goldstuck, 2014). The report further states that one in five South Africans today use facebook, which became the biggest social network in the country during 2013. The instant messaging service WhatsApp is used by even more South Africans. However, facebook is overtaking Mxit for the first time in South Africa. Facebook has received attention from locals and is currently the most visited site after Google (Fuseware, 2014). According to World Wide Worx (2010), today's consumers in South Africa have more options than ever before.

The key findings of the South African Social Media Landscape (2014) indicate that facebook has 9,4 million active users in South Africa, up from 6, 8 million users a year ago. Mxit, the previous market leader, now reports its figures based on "30-day active", a measure that gives it 6, 3 million users as at 1 July 2013. While this is up from 6,2 million a year before, it indicates flat growth as it feels the effects of competing for instant messaging services like WhatsApp and 2Go, as well as from the growth of social networking on phones. Twitter saw the highest percentage growth among the major social networks, from 2, 4-million to 5, 5 million showing 129% growth in 12 months (Goldstuck, 2014).

Goldstuck (2015) writes that one of the fascinating findings of the South African Social Media Landscape 2015 showed that facebook remained the most popular social network in South Africa. Goldstuck (2014) is of the view that one in five South Africans today use facebook, which became the biggest social network in the country during 2013. Goldstuck (2014) further indicates that the instant messaging service WhatsApp is used by even more South Africans. However, facebook is overtaking Mxit for the first time in South Africa. Scott (2010) writes that there are some important reasons why this communication is essential for an organisation. He further states that:

- Social media is a low-cost investment when compared to other options available;
- These sites also act like word of mouth that people believe; and that
- These sites get a lot of traffic and also generate traffic.

According to Brooks (2009) in South Africa, the Internet access became commercially available in 1993 with the emergence of the first ISIs, the Internet Company of SA and Internet Solutions. Consequently, the essence of ISPs has therefore been dial-up Internet connectivity, offering website development, routers, firewalls, and e-commerce and managed network and security services (Brooks, 2009). Lesame (2001) indicates that ISP may use various data-transmission technologies, such as dial-up, digital subscriber line (DSL), cable modem,

wireless or dedicated high-speed interconnected networks. Lesame et al. (2012:41) state that The Internet Service Provider Association (ISPA) is the foundation of good Internet connectivity in South Africa, and they regard lobbying government on regulation providing a framework for internet connectivity.

To explain and understand the Internet service provision in South Africa, this study will highlight the normative theory to assist in explaining behaviour offering Internet services. McQuail (2005:15) argues that a normative theory proposes an ideal model for media in society, or what the role of media should be. According to Hodge and Theopold (2001:17), the normative theory postulates that regulation ought to be introduced when there is a market failure. Christians et al. (2009:67) warn that the normative theory is becoming a global dialogue bringing back the normative theories of the west into the conversation in different parts of the world and doors are getting open to permit participants to utilise a great variety of normative resources in their cultural traditions. New normative theories require media practitioners to think out of the box and find dynamic ways of media operations. The purpose of good normative is to regulate better to provide better Internet services to South African users.

In South Africa, the telecommunications laws are set by the Ministry of Communications and administered, regulated and enforced by the industry regulator ICASA (Thornton et al., 2006:101). The Telecommunications Act (No. 103 of 1996) and Electronic Communications Act (No. 36 of 2005) requires every person who provides a telecommunications service to be requested by another such person interconnect its telecommunication system to the telecommunications system of such other person unless such request is unreasonable (Telecommunications Act, 1996:33). Part of the telecommunications regime in South Africa include the competition commission, which oversees the fairness of competition in all industries and the courts of justice, which resolve disputes and legal battles within the telecommunications sector (Lesame et al., 2012).

The national broadband policy and the associated strategy and a plan developed to South African's vision in the National Development Plan (NDP) is a seamless information infrastructure by 2030 will, therefore, be based on a dynamic and connected, vibrant information society and a knowledge economy that is more inclusive, equitable and prosperous. The purpose of this National Development Plan is to provide a vision and long term strategy that can begin to be implemented immediately to catalyse broadband connectivity in South Africa (National Development Plan, 2013). According to the National Development Plan (2013), this policy gives effect to the constitution of South Africa by creating the conditions in a modern electronic world aiming "to improve the quality of life of all citizens

and free potential of each person". In doing so, enables equality in the rights, privileges and benefits of citizenship, including the guarantees of freedom of expression and association in the Bill of Rights. This aligns with the declaration by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations General Assembly that access to the Internet is a basic human right which enables the individuals to exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression (South Africa's Broadband Policy, 2013).

According to Government Communication Information Service (GCIS, 2012), the Internet has profound effect on the people's lives, contributing significantly to communication and information sharing, its real potential is yet to be realised in South Africa. Minister of Communications Yunus Carrim (2014) indicated that information and communication technologies (ICT) has a huge potential to reduce the inequalities in our country and if not managed properly it will increase divisions. ICT have made it possible to find fast access to, and distribution of information as well as new ways of doing business in real time at a cheaper cost (Lesame Mbatha and Sindane, 2012:163). Many initiatives have been taken in South Africa to develop the communication infrastructure and services and develop a concrete vision and strategies for realising and financing the vision. A prerequisite to addressing and meet these challenges is the National Integrated ICT Policy Green Paper (2013). Carrim (2014) defines National Integrated ICT Policy Green Paper as a policy study of the ICT sector; it asks the policy, legislative, regulatory, institutional and other changes to ensure a more effective ICT sector. According to ICT Policy Study Panel (2013), Green Paper is not just a government document alone but all participants (such as stakeholders such as civil society, business, trade unions and the general public) have to undertake an integrated approach to contribute in shaping the ICT policy. Through this policy existing policies are studied and changes are proposed and it stimulates the discussion on key issues and ensure public participation in shaping policy. Thorton et al. (2006) state that the nature of telecommunications is that it is borderless. They further maintain that South Africa is a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Therefore, members are required to establish independent regulators who will be separate from and not be accountable to any supplier of basic telecommunications services.

According to Wronski (2014), social media breaks barriers in South Africa. He further indicates that the social media landscape in South Africa has undergone fundamental changes. Wronski (2014) continues to write that social media has transformed marketing and public relations space and changed the way brands think about customer relationship, communication and branding. Dumniy (2014) argue that South African businesses have been slow to acknowledge the potential value of integrating social technologies within the business. Wronski (2014) uses

social media marketing theory to describe how digital revolution has functioned as the great connector, allowing people to consume content on their terms create inspirational masterpieces and connect in real-time with people they care about. Stopforth (2014) observations resonate with those of Wronski (2014), stating that whether we like it or not social technologies and trends have changed the way we work, communicate, collaborate, create content, connect and even form relationships. Govender (2014) is the view that social business is one that has undergone a cultural shift to open up and become transparent. He further states that the social business is a new paradigm of thinking that integrates social media across the organisation.

Goldstuck (2014), furthermore, points out that the most significant finding aside from the growth is the extent to which social networks are being used on phones in South Africa. No less than 87% of facebook users and 85% of Twitter users are accessing these tools on their phones. Google+ has remained the laggard among social networks, with only 466 000 active users, only marginally higher than a year ago. However, the photo sharing and special effects app Instagram has exploded in use in South Africa, from below 100 000 a year ago to 680 000 in August 2013.

According to Wronski (2014) at the end of June 2013, no less than 14, 3 million smartphones were in use on South African mobile networks and the figure is expected to pass the 16-million mark during 2014. Goldstuck (2014) believes that ultimately, these phones will be using some form of social network or instant messaging platform, suggesting social network penetration passing the 33% mark during 2014. In his study Goldstuck (2014) found that mainstream media organisations are engaging in difficult to implement and to understand the ethical and social challenges of rapid growth in personal and social media. Barnard (2009) adds in his view that, given the global explosion of social networking tools, the uptake of the social media tools in the South African NGO sector has experienced significant growth and continued to challenge how to derive benefits from social media tools.

Based on the above discussion it is clear that The Internet is neutral in the same way as any other communication medium such as books, magazine, telephone, television and so forth. People need to understand that the internet is not human therefore it cannot take sides. Social media is now the new approach to market an organisation and encourage a dialogue between an organisation and the publics. Popular websites such as facebook, Twitter and Blogs are considered an important hub for communication. As a result of this study, South African public relations working within the NGO sector in the PR 2.0 field will get a better understanding of

the use of social media as a communication tool, with insight into the way in which social media is used.

3.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter three has paid attention to the definition and perception of public relations, a variety of aspects regarding social media, among other things the two-way symmetrical model of Grunig and Hunt (1984) model.

The literature study and theoretical discussion have revealed that the power of communication has shifted to the public, who co-creates and influences public relations messages. The use of social media, such as facebook, has become a pervasive and popular form of communication and information access. The networking nature of social media assists in the development of relationships, the dissemination of information, collaboration and engagement. The main insight gained was that public relations need to change the approach and adapt to active social media participation as it can result in a variety of organisational benefits. Furthermore, it is this new way of communication that will build stronger, more successful relationships between the public relations and public. Through the use of social media, publics are no longer passive observers in the marketplace.

In the following chapter, Chapter 4 attention will be focused on the research design, methodology, and data collection methods utilised in the empirical study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the methodology for this qualitative research study. This study uses a qualitative research approach as not much information currently exists that explains the process of using social media among public relations professionals. A grounded theory approach was used, which is a systemic, qualitative procedure that researchers use to generate a general explanation of a process action, or interaction among people (Creswell, 2005:52). Furthermore, the epistemological foundations for this study are constructionism and constructivism. The methodology for this study research project is a constructivist grounded theory. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research design of the empirical research regarding a social media guideline for public relations in non-governmental organisations. This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research design, including the beliefs, pilot study, and researcher role and how it informed the direction of the study and the approach to data collection and analysis of the study as a whole. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a discussion of quality in grounded theory and specifically strategies used to ensure a quality outcome.

4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

According to Salmons (2015), qualitative research is methods of inquiry directed at providing an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world of research participants by learning about their social and material circumstances, their experiences, perspectives and histories. Babbie and Mouton (2011) refers to qualitative research as research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Creswell (2013:43) outlines the characteristics of qualitative research and were applied throughout the data collection phase. These are as follows:

- The research is conducted in a natural setting of social actors;
- The qualitative researcher is seen as the key instrument in the research process;
- The researcher gathers multiple methods such as interviews, observations and documents;
- The actor's perspective (the insider perspective) is emphasised;

- The research is often inductive resulting in the generation of new theory;
- Researchers keep a focus on learning the meaning; and
- Researchers aim to get in-depth (thick description).

The characteristics identified in the abovementioned paragraph include those that are most commonly found in qualitative research. The overarching aim of qualitative research is suitable for searching a phenomenon that are new and relatively unknown. Grounded theory has become popular, being the methodology to develop a theory based on data (Glaser and Strauss, 2006). It has been defined as a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon (Charmaz, 2006). In a grounded theory study the steps are to identify the central phenomenon, the causal conditions, the intervening conditions and the strategies and consequences (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Furthermore, compared to other approaches to theory development it does not separate data collection and analysis. A researcher following a qualitative approach seeks to explore an unknown phenomenon. The main purpose of this grounded theory is based on the idea that while collecting data and simultaneously analysing the data the theory can be developed and or newly created. The following section focuses on the grounded theory.

4.3 GROUNDED THEORY

Grounded theory has been referred to as the process (or method) of analysis rather than a methodology and it has been suggested that it can be applied to other methodologies (Creswell, 2013:84). Whereas, Salmons (2015:240) on the other hand refers to grounded theory as usually selected as a methodology when the study aims to generate new theory. Because of this assumption, Charmaz (2006) writes that qualitative researchers from various methodological background use techniques set out by grounded theory to manage their data. Grounded theory was born from the constant comparative method as developed by Glaser and Strauss and places emphasis on the creation of new theory, as is the case with qualitative research methods (Goulding, 2002). Grounded theory is often used as a general reference to inductive qualitative analysis; it consist of specific and systematic procedures (Creswell, 2013). The belief that knowledge can be obtained using generating new theories instead of analysing data from existing ones is fundamental to the principle of grounded theory (Goulding, 2002:42). For this study, grounded theory (or more specifically, constructivist grounded theory) has been selected as the method for the proposed qualitative study.

The reason for the choice of grounded research is selected as the method for the qualitative research study. The reason is that the phenomenon of social media is relatively new. According to Salmons (2015:20) theories, whether these are theories of knowledge or theories from the discipline or field of study, underpin the research design. Grounded theory is concerned with generating theory (Charmaz, 2006). A researcher aims to discover and ground theoretical principles in the data (Salmons (2015:20). It is both a theory for the development of theory and the theory that results from the application of the grounded theory framework.

The following section explores the history of grounded theory, the characteristics that are common throughout all schools of grounded theory; furthermore the overall purpose is to give a comprehensive explanation of the constructivist approach and the reason for the choice of qualitative grounded theory for this study.

4.3.1 History of grounded theory

Grounded theory was started by the constant comparative method as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and places emphasis on the creation of new theory as is the case with qualitative research methods (Corbin and Strauss, 2007; Glaser, 1978; Creswell, 2013:83). Grounded theory was first presented by Glaser and Strauss in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Goulding, 2002). The same author further writes that in defining the grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss sought to justify a qualitative approach to research and position qualitative enquiry as rigorous. The grounded theory put forward by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 was influenced by their respective theoretical backgrounds, Strauss is more closely aligned with what is viewed as symbolic interactionism, and Glaser is positivist roots (Charmaz, 2006). There are many principles that go along with a grounded theory which help promote emergent processes, subjective social meanings, problem-solving and the open-ended study of action (Charmaz, 2006:7).

According to Goulding (2002:41), the aim of grounded theory was developed to provide a rationale for using qualitative research to develop the theoretical analysis. All grounded theory inquiry should result in the generation of substantive or formal theory (Charmaz, 2006). The same author suggests that Glaser and Strauss published their 1967 book to encourage researchers to develop new theory rather than verify an existing one, and to prove that qualitative inquiry can be rigorous and can generate valid theory. Furthermore, Charmaz (2006:5) point out that quantitative researchers of the 1960s saw qualitative as impressionistic, anecdotal, unsystematic and biased. Charmaz (2006:4) further writes that researcher who

adopted the positivist paradigm aimed to discover causal explanations and to make predictions about an externally knowable world. Their beliefs reduced qualities of human experience to quantifiable variables. In common, based on the views above positivist researchers used qualitative research as a precursor to quantitative data collection. Creswell (2014:54) indicates that quantitative research theory is an inter-related set of constructs formed into propositions or hypotheses that specify the relationship among variables. Charmaz (2006) is the view that quantitative researchers concern themselves with collecting concrete data or with testing hypotheses derived from existing theory. Particularly quantitative researchers start with a theory, develop a hypothesis, and collect data to refine or contradict the theory (Salmons, 2015:21). The term grounded theory mentioned in the discussion above indicates that grounded theory is an attempt to make qualitative research more scientific (Goulding, 2002:41). Glaser and Strauss's cutting-edge book proposed that systematic qualitative analysis had its logic and could generate theory (Charmaz, 2006:5).

The belief that knowledge can be obtained using generating new theories instead of analysing secondary data is fundamental to the principle of grounded theory (Creswell, 2013). Schwandt, (as cited in Salmons, 2015:293) refers to theory as a unified systematic causal explanation of a diverse range of social phenomena. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define a theory as a set of well-developed categories (themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form theoretical framework some social or another phenomenon. Based on the abovementioned definition, building a theory can be seen as a creative, dynamic and iterative process. It is also important to realise that grounded theory is not about numbers, but concepts, meaning and relationships.

To shed more light on grounded theory, it is appropriate to pay attention to the common characteristics of grounded theory as discussed below.

4.3.2 Common characteristics of grounded theory

Salmons (2015:28) indicates that grounded theory can be viewed as a method designed to generate theory, new theoretical constructs or models. Charmaz (2006:6) suggest that grounded theory can be viewed as a method with different approaches reflecting differing epistemological and ontological backgrounds which help researchers to control their research process and to increase analytic framework of their work. Charmaz (2006:9) further view grounded theory methods as a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages. Based on the abovementioned suggestions of grounded theory by Salmons and Charmaz, to put it simply, all grounded theory studies share some components that are common across the methods of grounded theory research.

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967); Glaser (1978); Strauss (1987) (as cited in Charmaz, 2006:5) the following common characteristics of grounded theory can be added:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis;
- Constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses;
- Using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis;
- Advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis;
- Memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, define relationships between categories, and identify gaps;
- Sampling aimed toward theory construction, not for population representativeness; and
- Conducting the literature study after developing an independent analysis.

From the abovementioned discussion, it is evident that almost everything a grounded theory carries out is rooted in the methods used to carry out the study. As a precondition to developing a strong substantiation of concepts in theory, data collection requires rigorous systematic procedures which can be applied to different sources such as interviews, documents. These sources are analysed by using appropriate procedures. Salmons (2015) agrees with the statement above by indicating that when researchers choose epistemology, methodology and methods they draw on accepted concepts and practices to create their frameworks to use in designing, planning, conducting and analysing and reporting on the study. The characteristics identified in the abovementioned paragraph include those that are most commonly found in qualitative research; the characteristics are elaborated on in the discussion of the research design and conduct of the research study. Next to be discussed is the preferred research design utilised for this research study.

4.2.3 Rationale for use of constructivist grounded theory

Grounded theory, especially constructivist has been selected as the method proposed for the proposed qualitative research. This study uses a qualitative research approach as not much academic information currently exist that explains the process of social media in non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The researcher adopted a grounded theory approach for the development of the model. Social media academic literature has not addressed the use of social media in NGOs. The researcher in this study used different data sources such as academic literature as a basis for development.

To get the desired outcome for this research, the constructivist/constructionist was used and its impact on methodology. Salmons (2015:21) indicates that qualitative researchers base studies on interpretive or constructivist epistemologies. The constructivist worldview put forward that researchers interpret experiences in the social world to produce and reproduce meanings (Blaikie, 2004). From this view, constructivist/constructivism suggest that the researcher and participant together construct data and in turn, construct meaning from data (Birks and Mills, 2011). Instead of verification or testing a hypothesis, grounded theory is concerned with the generation of theory. Salmons (2015) supports the above view by indicating that knowledge occurs when people interpret their observations of the world and invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience and modify these constructions in the light of new experience. Accordingly, in this study, the researcher applied theoretical sampling which has been found to be especially important when studying new or unexplored phenomenon because it allows for discovery. While collecting data, coding and analysis it took place concurrently. The main idea behind the open coding phase, new and repeatedly found concepts were added to the model, relationships between concepts and codes were developed to create meaning and understanding to the concepts. More clarity on the meaning and nature of the constructivist grounded theory will be discussed in the next section.

4.3.4 Constructivist grounded theory

Glaser and Strauss (1967) writes that the discovery of grounded theory constitutes the external reality. On the other hand, Charmaz (2006) states that reality is co-constructed and the individuals construct knowledge and experiences through social interaction. According to Creswell (2013), a second variant of grounded theory is found in the constructivist writing of Charmaz. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) is of the view that constructivist grounded theory lies within the interpretive approach to qualitative research with flexible guidelines, which focus on the theory developed that depends on the researchers view. Charmaz (in Creswell, 2013) indicates that there are factors that influence the final research outcome. The same author further writes that constructivist grounded theory divided these factors and places more emphasis on the views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions and ideologies of individuals than on the methods of research. The main idea behind the constructivist is to be able to start with experience and ask how members construct it (Charmaz, 2006:187). A constructivist has a very clear idea what is the phenomenon, gain multiple views and locate it in its web of connections and constraints, constructivist acknowledges that their interpretation of the

phenomenon is itself a construction. In essence, the key difference between constructivist and constructivism is its impact on the methodology.

Charmaz (2006) supports the above statement by indicating that the discovery of grounded theory transformed methodological debates and inspired generations of qualitative researchers. According to Bryant and Charmaz (in Birks and Mills, 2011:8) grounded theory has been seen as saliently authored, that is the researcher has maintained the position of remaining at length. According to Charmaz (2006), the purpose of constructivist grounded theory is to position the researcher as the author of a co-construction of experience and meaning. However, a major challenge about the constructivist grounded theory is the differing methods impacts data collection and the manner in which data collection is carried out and the process of analysis and theory generated. The grounded theory also suggests that it is in the researcher's interest not to bring preconceived ideas to the research. The following section explores the nature and the role of theory in grounded theory.

Based on the views mentioned above of constructivist grounded theory, constructivist is particularly appropriate for this research study because the underlying epistemology aligns with the researcher's worldview which is that there is no external or fixed reality. It is clear that reality is constructed (or rather co-constructed) by individuals in the field and through interaction and communication with others in the environment.

4.3.5 The nature and role of theory in grounded theory

According to Strauss and Corbin (1994), theory is a set of relationships that offer a plausible explanations of the phenomenon under study. Schwandt (2007:293) defines theory as a unified, systematic causal explanation of a diverse range of social phenomena. Salmons (2015) indicate that theories are interrelated with the epistemology that guides the study and will ultimately be used to justify and explain the new knowledge that emerges from the study. According to Birks and Mills (2011:16) the purpose of theory is to determine grounded theory as the product of the investigative processes which is abstracted from, or grounded in, data generated and collected by the researcher in grounded theory.

Charmaz (2006) indicates that the concept of theory can be defined differently from positivist and interpretive to identify major themes in them. Each of these definitions is briefly described below:

- **Positivist definition of theory:** treat theory as a statement of relationships between abstract concepts that cover a wide range of empirical observations. Furthermore, positivist view their theoretical concepts as variables and construct operations definitions of their concepts for hypothesis testing through accurate replicable empirical measurements (Charmaz, 2006:126). Glaser and Strauss (1967) defined theory as that which has the explanatory or predictive ability. Birks and Mills (2011) further define theory as an explanatory scheme comprising a set of concepts related to each other through logical patterns of connectivity.
- **Interpretive definition of theory:** state definition of theory emphasises understanding rather than explanation (Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, interpretive theory calls for an imaginative understanding of the studied phenomenon where this type of theory assumes emergent, multiple realities, facts and values as linked truth as provisional and social life as processual (Charmaz, 2006:126).

Glaser and Strauss (as cited in Goulding, 2002) indicate that theory may have important general implications and relevance to the development of a grounded formal theory. Creswell (2013) also mentions that theory emerges and evolves throughout the process of open, axial and selective coding. This allowed this study to categorise and described themes that emerge from data interpreted to make meaning and to increase the trustworthiness of the study. Also, analysing data through open coding, axial coding process, and selective coding to generate a theory (Creswell, 2013). The key principles of grounded theory are summarised below as beliefs of grounded theory. In general, grounded theory is the journey of discovery through the research process. The grounded theory study aim to develop a model organisations can use to improve adoption of new technologies.

4.3.6 Key principles of grounded theory

Charmaz (2006:9) views grounded theory as a set of principles and practices, not as prescriptions or packages. Birks and Mills (2011:130) indicate that there are four general principles that are needed to be considered on grounded theory:

- Identify your audience;
- Decide what level of analytical detail is required;
- Choose an appropriate style of writing; and
- Present your grounded theory as a whole.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) provide an explicit method for analysing processes. A process according to Charmaz (2006) consist of unfolding temporal sequences that may have

identifiable markers with clear beginnings and endings and benchmarks in between, the sequences are linked in a process and lead to change. Golding (2011) describes grounded theory objective is to generate theory through systematic and simultaneous process of data collection and analysis. Birks and Mills (2011:12) indicate that grounded theory is an integrated and comprehensive theory that explains a process or scheme associated with a phenomenon, where this theory is generated by the researcher.

On the other hand, Charmaz (2006:2) refer to grounded methods as consisting of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories grounded in the data themselves. Guidelines offer a set of general principles rather than formulaic rules (Charmaz, 2006:2). Furthermore, Charmaz (2006:3) note that grounded theorist start with data, the researcher constructs data through our observations, interactions, and materials that we gather about the topic or setting. Also, she emphasises that grounded theory methods have the additional advantage of containing explicit guidelines that show how to proceed.

Birks and Mills (2011:130) state that grounded theory is concerned with the methodological congruence and rigour of the study as a whole. The same author indicates that the inherent principle of grounded theory lies in how each component integrates together. Birks and Mills (2011:130) further highlights that a well-integrated grounded theory that demonstrates logic, consistency and its contribution to knowledge can be communicated in an interesting and succinct manner. Glaser (1978) argues for a funnel-down approach where a grounded theory's core category is introduced using an outline approach before the researchers focusing on a specific component in depth.

Charmaz (2006) indicates that grounded theory is both an inductive and abductive method. According to Birks and Mills (2011:11) abductively occurs at all stages of analysis, but particularly so during the constant comparative analysis of categories to categories leading to theoretical integration. On the other hand, Reichertz (2007:220) agrees by indicating that an abduction is an intellectual act that brings together things which one had never associated with one another. It is a cognitive logic of discovery (Reichertz, 2007).

Based on the abovementioned discussion of grounded theory, it is clear that grounded theory is a suitable method of investigation for generating a new theory. Particularly through a combination of abduction and induction grounded theorist work up from the data to create more abstract concepts increasingly and to theorise the phenomenon. As for the purpose of this research applies grounded theory in a holistic sense, as the approach to the inquiry that

has guided the research design and execution. The researcher combined both induction and abduction in a cyclical manner, moving backwards and forwards between induction and abduction. Furthermore, the researcher managed to take data collection simultaneously and analysis. Next to be discussed is the literature study in grounded theory.

4.3.7 The literature study in grounded theory

The role of the literature study in grounded theory is a much-contested topic (Birks and Mills, 2011; Charmaz, 2006; Goulding, 2002). There has been significant debate about the timing of literature study in grounded theory research and how the views relate to the research. The main discussion behind grounded theory is the foundation of methodology. Goulding (2002:70) indicates that the researcher enters the field with a very limited knowledge of the problem under investigation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued against the conduct of the literature study before the researcher enters the field. According to Creswell (2013) in the qualitative research literature is conducted related to the problem before data collection. On the other hand, Glaser and Strauss (2006) argue against this idea that researchers should enter the field with no preconceived ideas or knowledge of existent theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967); Glaser (1978); Charmaz (2006) further argue that conducting the literature study until after developing an independent analysis is the defining component of grounded theory. Charmaz (2006) indicates that the purpose of delaying the literature study is to avoid importing preconceived ideas and imposing them to the study. Charmaz (2006) is the view that the delay of the literature study is that a detailed literature study conducted at the beginning may contaminate the data collection, analysis and theory development by leading the researcher to impose existing frameworks or other theoretical ideas as the foundation of the data. Glaser in Birks and Mills (2011) however encourage the grounded theorist to engage with the literature from the very beginning of a study, but on the topic is to avoid contaminating and constraining the analysis of the data with codes and concepts. According to Birks and Mills (2011), this would undermine the focus and quality of the grounded theory research.

Charmaz (2006:165) further indicates that the key points in Discovery book clarify Strauss and Corbin (1990) views that we all bring to the inquiry a considerable background in professional and disciplinary literature while Glaser (1992) emphasise that grounded theorist should keep themselves uncontaminated by extant ideas. Extensive knowledge of pre-existing literature and in particular theory may withhold the researcher's creativity and delay their ability to generate new theory. Birks and Mills (2011:22) suggest there are many ways in which study can assist a researcher in grounded theory is used to enhance theoretical sensitivity. Dunne

(2011) agree with the statement mentioned above by indicating that an early study of the literature may cause the researcher to doubt their ability to generate theory.

Charmaz (2006:166) writes that the literature study can serve as an opportunity to set the stage for what you do in subsequent sections or chapters. Analyse the most significant works about what you addressed in your new developed grounded theory. In the following section Charmaz (2006), Golding (2002), Birks and Mills (2011) argue for literature study before conducting empirical research can do well for the following reasons:

- It ensures that the intended study has not already been done.
- It can help contextualise the study, orientate the researcher.
- Literature study helps the researcher in covering the literature and theoretical framework.
- Disciplines also shape how, where and to what extent the research study the literature and use extant theories.
- Grounded theory is designed to empower the researcher and therefore, it is important to conduct a literature study to identify gaps in existing knowledge.
- A literature study can allow the researcher to critique earlier studies and theories and make comparisons and aim to get ideas out in clear statements.
- It assists the researcher in gaining theoretical sensitivity.
- Only when the theory has substance should the researcher study the literature directly related to the field of study.
- This is proposed to help and assist the researcher to avoid bringing preconceptions.

According to Glaser, in Charmaz (2006) the emergent nature of grounded theory where the direction of the research is shaped by the co-constructed data that is collected and analysed. On the other hand, Strauss in Charmaz (2006) indicates the notions of human agency, emergent processes, social and subjective meanings, problem-solving practices and the open-ended study of action to grounded theory. Based on the above, it is not possible for the researcher to operate in a vacuum. It is necessary to study the literature to establish a need for the research study and to identify a gap in the existing body of knowledge. With this in mind, therefore, literature study focuses on demonstrating the need for this research by providing an analytical overview of existing related research and highlighting the gap this research will fill. A researcher has a very clear idea and also contextualise the research within the domain of communication research and the discipline of public relations in the context of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) using social media.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

4.4.1 Research setting

The research setting was limited to the following nine non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Gauteng of varying sizes. According to Creswell (2013) in a grounded study the researcher chooses participants who can contribute to building the opening and axial coding of the theory. Emails were sent to the selected NGOs to gain permission to conduct research at the NGOs around Gauteng. The organisational setting differed from participant to participant.

4.4.2 Establishing researcher roles

Contrary to a quantitative technique where objectivity is the goal, qualitative studies accept researcher subjectivity as an instrument in the data collection process (Maree, 2010). Maree (2012:75) indicates that qualitative researcher's role is assumed to become immersed in the situation and the phenomenon being studied. During the interviews, the rapport was established to enable easy collection of data so that participants will disclose detailed perspectives. The building of rapport differs depending on the type of qualitative approach being used (Creswell, 2013:151). To assure participants of the valuable contribution that they would be making to the study of social media. The researcher formally requested permission from non-governmental organisations management to conduct research at nine NGOs. After permission had been granted, a formal appointment was scheduled with the management to explain the nature and extent of the research. In each setting (NGO) a contact person was allocated to the researcher to provide the necessary information and support during the research study. Individual interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data. The researcher aimed to gain information from all nine NGOs until saturation was reached.

4.4.3 Pilot study

Strydom (2002) indicates that a pilot study is a very small research study conducted before a larger study to test whether methodology, sampling instruments, and analysis are suitable to acquire the experience and awareness of the complexity and dynamics of the particular field of research. Creswell (2013:165) concur that the definition of Strydom by pointing out that the purpose of a pilot study in qualitative research is to determine whether relevant data can be obtained from research participants and allows the researcher to test certain questions to refine them later. The pilot study allows the researcher to make necessary adjustments in estimating the instruments involved when problems arise (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Yin

(2009) also recommends a pilot test to refine data collection plans and develop relevant lines of questions. Neuman (2003) supports the idea of conducting a pilot study to improve the success and effectiveness of the interview guide in case modifications to the questions are required to ensure clarity of the questions.

In this study, a pilot study was done at NGOs with management to validate the interview guide for the final study. A further test on the use of social media in NGOs was done where the researcher probed and asked more questions and more follow up questions to obtain more in-depth answers. The results confirmed that the primary goal of the interview questions was adequate to obtain more answers from participants. A pilot study is imperative in any study; it enables the researcher to identify and rectify problems before the research being conducted. It provides an indication of the response rate that can be expected from the participants. Attention was paid to the critique given by the management. Certain questions were changed and others were improved, some of the questions were not clear and others ambiguous. The language used and the jargon on the questions was also addressed. Based on the above the pilot study allowed the researcher to reflect on the research design, interviews questions and test approach to the interviews. The researcher conducted the interviews with each participants face-to-face. Interviews allowed the researcher to explore things seen during the observation in the settings and to pursue new directions that had arisen in the process of conducting face to face interview data.

4.4.4 Sampling

Birks and Mills (2011:69) define theoretical sampling as the process of identifying and pursuing clues that arise during analysis in a grounded theory study. Grounded theorist collect data and undertake analysis simultaneously, changing sampling strategies as indicated by the data. Charmaz (2006) points out that there are two phases of sampling: initial and theoretical. She makes the observation that the term initial sampling in grounded theory is where you start, whereas theoretical sampling directs you where to go. The same author points out that the main purpose of theoretical sampling is to elaborate and refine the categories constituting your theory (Charmaz, 2006:96). The main idea behind theoretical sampling is to gather more data focus on the category and its properties. Birks and Mills (2011) suggest that it is theoretical sampling that is unique and distinguishes grounded theory from other approaches to qualitative research inquiry. Charmaz (2006) highlights the fact that theoretical sampling is a tool used to achieve theoretical saturation. Theoretical sampling as a tool is intended to minimise any bias or misunderstanding, so ideally to collect, explain and sort information in categories. This statement is supported by Birks and Mills (2011:70), indicating that theoretical

sampling provides direction simultaneous data collection and analysis continue until theoretical saturation has been realised.

Based on the above, the researcher undertook two types of non-probability sampling; snowballing and purposive sampling for the study. Salmons (2015) defines purposive sampling as when selecting people to interview because the sample is intentionally selected according to the needs of the study. Babbie and Mouton (2011) describe purposive sampling as based on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units' studies such as people in the organisations. According to Salmons (2015:118), non-probability sampling is the most commonly used method of qualitative research.

Based on the abovementioned identified considerations that researchers have to observe, particularly when sampling is evident that sampling technique is to collect the richest data. Salmons (2015:118) support the statements made on sampling by indicating that sampling involves more detailed exploration with a smaller number of research participants concerning the use to be made of the data provided. Purposive sampling implies that the most important aspect the researcher wants to see is different instances of theoretical principles, at different moments, in different places, with different people. It also assumes the researcher concern is with the conditions under which the construct or theory operate, not with the generalisation of the findings to other settings (Salmons, 2015:124).

For the purpose of this study theoretical sampling is achieved when no new categories emerge from the data and particularly when new data does not add to existing categories (Charmaz, 2006). The same author also points out that this approach will provide opportunity and become of value once categories have been developed as it enables the researcher to clarify and expand categories (Charmaz, 2006:70). In the very same or even in a better position, Birks and Mills (2011:69) indicate that regardless of the sampling size grounded theory aim to build theory through the construction of categories directly from the data.

This study used theoretical sampling after initial categories were developed to refine and build upon them. Strauss (in Birks and Mills, 2011:69) supports the above statement by pointing out that through theory directed sampling the researcher can examine concepts from various angles and question their meaning for developing theory. This approach provided opportunities to allow emergent categories and gain understanding and insight into the selection of participants (Birks and Mills, 2011:70). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978) at this stage of the research, no preconceived perceptions or opinions should be allowed to colour the investigation. Theoretical sampling often involves refining by

allowing the researcher to have an open mind and flexibility in the collection of data (Goulding 2004:198). Charmaz (2006) argues that the fundamental goal of theoretical sampling is the collection of further data with decisions on sampling strategies based on the emerging theory. Birks and Mills (2011:73) is of the opinion that the theoretical sampling is a self-correcting exercise to research.

Above all, theoretical sampling as it is the research method in this study allowed the researcher to determine variations within and relationships between categories of social media. The researcher purposefully recruited participants from nine non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Gauteng. Subsequently, the researcher selected participants regarding helping understand the features of categories. Theoretical sampling allowed the researcher to explore diversity and experience of public relations practitioners in NGOs who use social media to communicate with the internal and external publics. The primary aim of theoretical sampling in this study is achieved through recruiting public relations practitioners who use social media as a communication tool. In essence, the public relations practitioners who are working within the communications department in an NGO located in Gauteng province was recruited specifically to avoid geographical constraints. There were nine participants in this research. This sample represents a group of people which has experience of the phenomenon under investigation.

Creswell (2013) states that there are not rules for sample size in qualitative research with the sample size depending on what the researcher wants to know, and what can be done with the available time and resources. Marshall and Rossman (2010) note that sampling can change during a study and that researcher needs to be flexible, and plan ahead for a strategy.

Salmons (2015:120) explains, one of the most challenging obstacles with regards to the size of the sample is that there are no standardised guidelines on how many research participants are appropriate for the research study. Kvale (as cited in Creswell, 2013) suggest that researchers must interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what they need to know. The key to successful sampling is not to have a too big a sample that it is difficult to extract thick, rich data. On the contrary, the sample should not be too small or lack diversity and detailed information (Creswell, 2013; Salmons, 2015, Goulding, 2002). Salmon (2015) note that criteria sampling is based on the researchers identification of specific characteristics that serve as the basis for selection of research participants. Precision and clarity are important in any project involving social media communication.

Babbie and Mouton (2011:167) describe the snowballing procedure as implemented by collecting data on the few members of the target population and then asking those individuals to provide the information needed to locate other members of that population whom they happen to know. Maree (2010:80) further indicates that snowball is known as chain referral sampling whereby participants penetrate social networks to refer the researcher to other participants who could take part and contribute to the study. Babbie and Mouton (2011:167) indicate that snowballing effect is defined as appropriate when the members of a special population are difficult to locate.

The following criteria were utilised as a basis for the selection of research participants:

- Practitioners who handle social media in NGOs;
- Practitioners with public relations qualifications;
- A purposeful sample of nine senior practitioners, well established, with experience and standing in PR profession and represented women and men; and
- The interview followed a funnel method, starting with general questions and moving towards more specific questions (Babbie, 2004).

In light of the above, in this study purposive and snowball sampling effect provide a total of nine research participants and allowed for data saturation of emerging categories and themes. A purposive sampling technique was used to select NGOs for the research. The primary use of theoretical sampling for this study was in seeking out participants who were using social media specifically in NGOs. The researcher selected practitioners using social media as a tool for communication in NGOs. It allowed the researcher to determine and help understand the features of the categories, the diversity within the NGOs and the commonalities between categories and codes. NGOs in Gauteng were approached and invited to participate in this study. They were also requested to provide names of other individuals who also fit criteria of the study. The researcher use own judgement based on the nature of the study, the sample, norms and culture of the NGOs where the researcher hope to find information-rich multiple cases for research participation. Based on the above discussion, it is evident that there is no rule for the sample size for grounded theory studies because it is impossible to estimate when theoretical saturation will be achieved. Furthermore, different data collection strategies can also impact on the number of participants required to achieve theoretical saturation. Therefore, for this research study, the researcher achieved theoretical saturation with nine participants in NGOs.

4.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

There are some methods used when generating data. The main data collection technique used in this research study was semi-structured interviews.

4.5.1 Conducting interviews

According to Birks and Millis (2011:74) interviews are one of the most widely used qualitative methods for collecting data. Salmons (2015) indicate that the name interview originates from the Latin terms *inter* (meaning between, among or mutually, reciprocally) and *view* (meaning the ability to see something). Webb and Webb (as cited in Salmons, 2015) define research interview as a conversation with a purpose. Maree (2010) supports the abovementioned definition by Webb and Webb, by indicating that an interview is a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks the participants questions to collect data and to learn about the ideas belief views, opinions and behaviours of the participants. Salmons (2015) state that the advantage of the interview is to describe a particular experience and a full context in-depth, with as much complexity as possible of the subject. It also allowed the researcher to develop a relationship with the subject matter experts. The disadvantage according to Salmons (2015) is that it takes up too much time, the researcher's purpose is to generate reliable knowledge. It can be costly as it requires time to draw out responses to specific questions. The researcher can provide bias the interviewee's response.

Based on the above, in this study semi-structured interviews were used on purposefully selected individuals in the NGO sector. In conducting the interviews, the researcher was aware that setting the stage is an important process in qualitative interviewing (Kvale, 2007). Interviews were conducted face-to-face, using technology devices to record information. The researcher also conducted interviews with each participant and then observed how participants relate experiences in social media. Before the semi-structured interviews, the participants were informed of the confidential conversation and were asked permission before the interview was recorded. The reason for recording was to ensure that no information is lost and that the researcher could transcribe the conversation and always refer to transcripts when needed. An interview schedule was used to conduct semi-structured interviews with practitioners in NGOs. The interview schedule was important to allow participants to tell the particular stories they wanted to tell, without imposing pre-defined ideas on the data, a common in constructivist grounded theory interviews, in this study each interview commenced with the single question to prompt the participants to start talking about how they use social media platforms in NGO. According to Wellman (2010) when employing interview schedule, the order of the questions may vary depending on the way in which the interview develops

and organisation context that is encountered about the research topic. The researcher is allowed to adapt the formulation of questions, including the terminology to fit the background and educational level of the participants. The interviews were informal conversations in which the participants shared their experiences of using social media. In keeping with the grounded theory strategies the researcher gave and allowed the participants enough time and broad scope to tell their stories that were of great significance to them. As a result of this, the stories told provided insight into their experience for the researcher to interpret.

The statement above is supported by Charmaz (2006:29) by indicating that qualitative interviewing provides open-ended, in-depth exploration of an aspect of life about which the interviewee has substantial experience. The combination of how the researcher constructs the questions and conducts the interview shapes the theory that emerges. Salmons (2015) concisely articulate that qualitative studies realise a deeper understanding of the meaning and purpose of participant's behaviour would enhance study findings. Also, interviewing is a flexible, emergent technique, ideas and issues emerge during the interview and interviewers can immediately pursue these leads (Charmaz, 2006:29).

Based on the above discussion, interviews are a common data collection method in grounded theory. Interviews are acceptable to grounded theory studies because they allow the study of participants experience and on the other hand provide participants with an opportunity to outline their experience in their original words (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher approach to interviewing was to get participants to talk about their experience of using social media. The reason this study employed semi-structured interviews was to ensure that the interview followed a logical and structured path. In essence, grounded theory depends on methods that the researcher undertakes into and the field for the findings to be grounded in the empirical world (Goulding, 2002). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants for an interview (see Annexure B). By asking participants to speak about their experience, the researcher was able to pick up words they used to describe the things that informed them. Above all, it was important for the researcher to understand the participant's use of social media in NGOs and their expectations and attitudes regarding the use of social media as a communication tool. Furthermore interviewing allows the researcher to take control of the data collection. The interview is designed to explore the participant's experience. With this approach, the participants can relate the experience in their words. In keeping with grounded theory the researcher was very cautious about forcing the data, instead guided the participants to share their experiences.

4.5.2 Recording of data

Creswell (2013:168) indicate protocol is a predesigned form used to record information collected during an observation or interview. The interview protocol enables a person to take notes during the interview about the responses of the interviewee. Recording of data should be planned for a systematic manner that is appropriate to the setting or participants (Creswell, 2013:168). The audio recordings have been retained for reference in the data analysis phase. In the current study data were collected in the following manner:

4.5.2.1 Memo's writing

In grounded theory, the use research memo-writing to elaborate categories, specify their properties, specify their properties, define relationships between categories and identify gaps throughout the research process (Charmaz, 2006:6). The same author further describes memo-writing as the pivotal and critical step between data collection, analysis and writing papers about the research. Memo-writing is a defining characteristic of grounded theory, as it encourages the researcher to analyse data early in the research process (Charmaz, 2006:72). On the other hand, Goulding (2002:65) indicate that the memos are vital and can be reflective notes, help maps out the emerging theory, are used to identify concepts and their properties. Glaser (1978) suggests that memo are a core stage in the process, and without using them theoretically to write up ideas the research is not, in fact, doing grounded theory.

Charmaz (2006:72) write that memos catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections you make, and crystallise questions and directions for you to pursue. Charmaz (2006:84) indicate that memo-writing allow the researcher to explore ideas about categories and are imminently correctable. Charmaz (2006:84) further state much of memo-writing will be concerned with making constant comparative methods in keeping with Glaser and Strauss's constant comparative methods.

According to Salmons (2015), the approach for carrying out reflexivity is through memoing creating your researcher's notebook. Through memo-writing, the researcher compares incidents, converse with yourself, new ideas, and insights arise, integrate categories during the act of writing (Charmaz, 2006). In addition to writing, rereading and working through research memos, Flick (2007) suggests the use of peer debriefing. Regular meetings with other people not involved in the research can help researchers disclose blind spots and consider approaches for redress (Flick, 2007). In light of this, the researcher had regular

meetings with the supervisor to share ideas, frustration of being uncertain about certain ideas. Writing memos allowed the researcher to explore ideas and thoughts as they emerged.

4.5.2.2 Personal diary and project journal

Babbie and Mouton (2011) indicate the personal diary as a source of life history data. In light of this, a personal diary and project journal were made use of during the study to ensure that various steps taken during the research process were recorded. A personal diary and journal were made use of to ensure the researcher express feelings, thoughts and reflections about the interviews of study as well as interpretations and important decisions. This assisted the researcher to gather secondary data for later analysis and coding and enhanced reflexivity and objectivity throughout the process.

4.5.2.3 Audiotape recording

In this study interviews were tape recorded for quality assurance purposes and to avoid any misrepresentation or understanding in the construction of theory. Audiotape recording also helps the researcher organise thoughts on items such as headings, information about starting the interview, concluding ideas, information on ending the interview and thanking the respondent. Interviews were recorded via audiotape with the permission of each participant in NGOs, to enable the researcher to give full attention to the participant and to ensure that data are available for inspection and interpretation (Creswell, 2013). Interviews were transcribed to facilitate initial line-by-line coding. The overall purpose of audio recordings has been retained for reference in the data analysis phase.

4.5.2.4 Data storage and safe keeping

Creswell (2013:175) suggest that it is beneficial to set aside data for storage. Backing up information collected and noting changes made is important for all types of research studies. Creswell (2013) further point out that storing data is specifically important for qualitative data because of the extremely large database. Based on the abovementioned discussion, immediately following each interview, both a soft-copy as well as a manual backup system of all audiotapes transcribed interviews, personal diary and memos were maintained to minimise the risk of data being lost. Also, all documents were saved on computer safeguarded by password to ensure safety and confidentiality of all data. Furthermore, Kvale (2007) points out that it is beneficial to set aside some time for reflection. The process of reflecting allowed the researcher in this study to analyse personally the research process and reflect on the interview

process. It is evident that based on the abovementioned discussion on the reflection, it is clear that it helped the researcher to understand the importance of reflexivity and help to improve the research design. In the next section, we will turn attention to essential grounded methods related to data analysis.

4.5.3 Data analysis

According to Maree (2010:99), data analysis is an ongoing and iterative (non-linear) process, which implies that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined and not merely some successive steps. Rubin and Rubin (2012), Kvale and Brinkman (2009), Kvale (2007), supports the abovementioned definition by Maree (2010) by describing data analysis as a process that begins with research design and is ongoing throughout the research. Salmons (2015:255) is of the opinion that the researcher moves through distinct phases, the analysis is iterative and deeply reflective, not linear. Qualitative analysis transforms data into findings. Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data.

The researcher proceeded to study the transcripts of the semi-structured interviews to find and identify patterns emerge from the raw data. Data were organised into themes related to the research objectives of the study. The basic principles of grounded theory data analysis guided this study (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Salmons (2015:254) indicates that the expectations of grounded theory analysis are very specific, which is generate new theoretical principles. Creswell (2013) affirms that grounded theory researchers build on the understanding of individuals' experiences derived through phenomenological methods to generate theoretical principles. Birks and Mills (2011) indicate that grounded theory is categorical in its intent. The language used such as concepts, codes, and categories mean the same or similar things (Birks and Mills (2011:89). Salmons (2015) writes that in grounded theory researchers look at categories discovered in the data and construct explanatory theoretical frameworks which provide abstract, conceptual understandings of the studied phenomenon. The term coding was introduced by Charmaz (2006) and was defined as the first analytic step in moving beyond statements which are the process of defining what the data are about to make interpretations. According to Charmaz (2006:43) coding in grounded theory means naming segments and attaching labels to segments of data that simultaneously categorises, summarises and accounts for each piece of data. Furthermore, Chamaz (2006:47) writes that coding is the pivotal link between

collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding the researcher define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means.

Strauss and Corbin (as cited in Creswell, 2013:195) states that coding consists of at least three phases of coding namely, open, axial and selective. Each of these terms is discussed below:

- **Open coding:** In the open coding phase the researcher examines the text (e.g., transcripts, field notes, documents) for silent categories of information supported by the text. Using the constant comparative approach, the researcher attempts to saturate the categories.
- **Axial coding:** it means interconnecting the categories (Creswell, 2013). Strauss and Corbin (1990: 96) defined axial coding as a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories, while elevating the level of conceptual analysis. This definition acknowledges that the identification of patterns and relationships during the process of category development is unavoidable.
- **Selective coding:** it means building a story that connects the categories. In essence, the researcher generates propositions or statements that interrelate the categories in the coding paradigm.

The initial term coding is synonymous with Charmaz (2006) and it encourages the researcher to study the data closely to begin conceptualising ideas. Strauss and Corbin (as cited in Brick and Mills, 2011) refer to initial coding as a reflective activity whereby the researcher constantly needs to interrogate themselves about the early analytical decisions that they make. The main idea behind initial coding is to be able to study data closely to begin conceptualising ideas.

According to Charmaz (2006:57), focused coding means using the most significant and frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. Coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorise your data incisively and completely. Charmaz (2005:57) emphasises that the goal is to determine the adequacy of those codes. Focused coding allows the researcher to separate, sort, synthesise and explain large amounts of data and are more directed, selective and conceptual than initial coding. More clarity on the focused coding will be discussed in the next section:

- **Word by word coding:** this approach is useful when working with documents or certain types of written material such as Internet data (Charmaz, 2006:50).

- Line-by-line coding: this works well with detailed data, empirical problems, process, observations, and documents. It also encouraged the researcher to stay open to the data. Engaging in line by line coding help to refocus later interviews.
- Coding incident to incident: Here the researcher compares incident with the incident, and as ideas take hold, new incidents are compared to the researchers conceptualisation or previously coded incidents. Comparative methods help to see and make sense of observation in new analytic ways. To put it simply, this type of coding helps the discovery of patterns and contrasts.

Focused coding further means using the most significant and or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorise your data incisively and completely (Charmaz, 2006:57). The main idea behind grounded theory is that coding is an emergent process, unexpected ideas emerge. Code that the researcher constructs to fit one incident might illuminate another. A researcher has compared codes and data with each other.

Charmaz (as cited in Birks and Mills, 2011) is of the opinion that theoretical coding is employed in the later stages of grounded theory analysis for the purpose of moving your analytic story in a theoretical direction. Glaser (1978:72) write that theoretical coding is how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into a theory. It is agreed upon, that theoretical codes are integrative and lead to the logical and consistent codes that the researched have collected. Charmaz (2006:63) propose instead that theoretical codes specify possible relationships between categories developed in focused coding. Theoretical codes help clarify and sharpen analysis but the researcher has to avoid imposing a forced framework.

Charmaz (2006:96) define theoretical sampling as seeking pertinent data to develop your emerging theory. The main purpose of theoretical sampling is to elaborate and refine the categories constituting a theory. Furthermore, Charmaz (2006:96) writes that you conduct theoretical sampling to develop the properties of your categories until no new properties emerge. Based on the abovementioned definitions of theoretical sampling by Charmaz, to put it simply, the participants interviewed are theoretical chosen (called theoretical sampling) to help the researcher best form the theory. Creswell (2013) indicates that analysis of data the researcher makes to the field depends on whether the categories of information become saturated and whether the theory is elaborated in all of its complexity. According to Salmons (2015), the grounded theory analysis are very specific to generate new theoretical principles. Researchers build on the understanding of individual experiences derived through phenomenological methods to generate theoretical principles (Creswell, 2013).

In the current study, initial coding, focused coding and theoretical coding are utilised to thoroughly analyse and integrate the data gathered to develop an integrated policy guideline for public relations practitioners in NGOs. Salmons (2015) proposes that situational analysis is a style of grounded theory. The situational analysis investigates the social situation while grounded theory looks at the social process. Furthermore, Salmons (2015) point out that the situational analysis may be useful for researchers investigating policies, opinions, where participants express distinctive positions on the topic of inquiry. In addition to the above, data obtained from field notes, memo-writing, interviews to build case studies are integrated during the establishment of final categories.

During the semi-structured interviews more data on categories and themes had been conducted. All questions as well as follow-up questions informed by the interview schedule were covered during the interviews. Data were gathered until the categories were saturated. Salmons (2015:124) is of the view that saturation occurs when the researcher begins to hear the same or similar responses from interviewees. The sampling is terminated when no new information is coming from the sampled participants (Lincoln and Cuba, 1985:202). Furthermore, Charmaz (2006) make a distinction that initial sampling in grounded theory is where one start, whereas theoretical samplings direct where to go.

4.5.4 Qualitative techniques

4.5.4.1 Quality

According to Charmaz (2006:18), quality data requires rich, substantial and relevant data which must be suitable for depicting the phenomenon. The same author further suggests that researchers need to speak from a strong foundation, to collect sufficient data to create a complete picture of the phenomenon.

According to Charmaz (2006:18-19), the following characteristics of the quality research can be added:

- Collecting enough background data about the participants and their social media use, to contextualise the interview data.
- Collecting detailed descriptions of participant's to ensure it contained multiple views and actions.
- Using probing questions to ensure that the data revealed what is beneath the surface.
- Approach questions in a different way to ensure data reveal changes and gained multiple views of participants.

- Ensuring that category are saturated to develop analytic categories (Derived from the question set out by Charmaz, 2006:18-19). Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify data quality, the research process and empirical grounding of the final theory as key elements for judgement. Birks and Mills (2011:151) suggest that a quality grounded theory is distinguished by the presence of common criteria of grounded theory in the study as methods contribute to the quality of the study.

Charmaz (2006:182) sets out some criteria for evaluating the quality of grounded theory under the four headings of credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness.

Credibility

- Has your research achieved intimate familiarity with the setting or topic?
- Are the data sufficient to merit your claims? Consider the range, number, and depth of observations contained in the data.
- Have you made systematic comparisons between observations and between categories?
- Do the categories cover a wide range of empirical observations?
- Are there strong logical links between the gathered data and our argument and analysis?
- Has your research provided enough evidence for your claims to allow the reader to form an independent assessment and agree with your claims?

Originality

- Are your categories fresh? Do they offer new insights?
- Does your analysis provide a new conceptual rendering of the data?
- What is the social and theoretical significance of this work?
- How does your grounded theory challenge, extend, or refine current ideas, concepts and practices?

Resonance

- Do the categories portray the fullness of the studied experience?
- Have you revealed both liminal and unstable taken-for-granted meanings?
- Have you drawn links between larger collectivities or institutions and individual lives, when the data so indicate?

- Does your grounded theory make sense to your participants or people who share their circumstances? Does your analysis offer them deeper insights about their lives and worlds?

Usefulness

- Does your analysis offer interpretations that people can use in their everyday worlds?
- Do your analytic categories suggest any generic processes?
- If so, have you examined these generic processes for tacit implications?
- Can the analysis spark further research in other substantive areas?
- How does your work contribute to knowledge? How does it contribute to making a better world?

The criteria identified in the paragraph mentioned above include those that are commonly found for evaluation of grounded theory. To get the desired outcome for this research, these criteria were applied to achieve the goal of the research. The researcher was careful to design a programme of research that generated rich data and to apply the grounded theory analysis guidelines to ensure that the findings were deeply grounded in the data. To cater for, and to ensure that the findings of this study were credible, original, resonant and useful, the researcher in the following paragraph outline and discuss how the findings were credible, original, resonant and useful.

Charmaz (2006:181) indicates that for grounded theory research to be credible it involves taking comparisons from data and construct abstractions and simultaneously tie abstractions to data. Credible grounded theory research results in the production of the theory that is grounded in the data. Furthermore, Charmaz (2006) write that to be credible the findings should demonstrate specific, have a good knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. Birks and Mills (2011:158) supports the abovementioned statement by indicating that the outcome of any evaluation is enhanced through quality articulation and presentation of the final theory.

The current study data were gathered until the categories were saturated. Charmaz (2006:113) defines saturation as when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of those core theoretical categories. Furthermore, the abovementioned quality statements ensured the study preserve participants dignity and was positioned on strong empirical foundations and to establish rapport with the participants. According to Birks and Mills (2011:33) there are factors that influence philosophical and

methodological approach used to guide a study, the credibility of the research outcomes is dependent on the researcher employing measures to ensure quality throughout the entire process. The concept of the quality is synonymous with rigour. The characteristics identified in the paragraph mentioned above include those that are most commonly found in grounded theory study. Charmaz (2006) indicates that data collection and analysis are undertaken simultaneously, with each informing and influencing the other. The main idea behind grounded theory is that data is analysed and the results inform the direction of further data collection such as sampling strategies.

Based on the abovementioned characteristics, it is clear that the researcher in this study by attending to the quality and sufficiency of the data, the study was positioned on the strong empirical foundations. Next to be discussed is the preferred research ethics utilised for this research.

4.5.4.2 Principles of ethics

According to Salmons (2015), as dictated by the principles of ethics, participants have the right to know what will happen in the study that will be conducted. Furthermore, Salmons (2015) is of the view that researchers need to ensure that participants comprehend their roles in the study and grasp that involvement is voluntary. Creswell (2013) point out the researcher explains the purpose of the study and does not engage in deception about the nature of the study. Participants also have the right to decline participation in the study should they feel uncomfortable, they have the right to anonymity (Creswell, 2013). Salmons (2015) supports the statements made on ethics by indicating that participants in any study must understand the researcher's purpose and anticipated commitments and freely agree to participate without repercussions if they do not. Salmons (2015) suggest that the right thing to do is for the researcher to approach subjects at the very beginning of the research to ask for consent. Salmons (2015:149) identified ethical considerations that researchers have to observe particularly when approaching participants may include the following:

- The purpose of the study;
- The nature of the study and a general description of other participants;
- The expected duration of the individual's participation;
- A description of the procedures, including expectations beyond the interview for follow-up comments, study of transcripts and so on;
- A description of the extent to which confidentiality will be maintained;
- A description of who will have access to the data;

- A statement that participation in the study is voluntary and response to a given question is voluntary; and
- A statement indicating that the participant may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Based on the abovementioned identified ethical considerations that researchers have to observe, particularly where human participants are involved it is evident that confidentiality and trustworthiness be maintained. Creswell (2013) supports the statements made on ethics by indicating that ethical issues involve a clear understanding between the researcher and the participant concerning avoidance of harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, and deception of subjects, violation of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. Confidential information implies that the identity of the individual with remain anonymous. It also assumes that the researcher cannot identify the individuals.

It is agreed that the complete anonymity of participants in the study of this nature is unattainable. As data for the content analysis was obtained from interviews the identity or partial identity of practitioners may be revealed on the social media sites. Even though the identity of the practitioners was revealed, it did not affect the study by any means.

4.5.4.2 Ensuring quality research

According to Creswell (2013), it is imperative to ensure that each step of the research process described in the sections above is dealt with professionally to ensure the overall quality of the final product. Birks and Mills (2011:33) write that qualitative research has measures developed to ensure that the quality of the research is undertaken. In light of this in grounded theory quality is depended on upon attention to some factors that can influence the potential value of the resultant theory. Birks and Mills (2011) indicate factors influencing quality in the conduct of grounded theory research namely, researcher expertise, methodological congruence and procedural precision. Also, memoing in grounded theory is the cornerstone of quality (Birks and Mills, 2011:40). It records thoughts, feeling, insights and ideas about a research project. On the other hand, Corbin and Strauss (2008) identify some conditions that foster quality in research, which relate to personal and professional, self-awareness, clarity of purpose, commitment to hard work and internal motivation to do research are examples of these characteristics.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four concepts to be adhered to ensure quality research in qualitative research:

- **Credibility/Authenticity:** Lincoln and Guba (1985) point specifically to the need to establish confidence in the 'truth value' of research participants in the context of the inquiry. Credibility aims to provide assurance that the research has obtained an accurate interpretation of the meaning of data (Creswell, 2013). Credibility in the study is achieved when the researcher ensure that reconstruct and representation of the participants views match that of the participants for the study to have credibility. Also, to ensure that the description of the complexities of interaction is always embedded with data obtained during the interviewing process. In light of this, Lincoln and Guba (1985), Miles and Huberman (1994) state that through triangulation, researchers make use of multiple and different methods namely, peer debriefing, member checking, and audit trail to ensure the credibility of the research study. Linlcon and Guba (1985) also mention that through prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the setting increase credibility of the research study.

Based on the above it is clear that aspects that might influence the outcome of the research study are the validity of the study. Validity (which is another word for truth) is to be determined by the accordance of an account with the actual social phenomenon it is describing (Silverman, 2005:210). The main idea behind validity is to demonstrate that the research was conducted so as to ensure that the subject was accurately identified and described. Research for this study has been carried out thoroughly so for the researcher to gain an understanding of specific themes and categories. Also, the strength of the exploratory, qualitative study will be its validity, within the parameters of grounded setting, sampling, and theoretical framework, ensuring that the research will be valid.

- **Transferability:** Babbie and Mouton (2011) refers to transferability as the extent to which the findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents. With regards to transferability, the actual generalisation of qualitative findings to other populations and settings could be difficult. To ensure this, the researcher could refer to the theoretical framework. In this study grounded theory show how data collection and analysis will be guided by concepts and models, thereby setting theoretical parameters of the study.
- **Dependability:** According to Guba and Lincoln, since there can be no validity without reliability (and thus no credibility without dependability) a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the existence of the latter. In light of this, dependability is

viewed as the alternate to reliability. In attempting to prove dependability, the research will ensure that the research process is logical and account to changing conditions in the phenomenon under study. Will also account for the changes in a design created by an increasingly evolving refined understanding of the study.

- **Conformability:** According to Babbie and Mouton (2011) this is the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of the inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to conformability as an audit trail. This indicates an adequate trail should be left to enable the auditor to determine if conclusions, interpretations and recommendations can be traced to their sources and supported by inquiry (Babbie and Mouton, 2010:279). This means that the researcher needs to determine if the findings could be confirmed by an independent researcher, not having to be influenced by the objectivity of the researcher.

Despite the above discussion however Charmaz (2006:18) also found that quality grounded theory research should produce a theory that is useful and that offers interpretations that people can use in the everyday worlds. With its focus on the everyday experience of the use of social media the practitioners in this study provide insights that are useful and beneficial to organisations including NGOs.

4.6 STRATEGIES EMPLOYED TO ENSURE THE VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF DATA

Reliability relates to the findings of the research and the credibility of the findings (Maree, 2010). (Babbie and Mouton, 2011) validity refers to the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is happening. It means the test is valid. Triangulation, the use of multiple methods is considered as the best way to enhance validity and reliability in qualitative research (Babbie and Mouton, 2011:275). Triangulation can take place according to extensive field notes, paradigms, methodologies and researcher as an instrument in the data collection process. This research was triangulated by using various data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews in addition to observations to collect the qualitative data. A literature study and empirical study was conducted with the qualitative paradigm as the focal point of the research and NGOs websites were visited to broaden and deepen the researchers insight into the use of social media that have an impact on developing the policy guideline in the NGO context.

Member checking is one useful, appropriate strategy used in this research because it allows the researcher to verify what has been observed. Throughout the research process, the researcher engaged in discussion and study the data with the research supervisor. By following such a process, the researcher can take transcripts back to the sampled NGOs for clarity it also provides rich description of social reality. Salmons (2015:197) supports the above by indicating that the spoken word always has ambiguity, no matter how carefully we word the question. Salmons (2015) suggest that the researcher should see ambiguity as an opportunity to use to probe. Data collected using semi-structured interviews, the researcher, was able to go back to the participants and ask additional information to correct errors and to provide volunteer information. Member checking as a strategy was used to ensure accuracy and trustworthiness of the study. It is applicable in this study to ensure that before draw conclusions that social media is being used by NGO for public relations purposes the researcher understands the phenomenon and can make a valid explanation about the development of social media policy.

Member checking is a strategy that was used during this research study to ensure the accuracy of findings from the participants, which therefore contributed to the trustworthiness of the study (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). Creswell (2013:252) indicate that this approach involves taking data, analyses, interpretations and conclusions back to the participants so that they judge the accuracy and credibility of the study. Maree (2012:86) note member checking is the useful common strategy to ensure validity. Creswell (2009:191) observation about member checking are also significant to the study, the researcher as access and is involved in conducting a follow-up interview with participants in the study. Richards (2011:24) agrees with the statements above by pointing out that taking the researchers interpretation back to the respondents is very useful and helpful for data-making. This means that participants in this study were given an opportunity and to comment on the summaries of data collected to ensure that the findings are an accurate reflection of their experiences. The researcher had to keep in mind the respondents were not impartial in reporting their experiences during face to face semi-structured interviews. To achieve the above Salmons (2015) conclude that the interviewer is responsible for the interview and therefore must take this role seriously.

Rich, thick description is also a strategy that was used in this study. Thick description means that the researcher provides details when describing a phenomenon or when writing about the theme or code (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln and Guba, 2011). According to Babbie and Mouton (2012:272), a description is a lengthy description that captures the sense of actions. A description is rich if it provides interconnecting the details using strong action verbs and quotes

(Creswell, 2013:252). The researcher interviewed study participants to bring a depth of knowledge until data saturation was reached.

Adequate engagement in data collection is another strategy used to ensure that codes emerged for validity (Rossman and Rallis, 2012). To elevate the trustworthiness of the study the researcher repeatedly read the transcript material collected, transcript was verified to create a mental picture of the entire data and to ensure there were no mistakes in the meaning of codes during the coding process (Olsen, 2012). A distinguishing feature of the qualitative research is that key terms and concepts are articulated and defined as part of the research process (Jensen, 2012:276).

Multiple data collection methods such as interviews and document analysis informed the research process thereby enhancing the credibility of the findings of this research study. The aim is to engage and probe for a deeper understanding of a phenomenon also contributed to the trustworthiness of the findings. Maree (2012:81) state crystallisation provides us with a complex and deeper understanding of the phenomenon than triangulation. The use of metaphors, similes, emerging pattern, and facilitated crystallisation of participants lived realities and build on to the trustworthiness of our research. Through interviews, participants were encouraged to share their social media experience. Creswell (2009) supports the statements made above by indicating that qualitative researchers need to document the procedures of their phenomenon and to document as many of the steps of the procedures as possible.

Another strategy that ensured consistency in the research study was enhanced through establishment of the detailed audit trail (Richards, 2011:25). The audit trail method describes the systematic documentation in detail of how data was collected and how decisions were made throughout the research enquiry (Jensen, 2012). The audit trail method describes in detail how data was collected, typed, cleaned up, how categories were derived and how data was stored accordingly (Rossman and Rallis, 2012:265).

Based on the above discussion, the researcher in keeping the data intact, accessible and organised kept the research journal, in which valuable notes and everything that had happened throughout the process was recorded. In qualitative research, it is crucial to maintaining a good audit trail which could, in theory, be respected by others to ensure records are kept by data protection. It is evident from the literature that validity and reliability fit together and have a strong relationship in research practice.

4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rossman and Rallis (2012:69) define ethics as a moral principle, which is suggested by an individual character, it provide rules that guide action. According to Olsen (2012:87), ethical issues relate to informed consent and confidentiality. Ethics is an essential part of every step of the research process within a specific approach (Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole, 2013; Creswell, 2013; Knowles and Cole, 2008; Seale, 2012). Bernard (2013) support the statements made on ethics by indicating that the notion of morals is that there is no obligation for any individual to participate in the study by force. The ethics of research include moral principles and values that influence the way the researcher conducts the research activities. Creswell (2013) indicate that the participants have the right to know what will happen in the study that will be conducted and also has the right to decline. It is also of paramount importance to deal with the research subjects in an ethical and responsible manner.

This study is fundamental towards ethical principles where respect for an NGO is considered. Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013), point out that researchers have the right to search for truth but not at the expense of the rights of other individuals in society. It is of the essence in a research study to obtain informed consent from all the participants (Creswell, 2012, Maree, 2012). The interviewees were asked for their consent before the interview and this was an opportunity for them to query the involvement and ramifications of their participation (Bernard, 2013).

The following ethical considerations were taken into account while conducting the research, based on recommendations by Creswell (2013:174):

- Researchers should establish supportively, respectful relationships;
- Participants need to know that their privacy and confidentiality will be protected;
- The researcher needs to explain the purpose of the study;
- The researcher protects the anonymity of the informants;
- The issue of disclosure of the researcher, participants share information “off the record”. The participants should be told that they are at liberty to withdraw in the study;
- The researcher is accountable for the ethical quality of the study.
- Researchers should anticipate possible risks that may arise through interviews during data collection process; and
- That informed consent has been obtained and appropriately documented.

Based on the abovementioned identified ethical considerations it is clear and crucial that confidentiality and trustworthiness be maintained. Confidential information implies that the identity of the individual will remain anonymous. Creswell, 2009) supports the statement made above on ethics by indicating that confidentiality involves a clear understanding between the researcher and the participant concerning the use to be made of the data provided. It also assumes that the researcher cannot identify the individuals.

The study participants were all aware of the fact that the researcher needed them to make time for the one-on-one interview and to debate how social media has been used and how it is affecting their work. Furthermore, all data emanating from the interviews and conversation with study participants were kept locked in the possession of the researcher. The Ethics Committee of the North-West University's Potchefstroom Campus assessed and approved the current study (NWU ethics number - 23545306).

Above all the qualitative researcher should have personal integrity, be truthful and credible. The reader of a research report should be able to believe that what the researcher says happened, really happened. Otherwise, it is all for nothing. Falsifying data to make findings agree with research question is unprofessional, unethical and unforgivable (Gay, 1992:97; De Vos et al., 2011:115-121). It should, therefore, be stressed that confidentiality, trustworthiness, common sense and personal integrity prevail.

4.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The main focus of this chapter was on the design procedures that the researcher followed in conducting this qualitative research study. This chapter has provided a detailed overview of constructivist grounded theory and the application of constructivist grounded theory in this research study. The researcher also outlined the design and discussed how the data collection and analysis was executed in the study. The next chapter will focus on reporting the findings of the empirical study among sampled NGOs in Gauteng. The study sought to explore how social media is integrated into public relations communication strategy in NGOs. The chapter will aim to contribute to the understanding of the role of social media and the nature of using social media platform for public relations participation in the South African context. This will be done by utilising in-depth interviews to obtain a holistic understanding and meaning of the phenomenon of social media. The analysis is presented in a narrative form using quotations gathered from the above-mentioned data sources.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, attention was given to the research design and methodology of the study. This chapter introduces the participants (refer to Annexure 3 regarding the participant profile). This chapter positions the research by introducing the participants who helped to construct data, meaning and ultimately the grounded theory that is the outcome of this research study. Constructivist grounded theory was selected because it sees data and meaning as co-constructed by the participant and the researcher. Charmaz (2006:187) indicate that the main idea behind the constructivist is to be able to start with experience and ask how members construct it. A constructivist has a very clear idea what is the phenomenon, gain multiple views and locate it in its web of connection and constraints, constructivist acknowledges that their interpretation of the phenomenon is itself a construction (refer to Chapter 4, section 4.3.4). In this study the phenomenon of social media was explored.

The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to present the empirical findings of this research and analyse and interpret the findings of the use of social media. The primary aim of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of how social media is used by participants in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (refer to annexure 4). The study further discusses the views for using social media at NGOs. Furthermore, the aim is to reach an integrated and holistic understanding of public relations practitioners' experience and their use of social media in NGOs.

This chapter presents the description of the results, discussions, findings, analysis and interpretation of the study. During the design stage various draft questions were developed in an effort to address the problem and main objectives of this research study. The design and development of the invitation letter was achieved in collaboration with the Supervisor (refer to Annexure 1 regarding the invitation to take part in the research study). In this chapter, the responses given by the participants to the questions put in the semi-structured interviews will be presented, collated, analysed and interpreted (refer to Annexure 2 regarding existing interview schedule on page 212).

The findings for each participant are outlined in the table (refer to Annexure 4: regarding existing theory on proof of conversations) which outline the themes of the research that were extracted from raw interview data, the reflections of the interviews with the participants and the supporting quotes for each theme. In addition to the primary objective (refer to Chapter 1, section 1.5 on page 9), which indicates that this study wished to provide answers to research objectives and that will enable the researcher to make recommendations and to develop a managerial policy guideline for public relations practitioner in NGOs.

In addition to the above, during the interview study participants experiences as well as their views were explored. Themes that emerged from participants during the interviews are stated below: (refer to section 5.3):

- Theme 1: Global perspective
- Theme 2: Success and understanding of social media
- Theme 3: Purpose of social media
- Theme 4: Challenges and disadvantages of social media
- Theme 5: Social media influence traditional media
- Theme 6: Social media platforms used in NGOs
- Theme 7: The impact of social media
- Theme 8: The role of public relations

These abovementioned themes were selected and reflected how public relations practitioners in NGOs embraced social media in their organisations. Furthermore, the major empirical findings of the research (refer to section 5.4) were also identified.

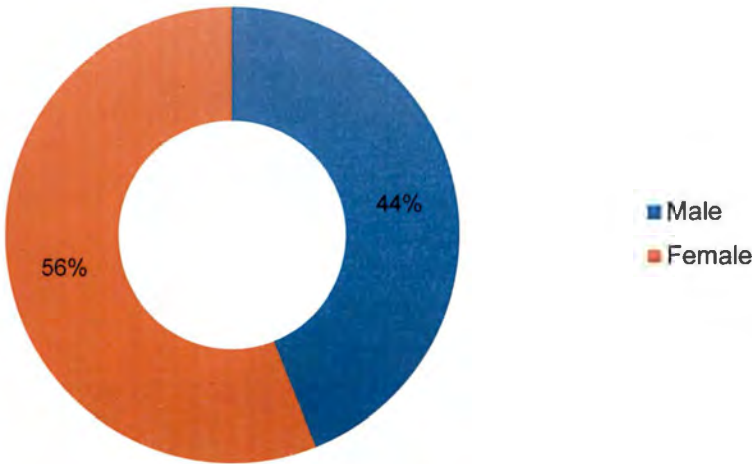
5.2 RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The respondents' demographic data included information on gender, race, age, education, and the personal characteristics most highly valued in public relations practitioner living in South Africa from the non-governmental organisation (NGO). This information was used to determine if results were, in any way influenced by the respondents' demographic information or not. The following section presents the demographic information of the participants obtained from qualitative data.

5.2.1 Gender

Individual interviews were conducted with participants. In total, nine face-to-face interviews were conducted. Information gathered from the individual discussion, one of the open-ended questions during the interview, a respondent had to indicate his/her gender. According to Stats SA (2014), approximately 51% (27,64 million) of the population is female. According to the findings in this study, there are more female respondents than male respondents who participated in the study (refer to Annexure 3 regarding the participant profile). In initial online interactions, users' biological sex may remain unknown. Al-Deena in Hendricks (2012) put forward that biological sex can play a significant role in communicative behaviour as females tend to self-disclose more to close friends than males and display greater sociability than males. According to the data in pie chart 5.1 below, there are more female respondents (56%) than male respondents (44%) who participated in this study.

Pie chart 5.1: Gender



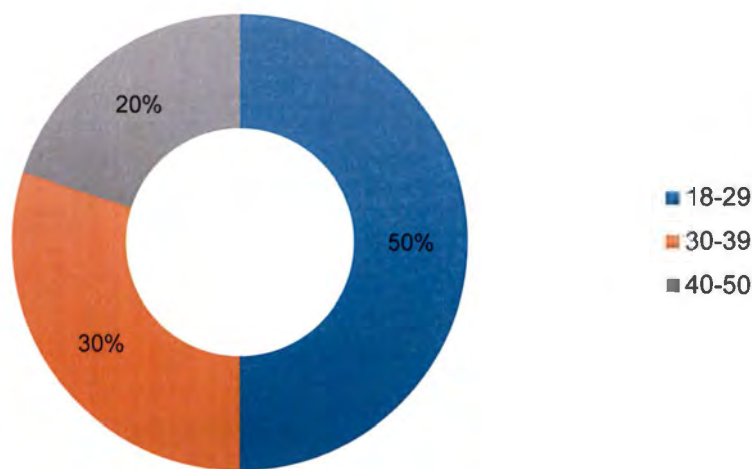
Source: (Researcher's own design)

5.2.2 Age

A breakdown of the respondents by age in this study is presented in pie chart 5.2 below. The results indicate that overall the respondents in this study were between 18 and 50 years of age, although most fell into the 30-39 years. Pie chart 5.2 below further indicates that employees who are in NGO's interviewed in this study are between 18-50 years-

In question 3 (refer to Annexure 2 regarding the interview schedule) However, the findings to be discussed in this chapter indicate that age and social media adoption do correlate (refer to Annexure 4 regarding the conversations). The point made in the interviews is that the older generation is afraid of embracing social media as a communication tool. However, they do realise the importance on this new technology.

Pie chart 5.2: Age



Source: (Researcher’s own design)

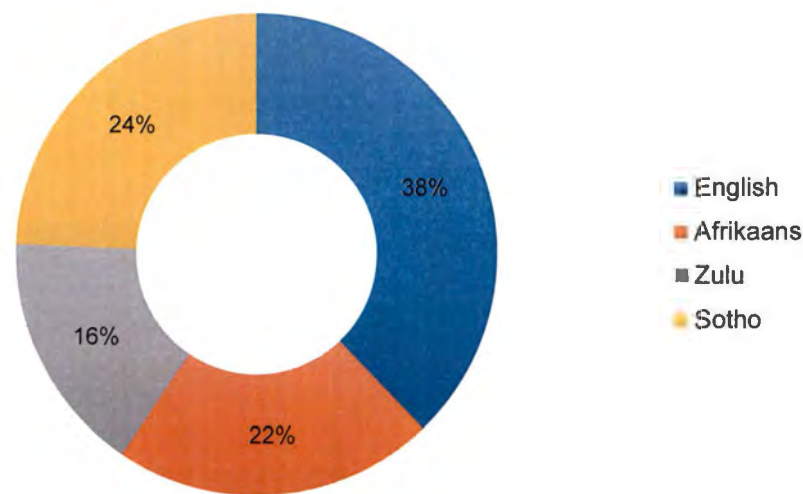
From the pie chart 5.2 above, it can be seen that younger members of the sample feel that social media is the best communication tool for the NGO sector. This apparently agrees with the literature (World Wide Worx, 2009) study indicating that younger generation tend to accept social media, while the older members of the sample are more afraid to embrace new technology instead are concerned with sharing personal information online. Furthermore, the older generation is concerned about criticism and loss of control as major challenge in using social media (refer to Chapter 2 section 2.11 regarding the existing theory on criticism of social media). According to the findings, respondents indicated that their organisations were using social media as communication tools to engage with various stakeholders.

5.2.3 Language abilities

In the semi-structured interviews, the respondents were asked to indicate their home language. More than half of the respondents indicated that their home language is Afrikaans,

while a large number indicated that they spoke English only at work. Respondents in management indicated that they speak both English and Afrikaans. A small number of respondents reported their home language is Sotho and Zulu. Furthermore, respondents who are working in fundraising/marketing department did indicate that they prefer communicating in English. Not all the respondents could speak, read and write English, which is accepted as the language of business in South Africa. A large number of respondents prefer speaking English at work.

Pie chart 5.3: Language abilities



Source: (Researcher’s own design)

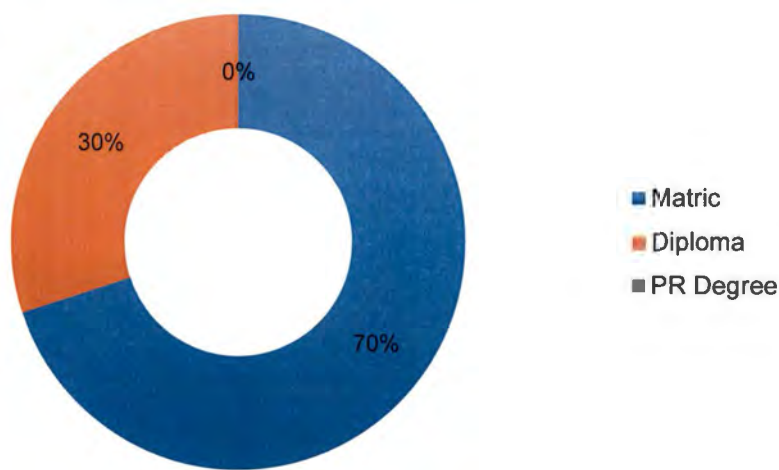
Pie chart 5.3 above, indicates that the English language was the business language used but for some respondents it was difficult to speak or write in an English. Furthermore, the column above indicates that out of all the respondents who are participants in this study, the majority speak English (38%), followed by Afrikaans 22%, Sesotho (24%) and Zulu 16% (Refer to Annexure 3 regarding participants’ profile).

5.2.4 Education

Respondents were asked to indicate their highest educational qualification (not specifically about public relations profession). This was a sensitive question to ask. Respondents were not willing to share information. The respondents were sceptical to share information about their qualifications. The respondents indicated that they did not have a formal communications

profession. Respondents who are managers did indicate their education qualification as mainly based in social work. Respondents who are managers/fundraisers and in marketing at NGOs indicated that they learned communication through experience and about conducting their work in such a way that it can contribute to organisational performance.

Pie chart 5.4: Qualification of the participants



Source: (Researcher’s own design)

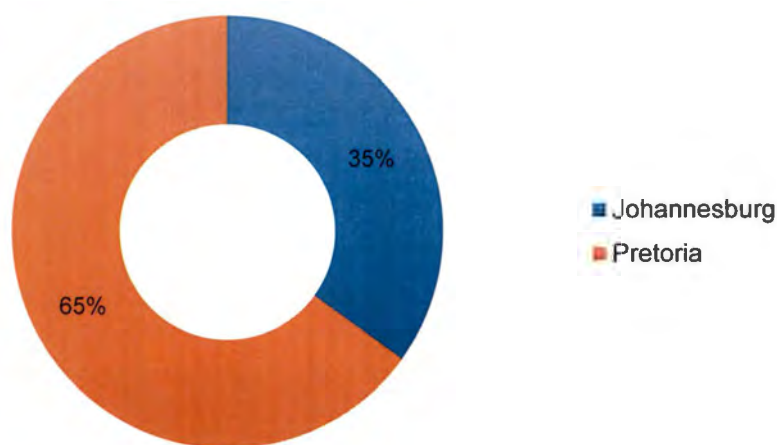
The sampled NGO respondents indicated that they had no qualifications in public relations communication. Some respondents had attended a short course. Only two respondents had social work degrees and held a post-graduate degree in social psychology. It would seem that there is a lack of formal public relations communication education for those NGO sampled. Findings (refer to Annexure 3 regarding participant profile) indicate that other respondents have qualifications that are not specific to public relations profession, although they are performing the public relations communication function.

According to Botan and Hazelton (2009) the key normative issue emphasises that for public relations to earn a place in strategic planning is required to bring scarce and unique expertise. The value of public relations can be determined by measuring the quality of the relationships the organisation establishes within its environment (refer to Chapter 3 section 3.3.1 regarding normative model of public relations practices).

5.2.5 Geographic area

According to the study done by SANGONET (2009), there are approximately 100 000 NGOs operating in South Africa, of which 53 % are less formalised, community-based organisations working at local level. Gauteng comprises the largest share of the South African population (Stats SA, 2014). According to Stats SA (2014), approximately 12,91 million people (23.9 %) live in this province.

Pie chart 5.5: Geographic area



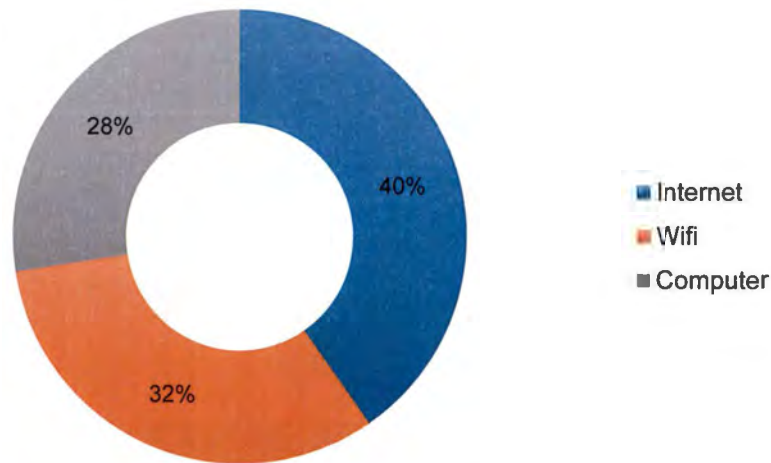
Source: (Researcher’s own design)

According to the information in pie chart 5.5 above, it seems that there was more interviews done in Pretoria than in Johannesburg. Respondents who are residents in this study, indicated that they are residing in Gauteng (Pretoria and Johannesburg). 35% reside in Johannesburg while 65% come from Pretoria.

5.2.6 Management and Resources

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they have resources in NGO sector (refer to Annexure 2). The telephone, facsimile service and e-mail are the services most used. Microsoft Office is the most dominant application in the office. Pie chart 5.6 below, is a good indicator of NGOs using technology to help organisations operate in a more effective manner.

Pie chart 5.6: Technology resources



Source: (Researcher's own design)

The results in the pie chart 5.6 above, clearly show that most respondents had access to the internet. Respondents were asked to rate their level of technology acceptance (refer to Annexure 2 regarding the interview schedule). Connectivity and access to the internet is of crucial significance with regard to the performance of NGO functions and operations (refer to Chapter 3, section 3.8 regarding the South African situation government have an important role to play in deploying ICT networks), highlighting that access to the internet via cell phone is possible and common.

The pie chart 5.6 above indicates that participants make use of a computer at work and at home. Findings indicate respondents have access to computers that provides up-to-date news. Almost 32% percent of NGOs indicate that their level of technology adoption is average to basic level. The limiting factor may well be the cost of rising technology which is expected to go up significantly in the years. The results in Annexure 4 on page 217, confirm that respondents who are public relations practitioners at the NGOs who participated in this study experienced challenges with issues of quality of technology. Some of the contributing factors regarding this matter highlights issues such as cost of technology, changing operating environment, ignorance, lack of strategic direction, lack of training and support and unreliable service providers. Furthermore the global recession forced many NGOs to cut cost and scale down and find new strategies for generating funding and other resources (refer to Chapter 1 regarding the problem statement in section 1.4 on page 6).

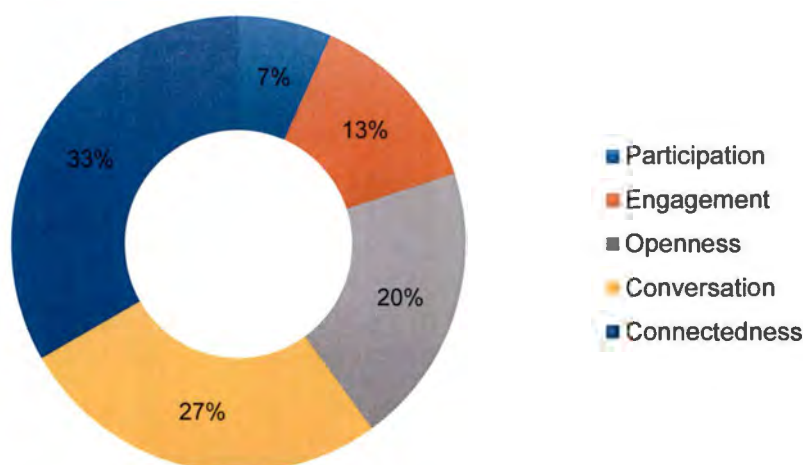
5.3 THE PRESENTATION OF THEMES OF THE RESEARCH

5.31 THEME 1: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The secondary objective of this study (see section 1.5) was to establish from the literature how NGOs are using social media as a communication tool. The respondents in NGOs were also asked to indicate how their organisations have integrated social media in their overall communication strategy. It would seem that the respondents are more familiar and aware of the advantages of social media, such as social media enables organisations to easily engage with the public online. This view could explain why the respondents agreed that the responsibility lies with the public relations practitioner to ensure that social media is integrated in the organisation. The view that practitioners should take charge of social media is supported by the literature (see section 3.3.1). The respondents placed an emphasis on public relations practitioners in NGOs taking charge of their contribution to organisational performance.

According to the pie chart below, the respondents who participated in this study indicate that their global perspective is social media is it facilitate participation, engagement, openness, conversation and connectedness. The aforementioned statements for respondents supports the literature (Chapter 2, under section 2.2), where it highlights the history and global perspective of social media. It highlights issues such as internet connectedness and communication reaching over a billion people, the initial purpose of the internet was to provide a method of rapid information exchange, to create a decentralised system of linked computers to engage and have conversation. Mayfield (2008) confirm and define social as a group of new kinds of online media which share most or all of the following characteristics: participation, and engagement, openness, conversation, community and connectedness. As suggested in the literature and by the respondents in the semi-structured interviews, the contribution of social media to an NGO is closely linked to strategic communication (see section 3.4).

Pie chart 5.7: Global perspective



Source: (Researcher's own design)

According to the pie chart 5.7 above the results indicate that social media were seen as the global communication tool (refer to Chapter 2 section 2.5 regarding major concepts). The participants who are practitioners in this study agree that NGOs should be informing global discussions and more importantly influencing the global development agenda (refer to Annexure 4 regarding conversations). The aforementioned statements for participants in Annexure 4 supports the literature (Chapter 2, under section 2.8) where it highlights the characteristics of social media. Social media as a communication tool should be used to keep in touch with the public worldwide. The advantages (Chapter 2, under section 2.9) where it highlights the advantages of social media are discussed. It highlights issues such as new paradigms, organisations have been able to control the information flow. The sampled NGOs are aware that public relations have to create environment to promote their services by profiling their expertise and providing case studies of campaigns and services. The advantage of using social media is that practitioners can talk directly to the public, audiences, supporters and volunteers. Social media allows for increased participation. This is increased by the fact that an increasing number of people are using the medium, and especially using it to obtain information, as well as commenting on and engaging in public discussion on the site.

The results in pie chart 5.7 above, confirm that the more the medium grows and the more the participation there is on social media from a public relations point of view, the more public can be informed about NGO activities and consequently participation in NGO can increase. The results in pie chart 5.8, is an indication that the statements contained in this study are viewed

by the respondents as global perspective of social media on NGOs. When looking at the findings from the study, it is evident that many activities are taking place on these sites from the public side. Wright (2014) add to this by stating that social media is the great enabler of communication as this will ensure that social media allows the practitioner the ability to watch and observe who are present in the space and see what they are reading, sharing discussing and see who they are interacting with. Social media sites such as facebook is essentially a public platform; one would expect that the activity entails NGO discussion with the public on it. However, the findings show that the sites are not used for this purpose and that many of social activities are occurring on this public platform. The benefits of social media (refer to Chapter 2 page 55) in NGO data is displayed below, namely to:

- broaden it to reach new audiences;
- deepen relationships with existing audiences;
- wage campaigns and to respond quickly to events; as well as to
- raise funds in ways that were never possible before with traditional media channels.

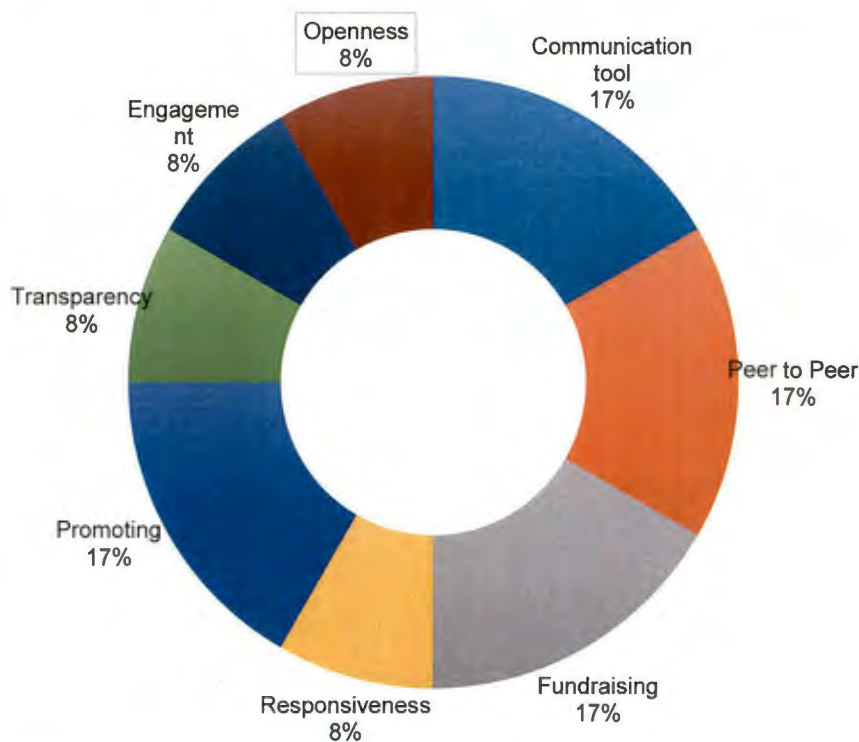
The abovementioned statements as indicated in the column above, were selected because they affirm that social media has changed the way NGOs communicate. Furthermore, participants agree that social media platforms have revolutionised the way in which people communicate and share information. It is clear that all participants are in favour for NGOs to step in and create more awareness of their existence on the social media platforms. The statement above is justifiable as all participants who manage social media are the ones who have to ensure that effective use of technology takes place in NGOs.

The aforementioned different statements as indicated in the column above by participants are supported by the literature (Chapter 2, under section 2.2) where it highlights history and global perspective of social media; it highlights the revolution of social media and that it is critical for public relations in non-governmental organisations to be aware of benefits and how it has enhanced communication in organisations. As a result, NGOs in South Africa faces a major challenge concerning the rise of Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 (refer to Chapter 2, under section 2.4 regarding the move from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0) in ensuring that NGOs provide optimal and professional services using social media. Furthermore, many NGOs, however, are unable to integrate platforms such as facebook to employees to exchange information, ideas and opportunities.

5.3.2 THEME 2: THE SUCCESSES AND UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The respondents were asked (refer to Annexure 2 regarding interview schedule) to indicate how they understand and use social media as a communication tool. The respondents further indicated that through the use of social media they were able to reach out to people and disseminate information. The results are shown in the pie chart 5.6 below.

Pie chart 5.8: Successes and understanding of social media



Source: (Researcher's own design)

From the pie chart above it is apparent that social media is used predominantly as social tools and are not utilised as business tools. The potential for social media used as business tool has been recognised with some participants utilising the social media sites for business purposes. It was also noted that the usage trend of the participants in the sample were quite different as noted above. The findings also reveal that as participants in NGOs accept and embrace experience in social media, the participants engage with a number of different type of information both within social media spaces and beyond it. According to the participants who participated in this study indicate that on social platforms participants engage with information that is contained in social media content.

From the above it can be concluded that NGOs with younger employees appear to use social media more regularly. The participants are immersed in social media as part of their everyday lives. Those NGOs who are likely to have participants who are older or who are unable to overcome the pressures of new technology, however, may tend to have a more negative construction of social media and tend not to take advantage of new technology.

The results mentioned (refer to annexure 4) indicate that the selected sampled NGOs use social media to communicate and engage with their publics and stakeholders. Social media platforms are powerful tools to advertise, inform and educate the public about NGO activities. The findings indicate that the sampled NGOs display that these NGOs have a website and the content is advising the public to visit their social media sites pages (see Annexure 3 & 4). The findings of this study further indicate that most of the NGOs use social media to communicate with their public and to keep up with the current times. Sampled NGOs felt that they must use social media, even though they did not know which platforms to use. This is influenced by the fact that an increasing number of people are using social media platforms, and specifically using it to obtain general information, as well as commenting on and engaging in discussions on the online platforms. One respondent from an NGO stated that:

"Looking at the way social media is happening, people who do not know each other can write, collaborate, think and work on projects together. For example, as an NGO, we managed to get a sponsor from the US to fund the good initiative".

"Through social media, I have been able to talk with other NGO members of the organisation online".

Another respondent from an NGO agreed that:

"Through social media, we form networks of new and old friends and turn to online communities for input on personal and professional decisions".

Another respondent from an NGO note:

"Social media is a direct channel of communication to the community who will get a better understanding of our vision, mission and what we stand for".

"Social media gives me perspective on what is going on around the company and the community".

"I have been able to download the content shared online and use it somewhere else, and have been able to speak and engage with them online whenever convenient for me".

"The NGO ensures that the public are provided with updated information, the website provides the public with stories and updated information about the organisation events successes, activities and challenges."

Another sampled NGO respondent stated as follows:

“Social media platforms provide the space for the NGO to converse about the services and build the advocacy work of an NGO. Social media sites have enabled Public relations to communicate directly with the different publics local and international donors.”

Corroborating the above statements, these findings are supported by similar studies on the use of social media (Avery and Seetser, 2010; Matthee, 2011). The aforesaid studies are of the opinion that social media are beneficial communication tools for public relations. Social media has created an opportunity for conversation to take place online and to enable them to communicate directly with stakeholders. The findings indicated that practitioners in NGOs were using social media as communication tools to engage with different stakeholders. This was illustrated by the sampled public relations practitioners in NGOs in Gauteng (Johannesburg and Pretoria) where practising two-way communication (refer to Grunig and Hunt model). These findings are supported by similar studies indicating that social media has become an essential part of the communication strategy (see Chapter 3 under section 3.4). This supports the literature (refer to Chapter 3) indicating the use of social media has become pervasive in society (Wright, 2014). Furthermore, that social media is prevalent that we are now entering the era of social networking.

The participant demonstrated a possible disadvantage towards the using of social media. Literature (see section 2.10) suggests there are disadvantages of social media. The view mentioned above is captured by the respondent as follows:

“The use of social media does not nurture client relationships; given our work it is unethical to disclose sharing of personal information online. Therefore, it is pointless to invest heavily in social media resources such as skills, knowledge and latest gadgets. A possible disadvantage of using social media is that the connection may collapse because of too many users at the same time.”

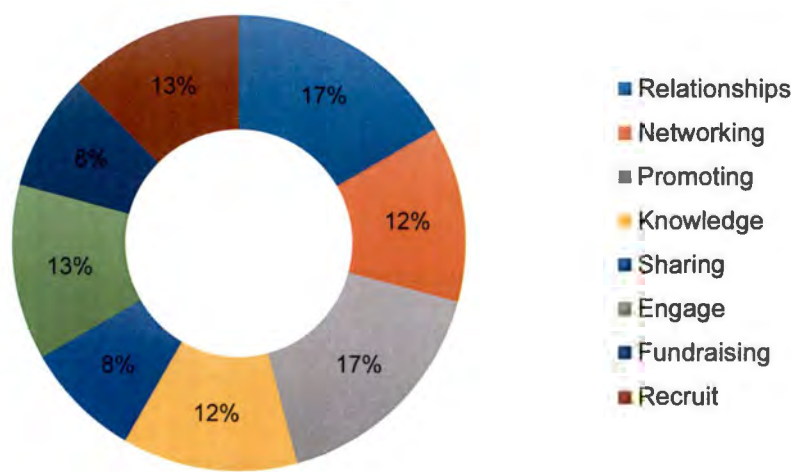
The view that disadvantages of social media in NGOs are threatened by technology, loss of control and inconsistent messages, is supported by literature (see section 2.10 and 2.11). However, the respondents placed an emphasis on NGOs embracing social media and practitioners taking charge of their contribution to organisational performance.

The statement above reflects that there is no inconclusive evidence that NGOs did go through a proper process of planning before using social media as a communication tool.

5.3.3 THEME 3: PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The respondents were asked to indicate the purpose and the benefits of using social media in NGOs. According to the pie chart 5.10, the respondents indicate that their organisations were using social media to promote, engage, recruit, create networking, share information, knowledge and build relationships with various stakeholders. In addition to this they used social media to raise fundraising and recruit new staff and donors. The aforementioned statements (respondents) support the literature (Chapter 2, under section 2.5.1) where it highlights the functions of social media defined by Solis (2010) indicating; a platform for the socialisation of media, the online tools that facilitate conversations; connections between friends, peers and influencers; collaborations and the redistribution of influence; compassionate and opinions and insights. The results are shown in the pie chart 5.9 below.

Pie chart 5.9: Purpose and the Benefits of social media



Source: (Researcher’s own design)

According to the pie chart 5.9 above, the results indicate that the respondents who are managers at the NGOs tended to agree that the purpose of social media is to enable organisations to connect with the public and establish relationships to promote NGOs’ image, programs and services. Furthermore, the participants agree that the purpose of social media is to create relationships while sharing information. It is important to nurture relationships through networks. The aforementioned statement supports the literature (chapter 2, under section 2.6) where it highlights the purpose of social media.

According to the abovementioned pie chart 5.9 results confirm that all NGOs agree that they are starting to embrace social media and are struggling with adapting social media into existing communication infrastructure (refer to Annexure 4 regarding proof of conversations). The findings indicate that all sampled NGOs are trying to maintain the online presence and acknowledge that social media has become an essential part of communications. Furthermore, the results presented in the pie chart 5.9 above indicate that public relations practitioners in NGOs are using social media as a communication tool to interact, engage and share with the public (refer to Annexure 4). This statement is reinforced by the following quotes made by participants:

"Social media helps me locate experts internationally or information that could help me".

"Social media helps us reach good, innovative decisions".

"Social media is a free platform, where I don't mind asking questions".

This is substantiated by the literature (refer to Chapter 2) Brynteson et al. (2011) indicating that social media tools allow people to share their ideas, beliefs, pictures, videos, files or promotions with one, or a few or the multitudes. Furthermore to ensure effective use of new technology, social media allow conversations rather than pushing content and also facilitate the building of online communities.

One participant commented that the more important and sensitive the issue, the greater the need for a meeting. Another participant added to this stating that although face-to-face communication is time-consuming, in their organisation it remains the most powerful way in which to engage the employees. Channels of communication used by NGOs include word of mouth, newsletter, brochures, email, phone calls, mass mailing list, meetings and annual reports (refer to Chapter 3). For the few participants who are not certain about using social media, this is indicative of the fact that there is a need for social media training and knowledge. Therefore, NGOs need to strengthen social media policy guidelines in NGOs.

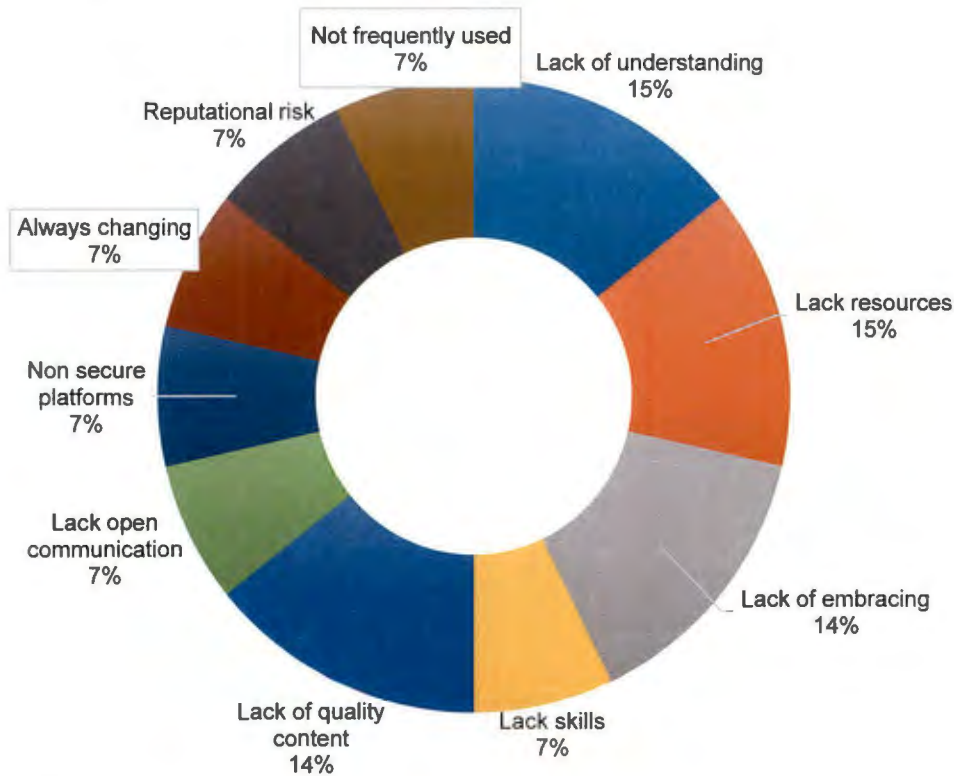
The findings indicated that public relations practitioners in NGOs were using social media as a communication tool to engage with the internal and external publics, local and international stakeholders. According to the two-way symmetrical model Grunig and Hunt (1984), the findings indicate and illustrate the fact that the sampled NGOs are practising a two-way model of public relations. These findings are supported by similar studies such as Wright and Hinson (2010); Veric et al. (2014) and Avery et al., (2010) on how public relations are using social media as a communication tool conducted in the American and European context

(Macnamara, 2010; Curtis et al., 2010, Lo and Water, 2012). While Australian researchers Herger and Howell (2007) pointed out that from a public relations perspective, there has been limited investigation and understanding into the nature of social media as a communication medium. Wright and Hinson (2009) suggested that public relations are at an early stage in adopting interactive Web 2.0 based media referred to as social media. The studies above are of the view that social media tools are becoming beneficial methods of communication for public relations practitioners. This was confirmed by Solis (2009) who states that Web 2.0 is putting the public back in public relations. The statement demonstrates that social media is becoming worthwhile methods of communication for public relations practitioners in the NGO sector.

5.3.4 THEME 4: CHALLENGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The respondents were asked (refer to Annexure 2 regarding interview schedule) to indicate the challenges and the disadvantages of using social media in their non-governmental organisations. The results are shown in pie chart 5.10 below.

Pie chart 5.10: Challenges and disadvantages



Source: (Researcher's own design)

According to the pie chart 5.10 above, the respondents who are practitioners who participated in this study experienced challenges with issues of social media. According to pie chart 5.10 above, the respondents indicate that they experiences challenges with issues of non-secure platforms, lack of quality content, reputational risk, lack of understanding, lack of resources and lack of embracing social media in their NGOs. The aforementioned statements from respondents supports the literature (Chapter 2, under section 2.11), where it highlights the criticism of social media.

According to the pie chart 5.10 above, respondents expressed their concerns regarding the content of social media and stated this as the reason for choosing not to use social media as a business communication tool. Furthermore respondents experienced a challenge to responding to comments made on social media platforms about the NGO and making sure all issues are considered. Another potential drawback indicated by the participants is NGOs have no control over what is said on facebook pages about the NGO. Some of the contributing challenging factors embrace and integrate social media as a communication tool for communication (refer to Annexure 4 regarding proof of conversations). According to the pie chart the respondents indicate the challenge is to expose NGO to social media issues, encourage management to take interest in the technology issues, sustain and expand these issues and harness the power of ICT in meeting their development and organisational objectives.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that social media such as facebook (refer to Chapter 2 regarding existing theory on facebook), is growing and has impacted on NGO organisations positively but participants highlight the fact that in South Africa many NGOs do not have internet access and not enough resources to cope with the challenges of the new technology. In essence, facebook and the ability to access is an important factor for NGOs as issues of access and infrastructure and knowledge is still pertinent in the South African NGO context. The challenge here is that although the NGOs are getting feedback and the social media platform offers them a way to determine public concerns and then act on those concerns and issues raised, it shows that social media is not being used by the NGOs for two-way interaction. As has been mentioned in the literature it is the two-way communication that makes the social media effective in the organisation. The results in the abovementioned figure confirm that respondents are experiencing challenges when it comes to the issues of social media. The respondent stated the following:

"It must be noted that the opportunities have not been equally distributed within South African NGOs. Furthermore, resources, language, education and socioeconomics are still low as a result of the digital divide".

Findings of the failures of social media, it is important to note that NGOs use facebook as communication tool to engage with the public. Participants perceived social media as tools which enabled them to share information as well as to reach the public. If issues arise on social networking sites that require more attention and sensitivity, the NGO will go about dealing with the issue differently. The following extract from an interview confirms this:

“Some issues are personal and sensitive and will not be dealt with via social media”.

Based on the above extract of an interview, the participant does not trust social media sites. According to the participants, trust remains an important issue and therefore feel they must be able to trust the social media tool first before they can use it. Participants were also concerned about sharing too much information on social networks. Central to this distrust is the feeling that they do not rely on others with security information, fear of sharing confidential information result in potential job loss which is an inhibiting force preventing practitioners from using social networks or voicing their concerns. Participants feel very reluctant to share personal or private information with other employees at work.

The findings indicate that the disadvantages associated with social media is that it is still a relatively new platform and it is evolving. One of the most prominent drawbacks that have affected social media since its rise to popularity is namely the fact that public relations practitioners find it difficult to adopt and embrace to convert clearly their social networking efforts into tangible, measurable communication results. Public relations in NGOs fail to keep up with the latest technology. This confirms studies conducted by Wright and Hinson (2010) which concluded that there is a lack of academic research in this emerging field of social media. Issues of access to technology and the knowledge and skills associated with social media is hindering factors to the process of embracing social media as a communication tool. This confirms research conducted by SANGONeT (2009) which concluded that many NGOs have little information communication technology (ICT) capacity to and infrastructure, the contributing factors in this regard are the cost of ICT services, unreliable service providers, changing operating environment, ignorance, lack of strategic direction and lack of training and support. This has resulted in the uneven adoption of social media in the NGO sector.

Furthermore, the findings indicate the disadvantage of social media is that anyone can join the social media sites such as facebook and comment and partake in discussion and online conversation, but it does not guarantee that all the views contribute to NGO activities. Anyone

can open and register on a facebook page; the organisation does not have control over social media content.

The findings as indicated (Annexure 4) emphasize that communication in NGO is still placed on traditional media. The perceived disadvantages are the limited resources, money, and knowledgeable staff. The findings of this study also found that public relations in NGOs are slow to introduce social media for internal and external communication because it is more demanding to manage social media sites. It is evident that NGOs with the completely developed public relations department are more likely to adopt and embrace social media to achieve their strategic communication objectives. The research findings drawn from interviews indicate that NGOs do not value public relations functions. Other NGOs are using both traditional and social media in a way that they supplement one another. One respondent pointed out that social media creates complex relationships and interactions between the organisation and its audiences which can be a benefit and also the danger. For example, content provokes reactions, produces unexpected consequences and generate network effects that can incur costs for the organisation far beyond what was ever planned at the beginning of a campaign.

One respondent pointed out that:

“The NGO does not have a fully-fledged public relations department. The NGO cannot afford to employ such a professional as it is too costly”.

One respondent explains:

“Social media is a distraction and waste of time and money. Employees spend too much time on social media and it affects productivity”.

In contrast, few NGOs indicated, namely The Lonely Road Foundation, Section 2.7 and TAC have successfully integrated social media including facebook into their internal communication strategy. This again is attributed to the need to reach the public especially the youth.

5.3.5 THEME 5: SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Table 5.1 indicates the comparison between social media and traditional media (refer to Chapter 3, section 3.3.2) where it highlights the impact of social media on pre-dating the commercial business of the internet, Lesame et al. (2012) add that traditional media can be thought of like the old way of doing things. Social media offers additional opportunities for

public relations practitioners to create and cultivate relationships as well engage different stakeholders.

The results in table 5.1 below contrast the social versus the traditional media.

Table 5.1 Social media versus traditional media

TRADITIONAL MEDIA	SOCIAL MEDIA
Challenging Archiving	Simplified Archiving
Controlled Publication	Self Publication
Delayed Metrics	Real Time Metrics
Detect	Connect
Environmentally poor	Environmentally friendly
Limited Media	Varied Media
Monologue	Dialogue
Poor Scalability	High Scalability
Relative High Cost	Relative Low Cost
Restricted Access	Unrestricted Access
Rigid – difficult to alter	Flexible – easy to alter
Sell	Tell
Specialized Knowledge	Ease of Use

Source: Smiciklas (2012)

According to the table 5.1 above, the respondents who are participants in study indicate that there is a particular value of social media as an additional platform for communication in NGOs (refer to annexure 4). Further findings indicate that respondents consider traditional media as the primary form of publicity, but acknowledge that social media influence traditional media to promote and advertise their services and to engage the communication online.

According to the respondents who participated in this study, traditional public relations is usually expensive (there are production costs or printed material such as brochures, and newsletters. In addition, traditional media can also be very time consuming (corrections, revisions printing and reprinting). The aforementioned statements for respondents supports the literature (Chapter 3, under section 3.3.2) where it highlights the underlying differences between traditional media and social media. Furthermore, many NGOs use social media to distribute information, reach

diverse people, and most importantly offer the public a chance to comment on what was said and done. Also, the findings revealed that NGOs use social media to network and communicate with their publics.

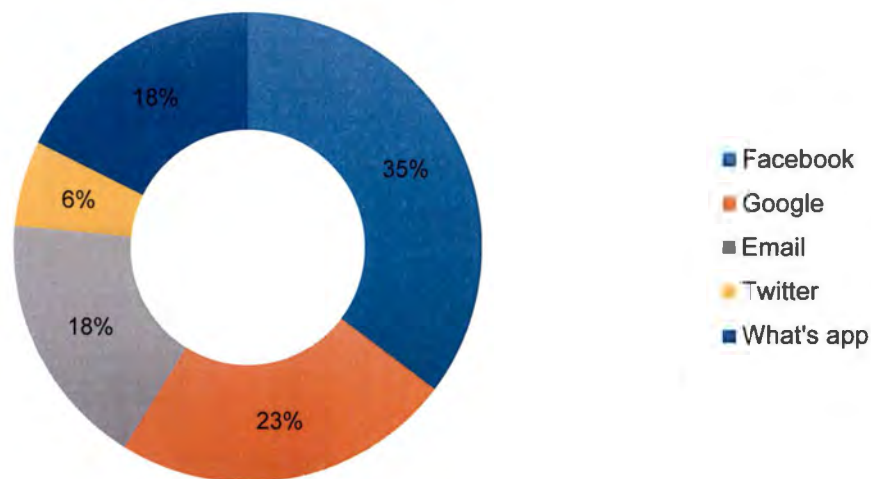
There is a common agreement amongst the participants as far as building the online opportunities is concerned. Most of the participants agree that of great importance in social networks is the creation of connecting people with similar interest who may never have met before. The majority of participants agree that facebook (refer to Chapter 2, under section 2.7 where it highlights the types of social media) is the most preferred social media sites, followed by WhatsApp, email, and SMS. Twitter is a nightmare for some participants. Respondents agree that all forms of social media sites such as LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, Instagram among practitioners in NGOs are important for coordinating information. However, the main emphasis of communication in NGOs is still placed on traditional media.

The aforementioned different statements are supported by the literature (refer to chapter 2), where it highlights that social media is very useful for creating and maintaining relationships. Furthermore, the use of social media has provided an additional communication channel for public relations practitioners to engage with the public.

5.3.6 THEME 6: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED

Respondents were asked (refer to annexure 2, question 5) which platforms is used comfortably to communicate in NGOs. All participants were asked what communication medium they prefer using when they solve problems or communicating a message to the public. According to pie chart 5.11 below, the respondents indicate facebook, Google, email, and whatsapp as the most preferred platforms. The reason facebook is popular it confirms research conducted by World Wide Worx (2011); Goldstuck (2014) which concluded that facebook is the most visited site in South Africa. The choice of the most preferred communication channels will be influenced by the organisational worldview and resources that are implemented in the organisation. In this study it is indicated that facebook is the most preferred communication, can serve as a two-way communication channel that can facilitate two-way conversation between the organisation and the publics in order to improve mutual understanding. According to the participants the preferred channel also depends on the age of the employees. The older people prefer face-to-face and written communication while the younger generation will prefer SMS and instant messages (refer to annexure 4). Pie chart 5.11 below summarises preferred communication platforms.

Pie chart 5.11: Social media platforms used



Source: (Researcher's own design)

According to the pie chart 5.11 above the results indicate that facebook is seen as the most preferred communication channel in NGOs. Facebook, Whatsapp, email and Google have provided communication practitioners in NGOs with new channels to choose from (South African Media Landscape (2014). The pie chart 5.11 is a good indicator of NGOs using technology to help their organisations operate in a more effective manner.

The findings as indicated in the literature (refer to Chapter 2, under section 2.5.1) emphasize that social media lack editorial character providing a widespread opportunity for participation by allowing unedited communication to take place. It is agreed to a large extent that aspects such as high expectations, information, feedback and removal of barriers to communication do indeed establish firm social media opportunities (Wright, 2014).

The research findings indicate that facebook (refer to Chapter 2, under section 2.7.3 regarding facebook) was the most used platform. Facebook emerged as the platform where most of the NGOs are comfortable using it and had an account. Facebook is utilised as the channel to educate and talk directly to the public, which widens the scope of the audience being reached, and in so doing encourage support for the NGO's activities. The findings in the abovementioned statement substantiate research conducted by SANGONET (2009) (refer to Chapter 3, under section 3.9) which highlight that facebook is the popular social networking site within the South African NGO context. The following extract (refer to Annexure 4) from an interview with the participant confirms this:

“Facebook is the tool to reach a large audience, in particular, the youth. Facebook is used in NGOs to entice the youth and to get the youth involved in the NGOs’ activities. To ensure that the NGO is understood and to provide information about what the NGO stands for, what its objectives are. Such engagement is purposeful as it will provide the NGO with more information and what problems exist in the community”.

The prominence of social media in South Africa was also confirmed by the study findings of the South African Social Media Landscape (2014) noting that approximately 9.4 million active users are on facebook (refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.8). The findings of the study further indicates that not only are South Africans public relations practitioners in Gauteng (Johannesburg and Pretoria) active and have social networking presences, but they also spend considerable time on these platforms to build relationships and build two-way communication.

5.3.7 THEME 7: THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Responding to the question: *What is the impact of social media?* (refer to annexure 2 regarding interview schedule), Social media on the practice of public relations (as has been described in Chapter 3, under section 3.5 on page 76), is valued for its ability to extend our reach, to connect across space and time to find people with shared interest and gather for social (Mandiberg, 2012). Concentrating on the impact of social media, it has been established that the platform has had a considerable influence on public relations in that it has widened the scope of communications considerably (refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1). The authority of communication has now shifted from the organisation to the public. This shift has put the public relations practitioners in an uncertain situation, as messages can no longer be pushed out to the public. The public now has the power to voice their opinion on social media platforms and it can spread influencing diverse people. Practitioners need to engage actively and participate and listen to the needs of the public and adapt their communication strategy accordingly. The aforementioned statements as indicated by respondents support the literature (Chapter 3, under section 3.5) highlighting that the implications of the rise of social media is an organisation’s loss of control over their message.

Another change is that traditional media platforms have lost a considerable amount of power to social networking sites as many people regard social media as the preferred platform for communicating with the organisation (refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1). The findings indicated that fear is one of a major reason for the slow uptake of social media as a communication tool

in NGOs. There is reasonable agreement among participants that fear is perceived as a stumbling block although a few refute this statement. It was also agreed by participants that social media takes away the human experience. As one respondent (FAMSA) pointed out in the following words:

"If we allow consultation to happen on social media we will be taking away human contact", you replace humans with technology to do the job".

The statement above perceives social media as a divergence from the real practice of public relations but the practitioner has to learn to adapt their existing communication efforts. Communication success of social media requires a new approach to communications thinking. Furthermore, the findings reveal that social media does not nurture relationships and therefore, NGOs feel there is no need to invest in social media as the core of a communication strategy. A worrying factor, perhaps, is that social media in other NGOs is not as effective as it is supposed to be. There is a sign that practitioners fear using social media for work purposes and are not assisted to feel settled to learn this new technology. This seems to be the weakest link as far as developing policy guideline are concerned.

5.3.8 THEME 8: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

According to the respondents who participated in this study also indicate that they experience the role of public relations with issues of management through communication, perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders. The role of public relations will be influenced by the resources that are implemented in the organisation. Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA) (refer to Chapter 3 under section 3.3) where it highlights the definition and role of public relations. PRISA defined public relations as the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders. Angelopulo and Barker (2013: 225) note that the key to public relations is the process of influencing public opinion by establishing and maintaining effective relationships between an organisation and its public. These findings are supported by similar studies on the use of social media in public relations (Wright and Hinson, 2009). The aforesaid studies are of the opinion that social media platforms are becoming beneficial tools for public relations.

Social media can provide opportunities for organisations such as NGOs to establish and sustain relationships with different stakeholders. The study findings correlate with the Grunig and Hunt model (1984) which states that the role of public relations can serve as a two-way

communication channel that can facilitate two-way conversation between the organisation and the publics in order to improve mutual understanding.

According to the participants in this study indicated that the role of public relations in NGO is to build relationships and two-way communication between an organisation and its internal and external publics. The aforementioned statements for respondent's supports the literature (Chapter 3 under section 3.7.4) where it highlights the two-way symmetrical model is to achieve mutual understanding between an organisation and its public.

Furthermore, social media offer the ideal platform for building relationships and two-way communication. Social media allow the public to connect with the organisation to share ideas by building relationships. The abovementioned discussion is supported by the literature (refer to Chapter 3, Section 3.6 under the heading Grunig and Hunt model), where it highlights that social media offers new ways of reaching new individuals and targeting specific publics. Public relations connect and build relationships with public and the stakeholders. According to Botan and Hazelton (2009) they emphasise that two-way symmetrical model uses research, listening and dialogue to manage conflict and build relationships with the strategic publics.

In the light of the above discussion, it is evident that social media is less hampered by time and space. This means that anyone anywhere can participate and engage in online discussion on a platform such as facebook. Social media allows anyone to participate regardless of where they are and who they are. This is important for public relations to consider because there are more participants and these platforms are not restricted by resources. The elements above are important for public relations as it influences the public discussion which allows public relations to reach and target a new audience and to continue building the relationships with different stakeholders. This is possible as social media does not abide by the same restrictions of time and space as traditional media; instead public relations can communicate and interact with audiences in new ways that were not possible through traditional media.

Based on the aforementioned severe resource constraints, it is clear that social media can prove to be a much more difficult tool to adopt. Limited resources, time, money, and little knowledgeable staff can severely hamper an NGO's ability to create and execute a proper effective social media campaign. This research (conducted in Gauteng – Johannesburg and Pretoria) proves that the ease of online communication allow individuals to collaborate in new ways. NGOs are collaborating electronically to complete projects and solve complex NGO problems. It is evident that the NGOs' social media initiatives are integrated with other relevant communication strategies. It is clear from the preceding that social media is a unique platform

and it attributes to why it is the most popular communication tool in NGOs. The NGO use social media as information dissemination tools and regard social media as a core element of their communications strategy. The findings (refer to Annexure 4 regarding proof of conversations) has shown that social media is playing an increasingly important role. Public relations now have an opportunity to reach audiences that traditionally have not been active in NGO activities. Furthermore, social media can reach where traditional is not always available. However, public relations need to understand that social media can only be an effective tool if it is used properly for the good purpose.

5.4 THE MAJOR EMPIRIAL FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

From the interviews (refer to annexure 2) held with male and female participants working in communication positions in NGOs, the following eight themes regarding the use of social media were raised:

- **Theme 1: Global perspective**

According to the history and global perspective and from the respondents' points of view. It is clear that the development of new communication technologies and their increasing implementation as well as the ways in which organisation are communicating with all their publics have changed. According to Seargeant and Tagg (2014) technology is fundamentally changing the way information is distributed, that information in Web 2.0 flows in a new faster way. The discussion and findings (refer to annexure 4 regarding proof of conversations) highlight that the development and evolution of Web 2.0 have not only changed the way individuals and organisation use the internet but has significantly impacted the way organisations in which public relations practitioners engage individuals and represent their organisations. The aforementioned discussion supports the literature (Chapter 2, under section 2.2), where it highlights history and global perspective of social media. It highlights issues such as, the evolution, originality of internet and the key milestones of social media.

- **Theme 2: The successes and understanding of social media**

Based on the findings (refer to Annexure 4) it is evident that respondents who are practitioners in the NGOs who took part in this study agree that social media can reach diverse individuals. According to the literature (refer to Chapter 2) social media is less hampered by time and space boundaries. According to the respondents (refer to annexure 4) understanding social media means that anywhere, anytime (that has access to or knowledge of the technology) has the opportunity to participate in a discussion on a platform such as facebook. Furthermore,

social media can overcome barriers of distance and time, thereby allowing for more immediate communication, mobilisation and organisation.

- **Theme 3: The purpose and benefits of social media**

The findings of the interviews (refer to Annexure 4) indicate that the benefits of using social media lies in its participatory value and ability to reach large audience. It is evident that it is critical for public relations practitioners in non-governmental organisations to be aware of the benefits of social media and how it has enhanced communication in organisations. According to the respondents in this study public relations practitioners are not using social media to its full potential. Furthermore, respondents added that one of the most important benefits for NGOs for using social media is that they now have access specifically to people who previously might not have been reached by traditional media or interested in NGO activities.

As the South African government approves the building of an information society and also address public access to ICT facilities, the National Development Plan (refer to Chapter 3, under section 3.8) is central to achieving the goal of digital inclusion, enabling affordable access to ICTs and providing sustainable connectivity.

According to World Wide Worx (2010 and 2011) (refer to Chapter 3, under section 3.9) where it highlights that the number of people using social media exceeds the number of those who rely on traditional means of connecting, therefore NGOs should pay attention to social media use as the medium is growing. Literature agrees (refer to chapter 2, under section 2.9) social media is inexpensive, conversations are recorded and immediate feedback is possible.

- **Theme 4: Challenges and disadvantages of social media**

The disadvantages associated with social media as indicated by the respondents (refer to Annexure 4) highlight that social media is still a relatively new medium which have many advantages. Other participants did not regularly use social media. Five participants specifically stated that keeping their personal life private was very important to them. This study also indicate that public relations practitioners in NGOs are far behind the impact of traditional media. Furthermore issues of access to technology and the knowledge and skills associated with social media are hindering factors to the process.

Based on the findings (refer to Annexure 4) participants agreed that some of the challenges that are still evident in NGOs sector are:

- High cost of resources;
- Lack of skills/education that could create more jobs;
- Lack of access to basic needs such as proper offices;

- Lack of good infrastructure;
- Socio-cultural constraints and economic hurdles;
- Lack of participation in policies that affect their working lives;
- Social media is an underdeveloped area in NGOs;

Another major challenge pointed out regarding the use of social media in NGOs is the fact that public relations practitioners and employees may not be technology inclined because they do not understand technology. It is completely a new communication system, will need to be learned and it will take time. The challenge was to collect the data from respondents in NGOs. Public relations were not negative but the challenge was the culture of the business, which does not encourage sharing. The challenge can be changing the mind set to sharing knowledge makes a person more powerful.

- **Theme 5: Social media influence traditional media**

According to the respondents who are managers who participated in this study indicate and agree that social media influences traditional media. The aforementioned statement supports the literature (chapter 3, under section 3.3.2) where it highlights the impact of social media on the traditional communication media. Anderson (2009) indicates two underlying differences between traditional media and new media are the different flow of communication and the speed at which it flows. Social media can provide a channel where the organisation can build relationships with the publics (Solis and Breakenridge, 2009: 166). Participants noted that strong relationships between peers, as well as with managers are key to successfully functioning as a team in an NGO environment. Participants also indicated that they value feedback from managers as two-way communication, and for them two-way communication is key to improving engagement amongst employees in NGOs. The aforementioned statement supports the literature (Chapter 3, under section 3.3) where it highlights the Grunig and Hunt Model. Mathee (2011) states that the Grunig and Hunt (1984) model aims to encourage two-way communication that leads to mutual understanding and corporation.

- **Theme 6: Social media platforms used in NGOs**

Using the interview schedule (refer to Annexure 2) public relations practitioners were asked to indicate what internal communication channels they use to communicate in the organisation.

According to the respondents in this study, facebook is the most used communication channel in NGOs. According to World Wide Worx (2011) the report states that one in five South Africans use facebook (refer to Chapter 3, under section 3.9 regarding the current status of social media in South Africa). According to the participants, the use of social media such as facebook plays an important part as a communication tool in NGOs. It provides the NGOs with

a platform to communicate important information campaigns to various stakeholders. The aforementioned statements supports the literature (Chapter 2, under section 2.7.3) highlighting the definition of facebook. According to Zuckerberg (2012) facebook was created to make the world more open and connected, and to bring people closer together. Furthermore, Arthur and Kiss (2010) note that facebook is currently considered the largest online social network. Positive response on using facebook for internal and external communication in NGOs included that it will connect all various stakeholders and will help share information and improve performance. Wilcox, Cameron and Reber (2015) note that facebook is referred to as the King of social networks. The positive findings indicate that facebook has managed to attract the youth to participate in NGO activities and the opportunity to reach rural areas and spread the message across. Facebook is not limited to friendly and social relationships, but can also be effectively used as a communication tool for social movements, to raise funds, to reach large diverse audience and influence a large scale on a specific issue.

According to respondents' face-to-face interpersonal and group meetings is extensively used by the managers and employees in the NGOs to communicate internally. It also became clear that the respondents use email internally to communicate important information to employees. Participants also indicated that the more complex and important the issue the more they prefer to use face-to-face communication. Literature concur (refer to Chapter 3, under section 3.3) that when the message is important and complex, it is advisable to use face-to-face communication as well as written communication to explain and communicate the message.

- **Theme 7: Impact of social media**

The results in Annexure 4 confirm that respondents who are managers at the NGOs who participated in this study experienced the impact of social media in their various communication departments. Social media offers a new way of reaching individuals and providing information and interaction with peers as well as changing the nature of participation and expression (refer to chapter 2, under section 2.5.1) where it highlights the definitions of social media. It highlights issues such as new media, social networking, internet, information society. Furthermore, characteristics of social media (Chapter 2, under section 2.8) highlights issues such as interactivity, digitality, virtuality, convergence, dispersal and hypertextuality. Participants stated that using social media as a two-way internal communication tool can enhance engagement and bring employees and managers closer together. This opinion is in line with the literature that states that a two-way symmetrical organisation help improve the morale and motivate employees which in turn can improve productivity (see section 3.7.4).

Participants regarding the impact of using social media is the impact of spending time on social media such as facebook during work will disturb productivity. Participants interviewed (refer to Annexure 4) fear that if employees had access to social media sites such as facebook they will spend too much time on it and this will affect productivity negatively in NGOs.

- **Theme 8: The role of public relations**

Using the interview schedule (refer to annexure 2) practitioners were asked to indicate whether they had a public relations practitioner in their organisation.

It was clear throughout the interviews that the participants said that they understood the role of a public relations practitioners in the NGOs as the process of influencing public opinion by establishing and maintain relationships between the organisation and its publics. Literature agrees (refer to Chapter 3, see section 3.3) where it highlights the definitions of public relations. Bates (2002) confirms that public relations as a management function that seeks to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between organisation and publics.

All practitioners interviewed (refer to annexure 2) felt that anyone can do the public relations function. Participants specifically added that they communicate to build relationships, as it is necessary to have healthy relationships between the manager, employees and the various stakeholders in NGOs. With reference to the literature (refer to chapter 3, under section 3.3.1) where it highlight the value of public relations can be determined by measuring the quality of the relationships the organisation establishes within its environment. Literature concurs (Botan and Hazelton, 2009) that organisations with excellent public relations have clear policies and this leads to increased employee engagement and satisfaction.

5.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The findings obtained through data collection and qualitative research process was analysed, interpreted and discussed at length in this chapter. Furthermore, this study presented the grounded theory of practitioners' experiences on their views on the phenomenon of social media. This study investigated the use of social media in public relations in NGOs in Gauteng (Johannesburg and Pretoria). The aim of the study was to provide insight into how public relations practitioners in Gauteng use social media as a communication tool to communicate with their stakeholders. This was done to obtain their experiences, perceptions on the use of social media as a communication channel in NGOs. It was also examined how social media are being integrated in NGOs to sustain relationships with various stakeholders.

Study revealed that NGOs are using social media as a communication tool to engage with the publics. Facebook was the most recognised and preferred social media site to communicate and disseminate information, followed by the Google and Whatsapp. It is evident from the results that Twitter was still a nightmare to other participants. The results further confirmed that the respondents agree that NGOs were using social media to raise funds and attract new sponsors and furthermore to build and sustain relationships. The study highlighted that facebook have enabled NGOs to communicate and engage with diverse stakeholders in a two-way communication. It is evident from the results that social media channels are useful tools in public relations but need to be understood and change attitude towards social media to encourage input effectively for the organisation. Based on the findings technology will enable these tools to continuously change for better communication to better suit the NGOs' needs.

The results further confirmed that some of the challenges facing public relations practitioners include the lack of role-models for the communications profession in the NGO sector. Salary inequity also contributes to the challenges that public relations practitioners face in the NGO sector. The lack of ability to choose the right platform for NGOs also contributes to not using social media. In addition perceptions and stereotypes play a role for public relations not working for the NGO.

All participants had an understanding of social media as any platform where groups of people can express their views, it is a platform that facilitates engagement, it is any technology enabled platform where people can share experiences and learn new skills.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the results of the empirical research study were outlined, and discussed. In this chapter the focus is on the primary conclusions and recommendations of the study in terms of the research problem and study objectives. Secondly, conclusions regarding the research methodology used in this study are presented and finally, the developed managerial policy guideline for public relations in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in order to sustain relations with the publics is presented.

Social media is a relatively new public relations tool in the South African public relations context; it has been found (Goldstuck, 2014) that although social media has been utilised in South Africa, research into the use of social media in the South African public relations context is an underrepresented field of study.

Based on the findings and discussion, this chapter draws a conclusion to the research. The main objective of this study was to understand how public relations practitioners in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in Gauteng (Johannesburg and Pretoria) use social media to communicate with their various stakeholders. The study further examined how social media was integrated into public relations' NGOs communication strategy. The literature on social media was used and the main findings of the study are summarised.

The limitations of the study will also be presented and suggestions for future studies on social media provided. The theoretical framework of the study was informed by Grunig and Hunt's (1984) two-way symmetrical communication model. Finally, recommendations are made regarding the integration and strategic use of social media as a channel for communication in NGO.

6.2 THE RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

In South Africa the telecommunications laws confirmed that although progress has been made with regard to regulating the internet, international trends show that social media usage is being taken seriously and social media usage in Africa is a rapidly growing trend, there is still a pressing need for social media to be one of the most commonly used means of communication (Thornton et al., 2006).

The literature sources such as the journals, textbooks, magazines, newspaper articles that were used for this study, confirmed that modern researchers such as Wright and Hinson (2010); Macnamara (2010); Veric et al. (2014) have observed that most organisations including non-profit organisations use social media to promote products and services but not all are taking full advantage of this new technology. The literature sources such as the Telecommunications Act (No. 103 of 1996) (SA, 1996) which is aimed at regulating telecommunications and the Internet, confirmed that social media is a field where the private and civil society have a more important role to play than governments (refer to Chapter 1).

There is also increasing frustration that social media is still a relatively new medium, NGOs are leveraging technology but not nearly achieving its potential. Adoption of social media is still far behind the impact of traditional media. Furthermore, issues of access to new technology and knowledge and skills associated with using social media make it difficult for the process (refer to Chapter 1). The research problem is that monitoring the content on the online social websites is time-consuming and practitioners have other responsibilities. This created a great deal of frustration. Hence, not all NGOs are embracing social media as a communication tool (also refer to Chapter 1).

The research problem: Although social media plays an important role in promoting the organisation, the problem is that anyone can join these sites and anyone can comment and partake in the discussion with ulterior motives to damage the image and reputation of the organisation. This created a great deal of dissatisfaction in the management to protect the company information and to protect the employees. Social media increases the threat to privacy. Social media usage complicates employment relations and employment law (refer to Chapter 1). Many NGOs are unable to embrace social media and reasons can be that there is no current legislation dealing explicitly with social media. The statement above is supported by a report by the Telecommunications Act (No. 103 of 1996) (SA,1996) indicating the regulation and the provision and use of the Internet. On the other hand, ICASA is to support

and strengthen the capacity to regulate to ensure sustainable provision of ICT services. GCIS (2013) also agrees with the statement by pointing out that this plan provides a framework for making sure that the ICT goals are achieved (refer to Chapter 1).

Furthermore, a significant number of NGOs do not have internet access, skill, knowledge, resources and capacity to meet the rising need of using social media as a communication tool (refer to Chapter 3).

The research problem is there is not enough empirical research that has been done regarding the use of social media in non-governmental organisation in South Africa. There had been no empirically derived discussion on the impact of social media on public relations in NGOs generally. NGOs face numerous challenges such as keeping up with rapidly changing social media technology development, developing internal educational processes and implementing social media as a communication strategy. Many NGOs are unable to stay abreast of a wide range of social media and policy issues. The aforementioned statement is supported by a report by The State of ICTs in the South African NGO sector (2009) indicating that there is limited research done on social media in NGOs (Barnard, 2009). Furthermore the 5th Annual SANGONeT (ICTs) for Civil Society conference highlighted the networking platforms such as facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MySpace in reinforcing the work of the NGOs (Barnard, 2009). During the course of this study, there has been some literature published relating to the impact of social media, but there has not been any research that explicitly deals with public relations using social media in NGOs in the South African context. Therefore this research seeks to close this gap.

The research problem, 2015, was a challenging year for NGOs especially in South Africa. The economic decline forced many NGOs to cut costs, scale back programme activities, and find new strategies for generating funding and other resources. This has created frustration by practitioners at the inability to embrace social media to do what is expected of them. The aforementioned statement is supported by a report by SANGONeT (2009) indicating that global recession has forced other NGOs to close down (refer to Chapter 1).

The participants were chosen based on their availability. It was not an easy task to gain access to other NGO organisations. The research was conducted during the time the NGO sector was experiencing difficulties such as pressure to closing down office or scaling down activities due to insufficient funding.

The problems mentioned above will be answered and dealt with when the findings and conclusions relevant to each research objectives are discussed in detail below.

6.3 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY USED FOR THIS STUDY

Constructivist grounded theory was the selected methodology for this study. This research method used in this study was appropriate to generate a new theory. Grounded theory is one of the developments of Glaser and Strauss's grounded theory methodology. The conclusions to substantiate the effectiveness of the research methodology (grounded theory) used for this research.

The main idea behind constructivist grounded theory is its impact on methodology. Glaser and Strauss refers to the discovery of grounded theory, on the other hand, Charmaz (2006) refers to the grounded theory as constructed. Furthermore, Glaser and Strauss point out that there is external reality while Charmaz (2006) emphasises that reality is co-constructed. In common, based on the aforementioned discussion, Charmaz (2006) indicates that individuals construct knowledge and experiences through social interaction. The same author further writes that in constructivist grounded theory the researcher becomes the author and co-construct data with the participants. Birks and Mills (2011:8) agree by indicating that grounded theory has been seen as saliently authored. Charmaz (2006) goes even further to suggest that researchers need to immerse themselves in the data to find the meaning. For purposes of this study, memos are a core part of the process of grounded theory. The researcher brought together everything about the category including data related to the aspects of the category.

The consultation of the literature sources from history and global perspective on social media indicating that international trends show that social media usage is being taken seriously in various disciplines and is rapidly growing in South Africa. On the other hand, the consultation of relevant literature sources such as The Communications Act (No. 103 of 1996) (SA, 1996) indicating that in many cases the lack of regulating telecommunications contributes to the inefficiency of using social media in NGOs. Furthermore, the consultation of the current status of public relations from a South African perspective (refer to Chapter 3) indicating that social media is the commonly used communication tool and have to be embraced and integrated into the NGO environment. The consultation of the sources above ensured a broad and balanced study of sources of literature (refer to Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). According to Charmaz (2006), the inductive nature of grounded theory research and its focus on

constructing a theory from the data has caused many to question the wisdom of literature study. With this in mind, in grounded theory there is a fear that pre-existing literature may suppress the researcher's creativity and constrain the researcher's ability to generate new theory. Charmaz (2006) agrees by indicating that it may cause the researcher to force the data into preconceived ideas (refer to Chapter 4).

In addition to the above, theoretical sampling is a form of non-probability sampling that refines and elaborates and exhausts conceptual categories (Gibbs, 2010). It is clear from this section of the study that by allowing the researcher flexibility in the collection of further data, with decisions based on the emerging categories. It is the process by which the researcher collects, codes and analyses his data and decides what data to collect which later facilitates theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 2006:45). According to Charmaz (2006), theoretical sampling distinguishes grounded theory from other approaches and sets it apart as significantly more than a coding method.

Based on the abovementioned discussion, to put it simply, the differing assumptions that underpin constructivist grounded theory is that it impacts the methods for data collection and the way in which data collection is carried out and the process of analysis and theory development. Birks and Mills (2011) add by indicating that researchers are not to bring preconceived ideas to the research. Charmaz (2006:7) argues that the fundamental goal of the researcher is to maintain a position of a distant expert as the theory is created.

6.4 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study was to develop a managerial policy guideline for public relations practitioners in Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The purpose of these guidelines is to create awareness of some of the opportunities that social media presents for NGOs, as well as making public relations practitioners aware of how to manage the risks associated with the use of this new kind of technology. The abovementioned objective was attained through the responses by the respondents who are practitioners at NGOs to the questions related to the use of social media. Strauss and Corbin (2005) support the above objective by indicating that the emergent nature of grounded theory is the direction of the research is shaped by co-constructed data that is collected and analysed (refer to Chapter 4).

Constructivist grounded theory which is particularly appropriate for this study as the worldview is not external or fixed reality, but rather a reality is constructed by the individuals through

interaction. Furthermore, the objective was also attained through analysing journal articles, books (refer to Chapter 2 and 3). The study investigated the use of social media in public relations management by NGOs in Gauteng province. The aim of the study was to provide insight into how all nine sampled NGOs use social media to communicate with their internal and external publics. The research questions guided the study throughout and the discussion in the next section will show how the secondary objectives, guiding theoretical arguments and empirical findings pertain to each other.

In conclusion, it is clear from this section of the study that the strategy for using social media in NGOs is not well regulated. Complying with policy guideline is important and it should become the core focus of the process of using social media in NGOs. It is very important to develop a credible and relevant communication strategy which addresses the intended vision, objectives and local community needs and envisaged outcomes of the NGO.

6.5 SUMMARY OF THE SECONDARY OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- **To discuss the history and global perspective on how social media have impacted public relations practice. The literature investigation attempted to establish how social media elements such as facebook function and how communication on this platform is established and used.** This objective was attained through the literature study that was used for this study. The study also notes choose the significant platform from which the organisation can use to communicate with diverse publics. The literature study covered the role of the internet, more especially the evolution of Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. In doing so, a detailed explanation and definition of social media, new media, social networks, and information society is provided to provide a contextual background (refer to Chapter 2). Furthermore, the literature indicated that by embracing Web 2.0 technologies to connect with the publics, non-governmental organisations are making good decisions to use social media to connect and build relationships with the publics (refer to Chapter 2, under section 2.4). The literature and empirical research successfully identified measures of success for any social media tool should be, communication, dissemination of information, interaction and education that can be used to deliver efficient use of social media in NGOs.
- **To describe the advantages and disadvantages of using social media in an NGO context.** The literature study and the empirical research that was used in this study

enabled the attainment of this objective. The literature and empirical study successfully identified the following are some of the benefits to NGOs of using social media: increasing NGO access to its publics, reaching the specific public on specific issues, improving accessibility on NGO communication and increasing feedback. According to the literature (refer to Chapter 2 Section 2.2.1), social media is less hampered by time and space boundaries, less regulated, is more diverse and private and personal communication becomes blurred. This means that social media allows anyone to participate in its use regardless of where they are. The literature and the empirical research identified that social media applications allow NGOs to communicate, engage, and interact with the public. Improve cost-effectiveness of NGO communication (refer to Chapter 2 and 3).

The abovementioned factors have a direct impact on the success of using social media as a communication tool in the organisation. The study also found that the reason most of the NGOs were not using social media was due to the lack of resources. Other problems were a limited budget and lack of technical knowledge. However, as a result of the literature the disadvantage is issues of access to the infrastructure and knowledge of technology use are important to consider (refer to Chapters 2 and 3). Furthermore, the literature and empirical findings highlight that the key aspect of communication strategy is integrated social media into the traditional everyday experience. Participants feel they must be active on a social media website it is essential to use for NGOs. Participants viewed social media as a tool to disseminate information, to attract sponsorship and generate donors and engage volunteers. The disadvantage is that anyone can join social media sites and make a comment and partake in the online discussion. The problem is other people join in to damage the reputation and therefore the organisation has no control of what is said on platforms.

- **To determine the purpose of social media as a communication platform in NGOs and discuss whether social media (such as facebook, Twitter, Blogs and content sharing sites) influence the traditional media:** As a result of the literature study, and the empirical research that was used for this study this objective was also attained. The purpose of using social media such as facebook for NGO participation is to engage the public and the youth via social networking sites and to encourage them to get involved in NGO activities, discussion and action (refer to Chapter 5). The literature covered the participatory value of social media and how it can be utilised as an additional tool of communication other than the traditional media. The literature and empirical research identified that social media can supplement traditional media use

(refer to Chapter 3). This is because social media can be used to strengthen, support ideas and inform the public without having to adhere to the rules of traditional media. The findings have shown that social media is playing an important role to publish information, initiate engagement, participation and to maintain relationships (refer to Chapter 5). Social media can reach where traditional media is not always available.

- **To determine how public relations in NGO use of social media to communicate with the publics:** Chapter 3 focused on the literature and current status of public relations communication. As a result of the literature study and empirical research that was used for this study, this objective was also attained. The definitions, functions and the role of public relations used for this study were highly effective in capturing the data about the development of a managerial policy guideline for public relations in NGOs. The formulation of the interview questions was done about other related research studies in social media from relevant academic literature sources. The semi-structured interviews are common data collection method in grounded theory. They are well suited for grounded theory studies because they allow the exploration of participants experience and provide them more opportunity to describe their experience in their words (Charmaz, 2006). Based on this, it can be concluded that the grounded theory approach used for this study was appropriately constructed and designed according to the methods of the literature study.

- **To describe the two-way model about public relations practice**

The literature successfully identified the Grunig and Hunt model highlighting the strategic relevance of the model. This model was discussed about the public relations perspective. This made it possible to formulate questions for semi-structured interviews. The literature study and empirical research identified the objective of social media should not only be to the public or distribute information but must initiate stakeholder engagement and manage to build meaningful relationships with diverse publics.

The characteristic of an asymmetrical worldview includes the fact that the organisation may be a closed system (refer to Chapter 3 under Section 3.6.3). This implies that such organisation is not open for change and fear change and therefore cannot share and connect with the outside world. Furthermore, organisations that asymmetrical practice approach does not view communication as a strategic element. In contrast to this worldview, the symmetrical approach is characterised by an open system. It uses communication to manage conflict with strategic publics (Botan and Hazelton, 2009).

The organisation is not isolated but is part of the community: interaction, innovation and creativity are valued. It produces better long-term relationships with publics (Botan and Hazelton, 2009). Important to the study is the two-way communication models by the Grunig and Hunt model (1984) (refer to Chapter 3, under Section 3.6).

Public relations would benefit from the two-way model. The two-way symmetrical model is considered to be the most ethical and normative model; it was criticised for its idealistic approach to communication and relationship because communication practitioners are expected to balance the needs and interest of both the organisation and its publics (Grunig and Dozier, 2002; Ledingham and Bruning, 2000). According to Lane (2002), the Grunig and Hunt model is still widely used and cited in many public relations courses.

The two-way communication allows the mixed motive model to fit into the symmetrical organisation and this qualifies as the excellent communication. This supports the literature (refer to Chapter 3, under Section 3.6) indicating two-way communication model can be used in NGOs to communicate with publics near or far depending on the context. The two-way communication model improves employee morale and productivity; information is not pushed but feedback is regarded as essential to the management (Botan and Hazelton, 2009).

- **To describe the role performed by public relations practitioners and discuss the current status of practitioners concerning using social media as a communication tool in the NGO sector:** As a result of the literature study, this objective was attained. Through literature study and empirical research that was used for this study to investigate the extent to which the NGOs have adopted social media use. The sample of NGOs and in-depth interviewing were highly effective in generating the data about perceptions in integrating social media into the South African organisational communication strategy. The respondents in the semi-structured interviews had to indicate the role that they perform in the organisation. According to the function indicated by respondents, they were performing, fundraising, and marketing coordinator, sponsorship, events/PR manager roles. The literature study covered the descriptions of the definitions of public relations relevant for efficient and effective service in non-governmental organisations. This made it possible to formulate open-ended questions related to the significance of using social media. It also requires to determine what public relations model is presently practised in NGOs. The formulation of the questions was done about the other related research studies. The

aim of the study was to provide insight into how all nine sampled NGOs use social media to communicate with their internal and external publics. It also examined how social media is being integrated into the public relations communication strategies of NGOs to build and sustain relationships.

- **To conduct an empirical study to determine the validity and reliability of the measuring instrument that was used for this study.** As a result of the literature study and empirical research that was used for this study, this objective was also attained. The sampled NGOs and measuring instrument (semi-structured interviews) used for this study were highly effective in capturing raw data to organise and categorise themes. To elevate the trustworthiness of the study the researcher repeatedly read the transcript material collected (see annexure 4). Data generated from the interviews and the content analyses were used to ensure reliability and validity of the study. Interviews were transcribed, analysed and kept for future reference. The study also was to document the experiences of public relations practitioners within the NGO sector. The study investigated the use of social media in public relations practice in NGOs. The aim was to provide insight into how nine sampled NGOs use social media to communicate with their internal and external publics. In light of this, the research revealed that NGOs have recognised the significance of social media in communication to enhance internal and external engagement. The main emphasis of communication in NGOs is still placed completely on traditional media, the research findings drawn from interviews indicate that participant NGOs are using both traditional and social media platforms in a way that complement one another.

- **To determine how the principles of symmetrical communication are implemented in social networking sites and discuss the two-way symmetrical model of public relations proposed by Grunig and Hunt (1984).** The literature study that was used for this study enabled the attainment of this objective. The literature study covered Grunig and Hunt's four models of public relations. The four models, which have been used widely in public relations theory, helped explain how public relations have evolved (refer to Chapter 3). The literature identified all four models as an important model that can be used to practice the two-way symmetrical model (also refer to Chapter 3). The literature identified and studied that two-way symmetrical model enables people to share ideas and gain something from the experience and technology has made it easier than ever before (refer to Chapter 2 and 3). The key commonality is new web technologies encourage two-way communication.

Based on the above discussion, social media is powerful communication tools that have a significant impact on public relations practice. Social media have enabled NGOs to communicate and engage with publics in two-way communications. Social media provide a voice to both organisations and publics as well as help them to interact with one another on a personal, professional level. The following policy attempts to present guidelines on how social media could be used to enhance employee and stakeholder relationships in NGOs. To encourage public relations to full advantage of social media, the following guidelines were formulated.

- **Developing themes for guidelines to public relations practitioners in NGOs**

Since the advent of social media, there is a small number of research both at a global and local level focusing on the use of social media from a public relations practitioner and management perspective. Although social media are relatively new there is a need for understanding how organisations use them to communicate with their publics. Studies conducted on social media (see section 6.3 on page 186) are relevant for NGOs since their structures are alike. The primary objective of this study was to develop a managerial model for public relations practitioners in NGOs in Gauteng (Johannesburg and Pretoria). This study sought to understand the way in which NGOs in Gauteng (Johannesburg and Pretoria) use social media to engage, maintain relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

Based on the empirical results (refer to chapter 5 and Annexure 4). The eight (8) themes identified, will form key pillars of the developed guideline for practitioners in NGOs.

Botan and Hazleton (2009) define policy as a specific course of action taken collectively by a representative of society addressing a specific problem of public concern that reflects the interest of society. It is important to formalise some guidelines on the use of social media to ensure that the channel is used correctly and that it can ultimately contribute to two-way communication model and participation between public relations and the publics. Botan and Hazleton (2009:505) indicate that corporations can potentially create policies that affect various publics. Botan and Hazleton (2009:505) are of the view that the policy process includes efforts to formulate alternative solutions presented for adoption, implementation of the policy and specification of the procedures to be followed.

The following conclusions are drawn from the empirical research:

Conclusion: Theme 1: Global perspective

According to Mayfield (2008) social media is best understood as a group of new kinds of online media which share the following characteristics; participation, openness, conversation, community and connectedness (refer to Chapter 2). According to the literature study, social media is mainstream that describes online many to many communications (Rettberg, 2014). Wright and Hinson (2009) write that social media tools have transformed the public relations function and integrated the tools within their mainstream communication strategies. The literature as reported in Chapter 2 confirm the findings (refer to Annexure 4) of this study. At the centre of all social media is digitisation, convergence and the Internet, which is viewed as one of the main new media employed today in NGOs. The most important benefit of social media is that it is digital technology which allows interactivity, hypertextuality, virtuality and multimediality (see Chapter 2 section 2.8). The findings has described the history of the Internet also explored social media competition issues in Internet service provision. It is apparent from the discussion that Internet services provision should continue to be regulated by government and ICASA to avoid monopoly to dominate the industry.

Conclusion: Theme 2: Success and understanding of social media

The research findings indicated that public relation practitioners in NGOs use social media as a communication tool for informing, sharing ideas and opportunities. This concurs with the argument of Lesame et al. (2012) that social media is about individuals sharing content,

insights, and news. Similarly, social media is communication platforms that empower people to form virtual communities which are linked by certain interest and values and fosters collaboration, interaction and sharing (Bagui and Parker, 2009).

Practitioners interviewed acknowledged that their organisations are prepared to let their employees go for a social media course. This shows that social media is being used and integrated into the communication strategy not only to disseminate information but also interacting and building relationships with the publics. Participants indicated that young people are technology savvy and therefore it is imperative to get everyone in the organisation to be engaged as possible in social media platforms. In addition, NGOs have realised the important role that social media sites play in NGOs in networking with other organisations and increasing access to useful information. Wright and Hinson (2009) write that social media tools have transformed public relations function and integrated the tools within their mainstream communication strategies.

Conclusion: Theme 3: Purpose and Benefits of social media

Stokes (2009) has put forward that social media is less restrained by time and space. Brown (2009) indicates that social media not only allows public relations practitioners to reach out to and engage their public in conversation but strengthen relationships. This is supported by Scott (2010) who states that through social media anyone, anywhere can participate in a discussion. Androutsopoulos (2010) add that social media allows anyone to participate regardless of where they are.

The study found that to most NGOs social media was essential to spread information about campaigns, fundraising, attracting local and international donors, and attract more volunteers. Most NGOs could point out several success stories concerning specific projects using social media. Many compelling reasons for NGOs to use social media as an internal and external communication channel have improved two-way communication, free information gathering, trust and improved employee productivity. All these advantages can lead to sustainable relationships between the organisation and the publics.

It is clear from the above discussion that understanding, reputation and perception are important pillars that facilitate communication with all audiences, instant feedback and behaviour change. The findings further indicate that public relations practitioners make

choices every day about how to relate to different publics in different situations. In addition to this public relations perceive social media to be a normal part of their organisation.

Furthermore, participants who are public relations practitioners at the NGOs for this study tended to agree that social media is important communication tools for sharing, connecting and creating content especially when dealing with the external publics. Scott (2012) supports the above statement by indicating that social media have become increasingly important communication channel for building a connection between an organisation and the public. The findings of this study confirm that the NGOs sampled In Gauteng maintained and created a presence on social media sites such as facebook engaging and initiating discussion, dialogue, and conversations with publics. The participants also add that their presence on social media platforms is an interactive process of taking advantage of social media and to ensure that NGOs become involved in the technological and online world.

The findings as reported by the participants that there is no alternative for them to not being active on social media, are supported by Scott (2010) by pointing out that for NGOs to be successful they should begin to think strategically about social media, be cognisant of the available tools and how they align and give support to the organisational goals and objectives. Brown (2009) adds that social media sets the new landscape and therefore social media must be used to augment traditional activities rather than replace them. This is supported by Al-Deen and Hendricks (2012) who state that social media have become a powerful tool in the arsenal of public relations. Argenti (2011) posits that it is necessary for organisations to integrate and embrace social media tools to engage and build relationships with the public. The following are some of the benefits to NGO of using social media:

- Increasing NGOs' access to its audiences;
- Use of social media can empower the employees in the NGOs;
- Increasing the speed of feedback and input;
- Improving the accessibility of NGOs' communication;
- Allowing NGOs to adjust communications quickly, where necessary; and
- Open networks foster creativity and can solve problems and challenges.

Conclusion: Theme 4: Challenges and disadvantages of social media

The findings indicated that public relations practitioners in the NGOs have not had specific policies about social media use. Furthermore, the organisations do not provide training for public relations practitioners using social media about NGO work. Therefore, communication

via social media presented challenges as it was not controlled. Some NGOs highlighted that they considered social media platforms to be risky as they were not regulated and they had no control of the content. Practitioners pointed out that the risks regarding the use of social media in NGO should be mitigated by developing policies and guidelines that can govern the use of social networking site such as facebook.

The findings indicated that public relations practitioners were using social media as a communication tool but they could not monitor social media content. Furthermore, issues of knowledge, skills and fear are hindering the process of using social media effectively in NGOs. Another challenge is that there are no rules, lack of clear social media strategies, difficulty to measure the success of social media and to understaff the social media team. However, there is also a considerable amount of literature which reveals that there is some significant challenges that should be overcome to reap the full benefits of social media in NGOs. A study by Fitch (2009) reported that the Internet is the Wild West, right anything goes, there are no rules, emphasising the unregulated and largely unmanaged practices of social media use. Furthermore, a study by Wright and Hinson (2009) concluded that meaningful gaps exist when implementing social media in public relations. These findings, as reported by similar studies on the use of social media (Coman and Paun, 2010), indicated that the emergence of social media challenges the traditional instrument of public relations. The studies above are of the view that social media tools are becoming beneficial tools of communication for public relations. Social media tools enable the practitioners to share information as well as to reach the public. The challenge is that public relations make choices every day about how to relate to different publics in different situations as they perceive social media to be a normal part of their organisation. The findings indicate social media have changed the communication landscape by allowing two-way communication channel between organisation and publics.

Based on these challenges mentioned above anyone can join the social media sites and comment and join in the discussion, however, it cannot be guaranteed that all views are positively contributing to the NGOs' conversation. Within social media platforms, NGOs talk about their campaigns, events, causes and activities. As anyone can access their social media sites, it means that the NGO cannot have absolute control over all social media platforms.

The social media environment is an extremely free-flowing channel, and the available tools and applications are constantly evolving. The findings revealed that social media is used as a communication tool and to maintain relationships with the public. This confirms that social media is critically important communication tool, particularly when dealing with external publics. This view is supported by Mersham et al. (2009) who claim that social media equate

to a conversation where the public relations practitioner want to be part of the discussion or engage the public one-to-one. Mersham et al. (2009) further add that through social media conversation is alive and active with participants uploading, sharing, and creating new content and reflects real life communication networks with friends, colleagues, and those who share their interest whether business or social. Hotz (2008) also point out that social media allows for opportunities of self-expression. The abovementioned discussion is supported by Skinner et al. (2010) agreeing that by pointing out that social media is an empowering tool or public relations, eroding the value of controlling information which enables honesty and transparency to emerge.

However, some participants disagreed that social media is critically essential for building relationships and perceptions in NGOs. This has created a great deal of dissatisfaction and unhappiness for the public relations practitioners in the NGOs. Hence practitioners who deal with vulnerable people prefer keeping their private life private. This view is confirmed by Skinner et al. (2010) by pointing out that several issues are raised when practitioners propose the idea of introducing social media into the existing communication strategy, Furthermore Skinner et al. (2010) indicated that the issue of control of information and trust will wither. This statement confirms that providing training for public relations is important so that they understand their social media responsibilities. Taylor et al. (2010) and Grunig and Dozier (1992) concur that the effectiveness on social media platforms is necessary for relationship-building.

In light of the findings above, some participants in NGOs disagreed that social media platforms are essential for public relationships and therefore it was not necessary to invest in the social media as the core of their communication strategy. The overall trend is that practitioners reported that the reason they were not using social media often was due to lack of resources and lack of technological knowledge. Further analysis of the findings shows that although social media facilitates two-way communication, NGOs are not taking full advantage of this benefit. The findings show that the response on social media is not in a form of discussion but rather practitioners are analysing how the public's comment will affect and influence the strategic communication. It was also established that social media platforms for personal purposes can affect productivity negatively if practitioners spend time at work engaging and interacting with the public in a thoughtless manner. As reflected in the findings, participants are of the opinion that unrestricted access to online information by employees is a challenge for the organisation.

Conclusion: Theme 5: Social media influence traditional media

Social media is less hampered by time and space (Skinner et al., 2012). This means anyone, anywhere can participate in a discussion on a social networking site (Wright, 2014). The abovementioned statements are supported by Mandiberg (2012) by indicating that the significance of using social media is to give people access to information and to attract volunteers and international funders to donate money to the organisation. The participants further indicated that through social media their organisation had been able to identify interested individuals who would want to partner with the NGO activities. Social media has also helped the NGO management to learn more about the needs of the community and network with other groups.

The research findings indicated that all sampled NGOs use social media to communicate with the publics. NGOs have realised the important role that social media play in NGOs, although they are not always using it to its full potential, the opportunity still exist for the organisation. This was illustrated by the fact that the sampled NGOs were learning to use social media for work purposes and practising two-way communication model of public relations (Grunig and Dozier, 2002). Furthermore, Scott (2010) is the view that social media have become an increasingly important communication channel for building a connection between companies and the public. According to Wright and Hinson (2009) studies, the phenomenon of blogs and other aspects of social media contain the PR strategies and the potential to bring changes to many aspects of public relations. Macnamara (2011) agrees with the statement above by pointing out that public relations practitioners must seek ways to improve their capabilities and approach to transform PR strategies if they want to maximise the potential created by social media. Solis (2008) share the same sentiments that social media forced public relations to stop broadcasting and start connecting and concluded that monologue has given way to dialogue.

The findings of the study confirm that the significant, reason and aim of using social media is to maintain a visible and constructive presence on their social media platforms. To be able to share information initiate conversation, interacting and replying to comments and questions. Mayfield (2008) contends that social media key elements are not entirely new but several characteristics set them apart such as reach, accessibility, usability, and transparency.

According to the findings presented above it seems that the participants agree and have acknowledged the importance of using social media to benefit from the publicity, information sharing and relationship building. The findings further indicate that there not enough research has been done to provide a definitive answer as to how effective or successful public relations efforts have been in using social media platforms as a communication tool in NGOs.

The overall trend is that public relations practitioners value the importance of social media as an additional platform for communication in NGOs. Social media provides dialogue and it can reach more people. Social media use in the public relations practice does facilitate the potential for interaction and participation, but South African NGOs are not adequately utilising it to communicate with the publics.

Conclusion: Theme 6: Social media platforms used

According to the findings, the participants were connecting, engaging and interacting with the public through social media pages. Content analysis shows that facebook has emerged as the platform where most interviewed NGOs had an account. Furthermore, findings reveal that the participants use more than one social media platform. Information gathered from the interviews revealed that facebook was the most used communication tool in NGOs. The study findings correlate with Sangonet (2009) findings which state that facebook is the most popular social networking site within the South African NGOs. The research also confirmed that South African NGOs are leveraging technology, but not nearly achieving its full potential. Information gathered from the interviews revealed that facebook was the preferred communication tool in NGOs. According to the NGOs, facebook is the tool to reach the public and community, in particular, the youth. Reaching the youth is essential for NGOs to ensure that they get the youth involved in important projects for campaigning and fundraising.

Goldstuck (2014) is of the view that one in five South Africans today use facebook. This above statement is confirmed by Scott (2009) who argue that social media is a low-cost investment that acts like word of mouth to enable the organisation to reach out to many people.

Participants agreed using social media platforms such as facebook to stay in touch with friends, meeting new people, organising social events, communicating with the internal and external audience. Facebook emerged as the platform where all ten NGOs had registered an account. The role of facebook is to ensure that NGOs mission, objectives are understood and to provide information about what the NGO stands for. Furthermore, participants also point

out that they use facebook to disseminate information to the public and to get the community involved. Facebook feedback also helps NGOs to improve communication, to improve future project strategic planning.

The abovementioned findings are supported by similar studies on the use of social media, Wright and Hinson (2010) highlight that the reason facebook is used is for engagement and interaction. During the study of the literature on the subject of social media, it was found that social media services such as facebook have revolutionised how people communicate with one another (Shapshak, 2009:4). The findings have shown that social media is playing an increasingly important role to reach the public that traditionally have not been active in NGOs activities.

The overall trend is that facebook is the most preferred channel of communication for information sharing, relations building, to educate and engage with the publics. When looking at the NGOs facebook pages, if the concern is made on facebook page it is often concerning information exchange from the organisation to the publics.

Conclusion: Theme 7: Impact of social media

The findings reveal that the participants were using social media platforms to engage and interact with the public. Participants perceive social media as tools which enabled them to share information, educate, disseminate information, interact and communicate as well as to reach the public. The statement above is supported by Breakenridge (2008) by indicating that social media can be described as anything that uses the internet to facilitate conversation. Furthermore, this means that anyone anywhere can participate in online discussion. A fairly similar view is taken by Scott (2010) who states that social media allows anyone to participate regardless of who they are, where they are, why they are involved or what motivates the individual to partake in the online conversation. Hence promoting campaigns, fundraising and other activities on social media has helped NGOs in getting individuals to support, participate and involved for the good cause. The use of social media allows public relations practitioners to reach and target new publics. Social media does not abide by the same restrictions of time and space as traditional media (Mayfield, 2008). Brown (2009), Scott (2010) however bring forward that social media can only be effective if it is utilised properly. The statements above support the literature (Chapter 2) where it highlights the impact of social media. It highlights issues such as forms, characteristics and the move from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. In conclusion, social media has influenced our cultural identity, our way of understanding ourselves, the world

in which we live and our ability to participate effectively in a society (South African Government Gazette, 2009).

The overall trend reported by the participants when using social media is that the purpose of using social media is as follows; to promote the organisation, to make the public aware of their existence, advocacy, and knowledge sharing such as a newsletter, brochures, annual report and volunteers such as youth. Social media facilitates interaction and participation by making two-way communication possible. Findings indicate that NGOs use social media to communicate with stakeholders. Social media facilitates a conversation with the communities through relevant content. It is all about exchanging information and not just delivering the message.

According to the findings presented above it seems that the participants tended to agree that the purpose of using facebook in NGOs is to engage the youth via social media and to encourage them to become further involved in NGO discussions and activities. The findings however also indicate that the participants tended to disagree that the purpose of reaching and targeting new publics through social media is given, it is merely a possibility if the communication tool can be utilised properly. As NGOs are still trying to learn and incorporate social media into their communication strategy, they are in the beginning stages of using social media as a platform.

Conclusion: Theme 8: The role of public relations

According to Graham and Dutton (2014:140), the growth of social networks and the emergence of personal media such as facebook and Twitter might be rebalancing the traditional relationship between producers and consumers. Skinner et al. (2010) are of the view that when introducing social media into the existing communication strategy, the issue of control information is raised because most organisations are used to tightly controlling information flow to its stakeholders. Skinner et al. (2010) further point out that flatter organisations such as NGOs find it easier to adopt social media strategies. This is supported by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) who state that social media should be used to enhance traditional media activities rather than replace them. Mersham et al. (2009) suggest that organisations should learn to integrate communication channels in their effort to manage two-way communication. An organisation that ascribe to a symmetrical worldview may promote two-way communication.

The abovementioned statements have a direct impact on public relations practice the essence of Web 2.0 social media is that it put the public back in the public relations (Solis and Breakenridge, 2009). The statement above is supported by Waddel (2010) who states that the concept of social media helps public relations build more relationships across a wider landscape, and enables to maintain ongoing quality relationships with influencers, media, customers, and partners regardless of where they are.

It is critical for public relations practitioner to realise the importance of having a properly structured social media system to be able to meet the goals of mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders as the web has become a platform. Baguio and Parker (2009:3) agrees with the statement above that the web empowers people to form virtual communities which are linked by certain interests and values and fosters collaboration interaction and sharing. Lesame et al. (2012) point out that social networks are places where social capital can be leveraged and used as an instrument to get advocacy. The participants further indicated that the aspect of social media is considered as an integral part of the overall communication enhancing strategy to meet the current trends of digital communication. The statement above is justifiable as all the participants indicated that the aspects of social media is considered as an integral part of the overall communication enhancing strategy and they are the ones who have to ensure that they meet the current trends of digital communication.

The Public Relations Institute of Southern Africa (PRISA, 1993) describes public relations as the management, through communication, of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders (refer to Chapter 3 under Section 3.3). Grunig (1992:4) defines public relations as the overall planning, execution and evaluation of an organisations communication with both internal and external publics or groups that affect the ability of the organisation to meet its goals. For the purpose of this study, this definition is accepted as the definition of public relations (PR). Skinner et al. (2010) supports the abovementioned definitions by indicating that fundamental to public relations is the establishment of mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. Different definitions of public relations are discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the study.

Solis (2008) defines PR 2.0 as the realisation that the Web changed everything, inserting people equally in the process of traditional influence. He further indicates that practitioners are now presented with the opportunity to not only reach our audiences through media gatekeepers but also use the online channels where they publish and share information to communicate more directly and genuinely. Breakenridge (2008:14) also supports the statements by Solis by pointing out that practitioners not only provide important information

that is useful but gives publics a means to communicate in two-way conversation at all times. The statement also confirms the statement made by Solis (2008) indicating that PR 2.0 is the understanding and practice that communications is a two-way process and incorporates the tools, principles, strategies, and philosophies for reaching, engaging, guiding, influencing and helping people directly in addition to the traditional cycle of PR influence.

To understand the role of public relations in an organisation, the researcher is of the view that we need to bring into our discussion the communication guideline elaborated by Grunig (1984). The four models are press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical models which are based on the free exchange of information. The four models of public relations and especially the two-way symmetrical model, have been the most debated component of the excellence theory (Grunig and Dozier, 1992). The two-way symmetrical communication model uses research, listening, and dialogue to manage conflict and to nurture relationships with the strategic publics. Grunig and Hunt (1984) furthermore state that it is a form of two-way communication which uses communication to negotiate with publics, resolve conflict and support mutual understanding. This is confirmed by Angelopulo and Barker (2013) indicating that the purpose of two-way communication model is to achieve mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. The statements above for the Grunig and Hunt model supports the literature (Chapter 3, under Section 3.6). Due to the development of Web 2.0 technology, the interactivity of the Internet has increased. Social media is not confined to personal use only but organisations such as NGOs are using them as an overall communications strategy (Reiman, 2012:80). Furthermore, organisations that apply the concept of two-way symmetrical communication will enjoy more mutually beneficial, sustainable relationships with their publics. This supports the literature (refer to Chapter 3) indicating that the two-way symmetrical communication model attempt to achieve a balance between organisation and publics. Furthermore, it will make a meaningful contribution to society by increasing understanding of various publics. The two-way symmetrical communication model is regarded as the most effective model for meeting organisational goals (Grunig and Grunig, 1992). Based on the above discussion, it is evident that mutually beneficial, sustainable, satisfying relationships with the stakeholders are important pillars of the two-way symmetrical communication model. It is essentially important that organisations use social media in a two-way communication to interact and engage stakeholders. Public relations practitioners who are experienced in two-way communication should be capable of practising the two-way symmetrical communication model using social media to build relationships.

Keeping the above characteristics in mind, the following section presents important guidelines for using social media as a communication channel and to ensure that it is used correctly and that it can ultimately contribute to public relations engagement with the publics in the NGO sector.

6.6 THE DEVELOPED MANAGERIAL POLICY GUIDELINE FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS IN NGOs

There is little research both at a global and local level focusing on the use of social media from a public relations practitioner and management perspective. Wright and Hinson (2009) conducted an annual report on an international study examining the impact of social media and other aspects of the new technologies on current PR practice. Their study strongly suggest that new communication media have a huge impact on PR practice. As Veric, Veric and Sriramesh (2014) point out that the focus has been on using the media as tools for purposes of media relations. Waters (2009) adds that public relations has discussed relationship development on traditional websites, but very little research has been published on social networking sites. Similarly, Wright and Hinson (2009) note that, most studies on social media have not been undertaken from the South African perspective. Only a few studies including Wright and Hinson (2009) have investigated the impact of social media from a global perspective. It is worth noting that studies on the Grunig and Hunt model often focus on the two-way symmetrical communication model (Avery and Sweetser 2010 and Matthee, 2011). In South Africa significant work has been done by Naudé (2004) study focussing on the interactive nature of the internet by applying the two-way symmetrical model. McCann (2008) research report found that social media is a confirmed global phenomenon but their study does not offer a view of the use of social media in Africa, especially South Africa. Therefore this study is relevant.

This section offers the working model for using social media within the NGO sector in South Africa. The primary objective of this study was to develop a managerial policy guideline for public relations in NGOs. From the research findings that were collected from the practitioners, there was a section that dealt with issues of how social media is used in NGOs. The research findings established understandings of how people seek, use, interact and share information using social media. Out of these findings eight themes were identified namely: global perspective, success and understanding of social media; purpose and benefits of social media, challenges and disadvantages of social media, social media influence traditional media, social media platforms used; impact of social media and the role of public relations.

The abovementioned eight themes have a direct impact on the phenomenon in which people make effective use of social media information.

According to Wright (2014), the key to the success of using social media as communication channels lies in a good social media policy. The statement above is supported by Graham and Dutton (2014) by indicating that in the context of communication technologies concern is many available policy tools offer protection by reducing opportunities for the free exchange of information or speech. However, Wright (2014) is of the view that an organisation has to have clear guidelines on what employees should and should not be doing on social media and hopefully they will be grounded in practicality and trust. According to Pons and Deale (2010) policy refers to the plan of action that set the course for achieving objectives. Furthermore, Graham and Dutton (2014) point out that the organisation should plan and set down how the organisational social media should be managed and what its aims and objectives are. This literature study focuses on demonstrating the need for the research by providing an analytical overview of existing related research on social media and highlighting the gap that this particular research will fill. A key aspect of social media communication strategy is integrating social media into an organisation's communication.

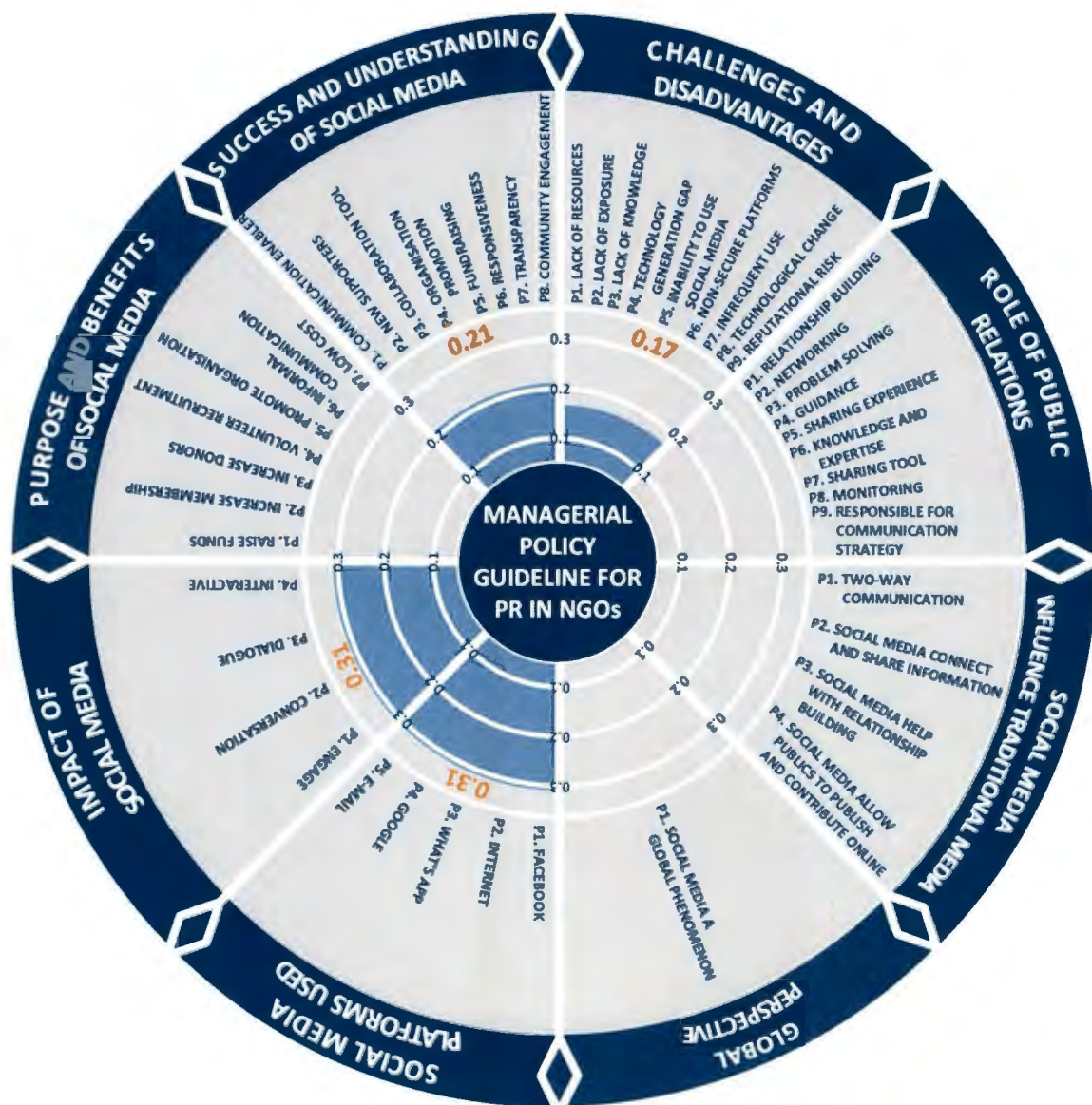
The abovementioned discussion have a direct impact on policy guideline; the intention was to provide a standard personal responsibility for NGOs' employees and to provide the potential benefits and risk associated with social media tools. Furthermore, it was to provide guidance on best practice use of social media in NGO context.

As already mentioned above that social media provides an opportunity for organisations and the public to interact with one another, and the way in which all nine NGOs are using social media to communicate is building a mutual understanding between the organisation and its publics. This research study attempts to present a framework on how social media could be used to build relationships with public and stakeholders in NGOs. Furthermore for social media to be effective, initiatives must form part of the wider communication strategy supporting rather than replacing traditional communication media. To motivate and inspire NGOs to take full benefit of social media, a guideline policy framework for the use of social media by public relations practitioners in NGOs was formulated. In keeping with the grounded theory, the proposed framework themes were constructed through analysis of data that the researcher and the participants co-created with participants. The study further discusses and presents the views of the practitioners in NGOs who were interviewed.

This section offers a policy guideline for using social media in NGOs. This answers one of the secondary objectives of the research which seek to provide a framework for the use of social media in NGOs. It outlines key issues integral in successful leveraging of social media in public relations practice in NGOs. As observed in the study, the benefits of social media is using social media to engage with diverse publics; social media broaden to reach a new audience. The findings are supported by similar studies on the use of social media (Wright and Hinson, 2009; Matthee, 2011). The aforesaid studies are of the opinion that social media is beneficial methods of communication for public relations practitioners in NGOs. This is confirmed by Rettberg (2014) indicating that social media is a mainstream that describes online many to many communication. The first statement is further supported by Mayfield (2008) indicating that social media is best described by the following characteristics, participation, engagement, openness, conversation, community and connectedness (refer to Chapter 2).

Furthermore, theme-challenges of social media of the eight themes identified is supported by Graham and Dutton (2014) indicating that NGOs require taking reasonable steps to ensure that they are not threatened by new technology (refer to Chapter 2). Effective use of social media requires that the NGOs use its resources and measures of control must be exercised in the use of social media. The statement above is supported by the Telecommunications Act (No. 103 of 1996) (SA, 1996), indicating that some rule and regulations must be created when using social media to identify opportunities and risks. It is, therefore, important to create rules and strategies for engaging with social media in line with the organisations overall strategic communication (refer to Chapter 1). Theme – the purpose and benefits of social media identifies supported in the literature by Breakenridge (2008) indicating that social media like print media and other online media, can be used as a communication channel that conveys communication messages. Similarly, Solis (201) reported that social media purpose is online tools that facilitate conversations among friends, peers and influencers. There is a need to publish quality information regularly that people check and respond (refer to Chapter 2). Furthermore, Scott (2010) indicates that the important fact is that messages disseminated on social media should be the same as those on traditional media (refer to Chapter 3).

Guideline 6.1 FOLLOWS ON THE NEXT PAGE



Guideline 6.1: A Managerial Policy Guideline Framework for the use of social media in public relations practitioners in non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

Source: Own compilation

SOCIAL MEDIA EIGHT THEMES

SUCCESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- P1 SOCIAL MEDIA IS INFORMING, EDUCATING
- P2 SOCIAL MEDIA INSPIRE AND ENGAGE OTHERS
- P3 SOCIAL MEDIA OFFER OPPORTUNITY TO EMPOWER AND INTERACT WITH OTHERS
- P4 SOCIAL MEDIA IS VALUABLE INTEGRAL PART OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGY
- P5 SOCIAL MEDIA IS FOR YOUNG GENERATION AND IT SPREAD THE MESSAGE FASTER
- P6 SOCIAL MEDIA IMPART SHARE INFORMATION AND GET FEEDBACK
- P7 SOCIAL MEDIA IS GOOD FOR CAMPAIGNS AND HAVE FOLLOWERS
- P8 SOCIAL MEDIA FACILITATE THE FLOW OF COMMUNICATION (COMMUNITY, SHARING OR POSTING INFO)

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- P1 SOCIAL MEDIA HELP LOCATE EXPERTS INTERNATIONALLY
- P2 SOCIAL MEDIA BROADEN TO REACH NEW AUDIENCE
- P3 SOCIAL MEDIA HELP DEEPEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXISTING PUBLICS
- P4 SOCIAL MEDIA USED TO ENGAGE THE DIVERSE PUBLICS
- P5 PROMOTE THE ORGANISATIONS SERVICES, FUNCTIONS AND TO RAISE AWARENESS
- P6 IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY OF NGO COMMUNICATION
- P7 IMPROVING LONG-TERM COST EFFECTIVENESS OF NGO COMMUNICATION

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- P1 I HAVE THE NECESSARY EDUCATION TO PERFORM MY JOB
- P2 THE EXPERIENCE I HAVE IS USEFUL IN MY CURRENT JOB
- P3 PUBLIC RELATIONS IS NOT A PRIORITY WE CAN ALL BECOME THE AMBASSADORS OF THE ORGANISATION
- P4 THE SKILLS I HAVE IN COMMUNICATION ARE USEFUL IN MY CURRENT JOB

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

- P1 SOCIAL MEDIA A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

CHALLENGES AND DISADVANTAGES

- P1 THERE'S NO HOW 'TO GUIDE' TO SET UP SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS
- P2 LACK OF CONTROL OF INFORMATION
- P3 NOT SURE HOW MUCH MONEY GENERATED ON SOCIAL MEDIA
- P4 SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS REGULARLY CHANGE THEIR PROTOCOLS, AND MAY HAVE DIFFERENT TOOLS AND CHANNELS FOR DIFFERENT USER NEEDS
- P5 MANAGEMENT STILL VIEW SOCIAL MEDIA AS A WASTE OF TIME AND DISTRACTION FOR EMPLOYEES
- P6 WE HAVE LITTLE INTERNAL CAPACITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE
- P7 LACK OF QUALITY CONTENT
- P8 SOCIAL MEDIA ALWAYS CHANGING AND THEREFORE IT'S DIFFICULT TO KEEP UP WITH LATEST TECHNOLOGY
- P9 THESE NO POLICY IN PLACE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA IN NGOS

SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE TRADITIONAL MEDIA

- P1 SOCIAL MEDIA IS COMMUNICATION, DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION, INTERACTION AND EDUCATION
- P2 IMPORTANT ELEMENTS ARE ANONYMITY, ENGAGEMENT AND CONNECTEDNESS
- P3 TO PROMOTE NGO IMAGE, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
- P4 IS INFORMING AND EDUCATING

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED

- P1 WE ALSO USE FACEBOOK
- P2 INTERNET SEARCH ENGINES – GOOGLE
- P3 WE USE EMAIL, SMS AND WHATSAPP
- P4 INTERNET SEARCH ENGINES – GOOGLE
- P5 WE USE EMAIL, SMS AND WHATSAPP

ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

- P1 WE CAN'T AFFORD A PROFESSIONAL PR
- P2 REASON WE USE SOCIAL MEDIA IS TO DEMONSTRATE TRANSPARENCY IN NGOS
- P3 SOCIAL MEDIA ENHANCE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANISATION AND THE PUBLICS
- P4 WE USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO COMPLEMENT TRADITIONAL MEDIA
- P5 AWARE OF TWO WAY COMMUNICATION
- P6 SOCIAL MEDIA HAS A MAJOR IMPACT TO STRENGTHEN THEIR WORK
- P7 CHANGE IN CULTURE
- P8 MOTIVATION FOR CHANGE

Table 6.1: Eight themes

Source: Own compilation

Based on the abovementioned guideline 6.1 framework the eight themes identified namely; global perspective, success and understanding of social media, purpose and benefits of social media, challenges and disadvantages of social media, social media influence traditional media, social media platforms used, impact of social media and the role of public relations will form the important pillars of the policy guideline in order to prescribe the acceptable behaviour for public relations practitioners in NGOs. By developing this policy managerial guideline (6.1) the study contributes to a better understanding of themes that may have an effect on the ability that practitioners execute its strategies. The guideline is based on the research findings in which NGOs were using social media. The main purpose is to help public relations in NGOs understand the importance and value of social media. Also make them aware of the opportunities, risk and the need to use social media in NGOs. Guideline focus on guidance in the use of social media within the South African NGO environment in order to improve NGO transparency, participation and interaction with the publics.

6.7 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DEVELOPED POLICY GUIDELINE BY NGOs

The developed managerial policy guideline (refer to guideline 6.1) can assist to provide a standard responsibility to public relations practitioners in NGOs. The guideline can further provide with potential benefits and risk associated with social media. Furthermore, give guidance in best practice use of social media.

Public relations practitioners in NGOs need to be aware and establish governance in all forms of social media. When using social media practitioners must be credible, accurate and transparent, be respectful, honest and professional at all times. As observed in the study (refer to Annexure 4), public relations are using social media to communicate, to build relationships, to attract the youth and diverse publics. Furthermore, when practitioners are using social media to be effective they need to write what they know, more especially know facts and write credible sources. According to Guideline 6.1, it is clear that the practitioners need to adhere to guidelines to effectively utilise social media. The results as reported in Guideline 6.1 above are supported by Angelopulo and Barker (2013) indicating that communication is the glue that holds the organisation together and therefore employees need to be responsible for the online communication and be ethical. Reiman (2012) also agrees with the importance of general guidelines – credible, fair, transparent and respectful by pointing out that it is important to have properly structured communication system and have a new approach to be able to meet the expected goals of integrating social media, but he further indicates that social media is a real-

time platform and represent the organisation hence some measure of control must be exercised in the use of such platforms Botan and Hazelton (2009) adds that organisation with excellent public relations has clear policies which lead to increased employee engagement and satisfaction (refer to Chapter 3).

Below it is recommended that clear guidelines be developed to guide and regulate the use social media:

6.7.1 Theme 1: Global perspective

Conclusion: Social media can be defined as the different channels that are used to share or transmit messages to various audiences. Social media is described as applications/channels that connect users by creating personal information profiles and inviting friends and colleagues to have access to the information and profiles (see chapter 2 for literature). McCann's (2008) research report found that social media is a confirmed global phenomenon but their study does not offer a view of the use of social media in Africa, especially South Africa.

Recommendation: Based on the empirical findings it is recommended that public relations practitioners implement the corrective measure as proposed in chapter 2 (under section 2.2 – 2.4). It is also recommended that the government accelerate National Development Plan (NDP) implementation. Making sure that South Africa become a world leader in ICT. Technology has the capacity to improve lives if the people using it know how best they can use that technology for their development. Social media should be used by NGOs to contact and assist governments to eliminate political challenges, including corruption, crime and terrorism by reporting such problems and information to responsible personnel.

6.7.2 Theme 2: Success and understanding of social media

Conclusion: The findings and the argument in this study is that the features of social media (connectedness, interactive, collaboration, openness and community) place the organisation in the position to engage in two-way communication with their stakeholders. As a results this helps to maintain healthy relationships. Social media enable various stakeholders to give input and to become active participants in the communication process.

Recommendation: Based on the empirical findings it is recommended that public relations practitioners encourage NGOs to embrace and take full advantage of social media. It is

recommended that using social media in NGOs should not only be to publishing information but initiate various stakeholder engagement for meaningful participation.

6.7.3 Theme 3: Purpose and benefit of social media

Conclusion: Social media platforms function from perspective of open and interactive communication networks. The use of social media can contribute to information flowing freely and more effectively in the organisation (refer to chapter 2, under section 2.9). The study also notes that there are many social media platforms currently available but it is essential for a public relations practitioner to identify the significant platforms from which the organisation may use to communicate and engage with various stakeholders.

Recommendation: Based on the empirical findings it is recommended that social media as a communication tool non-governmental organisations establish social media pages where they will provide organisations' information, and their stakeholders with updates and relevant information. Public relations practitioners should help stimulate conversations on the social media platforms and update useful relevant content.

6.7.4 Theme 4: Challenges and disadvantages

Conclusion: Despite the growing number of organisations using social media, NGOs have been slow to adopt this technology for internal and external purposes. Communication practitioners fear that they will lose control over disseminating information. Another challenge is that social media will distract employees and waste time and money. Furthermore, social media opens opportunities for security risk. The challenges is that it is still a relatively new medium of communication in NGOs and therefore not trusted (see Annexure 4). Literature agrees (refer to Chapter 2, under section 2.10). Many people are concerned about enjoying the benefits brought by social media due to crime committed on the Internet.

Recommendation: Based on the empirical findings it is recommended that public relations practitioners must be aware that considerable input is required from them in ensuring that consistent updating about the organisation through social media. Practitioners also need to be aware that social media have become part of their communication strategy and therefore it is impacting on the NGOs' internal and external communication. Once one becomes aware of threats, cybercrime, one can take precautions and survive. It is important to note that social media are present and advancing in every area of social, economic and political activity. Therefore public relations in NGOs need to keep with the pace in a social media era and be skilled to survive.

6.7.5 Theme 5: Social media influence traditional media

Conclusion: The research findings have indicated that social media are useful communication tools to spread the message. NGOs have realised the significance and potential of social media to create and build relationships. This study also highlighted that active social media were found to be important in building relationships. The use of social media has two main effects on traditional media. Firstly, it is communication within many different relationships. Secondly, social media creates a two-way communication environment, where many different publics, are engaging in conversation.

Recommendation: Based on the empirical findings it is recommended that practitioners in NGOs should never underestimate the power and speed of social media where information spread within seconds. It is important that practitioners monitor the content of social media platforms closely and respond immediately to any queries from the publics.

6.7.6 Theme 6: Social media platforms used in NGOs

Conclusion: The findings in this study indicated that respondents use more than one social media platform. The findings indicated that public relations practitioners in the sampled NGOs were using social media as a communication tool to engage the public. Facebook emerged as the most popular platform for all interviewed NGOs. This confirms the literature study conducted by SANGONeT (2009) (refer to chapter under section 3.9) which concluded that facebook is the most popular social networking site within the South African context.

Recommendation: Based on the empirical findings it is recommended that public relations practitioners keep balance between formal and informal communication. Practitioners should help stimulate conversations on social media and they must create an open environment where employees trust that they can share ideas, and opinions. It is crucial to create a policy that will regulate public relations practitioners' use of social media such as, facebook for internal and external communication. This policy should provide principles for personal use of social media. It should also provide specific guidelines with regard to risk, culture and disclosure of business information (see guideline 6.1). Social media platforms are here to stay and are advancing every day. Therefore practitioners as users of new technology in NGOs need to keep abreast of technology and educate themselves.

6.7.7 Theme 7: The Impact of social media

Conclusion: The findings indicated that the impact of social in NGO was using social media as a communication tool to engage with diverse publics. This is illustrated by the fact that public relations practitioners in NGOs were practising the two-way symmetrical model (refer to chapter 3, under section 3.7) which highlights the Grunig and Hunt Model. These findings are supported by similar studies on the use of social media in relations management Lane (2003); Avery and Sweeter (2010); Matthee (2011); Veric, Veric and Sriramish (2014) Naude' (2004) studies focus on the interactive nature of the internet by applying a two-way symmetrical model. The abovementioned studies demonstrate that social media are beneficial methods of communication for public relations practitioners in NGOs.

Recommendation: Based on the empirical findings it is recommended that public relations consider social media as part of the communication strategy embrace it, engage and be part of the online community. Create open environment for dialogue, conversation thereby permitting all the stakeholders to communicate.

6.7.8 Theme 8: The role of public relations

Conclusion: The findings indicated that public relations practitioners in the sampled NGOs were using social media as communication tool to engage with different stakeholders. Findings also indicate that NGOs with proper public relations department were able to adopt social media and use it effectively to achieve organisational goals. Furthermore, the finding indicates that public relations practitioners perceived social media as tools which enable them to share information as well as to reach the public. These findings are supported by similar studies on the use of social media in PR conducted by Wright and Hinson (2009). The aforesaid studies opine that social media have changed the ways in which organisations communicate, with specific focus on internal and external stakeholders. Furthermore Wright and Hinson (2009) emphasise that social media have improved the practice of public relations. It is clear that the rise of social media has presented the world of PR with a new paradigm. The role and normative model of public relations are described in detail in Chapter 3. Findings also reveal that public relations use social media in order to maintain relationships with external stakeholders (see section 3.7 Grunig and Hunt model). The literature cited in this study has demonstrated that social media has many important and necessary benefits. It is fast, convenient and informative.

Recommendation: Based on the empirical findings of this study it is recommended that social media needs an operational strategy to support the organisations objective. It is also

recommended that the key aspect of communication strategy is to embrace and integrate social media in NGOs' daily communication plan. It is the duty of the public relations practitioner to connect social media with other existing traditional platforms. It is also the role of public relations to ensure that the message is communicated to the public in order to build and promote the image of the organisation. Social media can be used as a communication channel that conveys communication messages (see chapter 2). There is a need to publish positive attractive information to the social media platforms and to promote NGOs activities. Some rule and regulations must be created when using social media in order to identify opportunities, risk and to reduce complexity. It is important that people use social media wisely and for the right reasons.

The section to follow presents the limitations of the study and proposes some recommendations which will be discussed in the following section.

6.8 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Limitations were encountered during the study. Within South Africa, there has been very little research done on the use of social media by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). As a result there are few or none guidelines on how to use social media effectively and integrate with existing traditional communication channels in NGOs. These limitations were manageable, in South Africa significant work has been done by Naudé (2004) whose studies focus on the interactive nature of the Internet by applying a two-way symmetrical model.

The qualitative nature of this research study led to the researcher focusing on only nine organisations within the NGO sector in South Africa specifically in Gauteng province which is Pretoria and Johannesburg. This means that the findings of this study cannot be generalised to other organisations in other provinces, although the recommendations could be used as a managerial guideline for public relations practitioners if NGOs would consider implementing the use of social media for external and internal communication. This study employs grounded theory which suggests that grounded theory employs inductive analysis and is focused on discovery rather than verification. Furthermore it involves analysing data to develop theory, rather than verifying theory or testing a hypothesis through analysis of data.

The major limitation and obstacle to the study are, as already mentioned that the issue of social media in all its facets is under-researched. There are a limited number of scientific sources in this field, especially primary sources. Another limitation of the study lies in the

accessibility of professional public relations practitioners of the NGO sector as a research setting. Several visits and correspondence had taken place before permission was granted with the professional public relations practitioner for the research. Also, the NGO sector experienced many difficulties and other NGOs had to scale down their activities or close down offices due to a lack of funding during the time that the research was conducted. Because of this, several interviews with public relations practitioners have rescheduled and others postponed and eventually cancelled.

Furthermore, another limitation was that the study focused on a single method approach to collect data. The focus was on qualitative inquiry and semi-structured interviews. Also, practitioners all have a facebook account and not all NGOs use social media as an internal communication tool. This suggests that participants in NGO do not use social media platform such as facebook as a two-way communication channel. The section to follow presents the recommendations for future research.

6.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

From this research recommendations can be made for future research:

An in-depth analysis of this Managerial Policy Guideline for NGOs and implementation in the NGO sector to enhance public relations practitioners' engagement with the diverse public.

This study is predominantly qualitative. This study was conducted using a small sample in Gauteng (Johannesburg and Pretoria) but further research could seek to explore a large sample in all nine provinces in South Africa. Further studies could use quantitative which survey larger sample. Furthermore, since this study was limited to Gauteng it would be interesting to see how the findings of this study correlate with the results of similar studies in NGOs in other provinces across the country.

6.10 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

In the Communications Act (No. 103 of 1996) (SA, 1996) it is stated that rules and regulations must be created when using social media to identify opportunities and risks. Furthermore, The South African Government Gazette (2009:7) stated that The National Development Plan is the country's vision indicating that broadband infrastructure is central to achieving the goal of digital inclusion, enabling affordable access to ICTs by all citizens and providing sustainable connectivity. Also, The United Nations World Summit described the information and

communication technology infrastructure as the foundation to compete globally to close the digital divide gap (WSIP, 2007).

This study has made a number of contributions to the knowledge base of public relations research. It developed a new grounded theory that explains the use of social media in non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Social media have been incorporated in the daily lives of the public relations practitioners that it is normal and acceptable for them to use as a medium of communication. Social media platforms have become important tools for creating and building relationships. Analysis of the findings shows that the role of social media as an additional tool is an important aspect of public relations practitioners. According to the literature unlike traditional media, social means that anyone, anywhere, has the opportunity to participate on social media platforms. On the contrary social media is helping the public relations to enhance their skills and profession.

The use of social media in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has been gaining acceptance in all spheres of communication research. Social media is reinventing public relations profession. This study is a significant contribution because it fills the gap in understanding how public relations experience immediate information in social media platforms. This study also shed light on the value of using social media as a communication tool in NGOs. This provides an opportunity for two-way communication between an NGO and the government, public and various stakeholders thereby increasing the frequency and the speed of engagement. For the NGOs to realise the abovementioned statement, the developed managerial policy guideline for public relations practitioners in NGOs should give effect to improving the use of social media as a communication tool.

The key findings from this research study reveal that social media is a new form of technology adopted by NGOs. Furthermore, the findings reveal that social media platforms such as facebook is the most popular platform in NGOs' engagement. The most important benefit of using social media in NGO lies in its ability to reach a large audience. The study also reveals that the experiences in social media is complex for public relations in NGOs. Above all, the research has resulted in the development of a new grounded theory in social media.

In light of the above, the positive aspect of this study is the indication that the developed managerial policy guideline for public relations can be accepted and also proved to be valid to realise the advantage of using social media at non-governmental organisations. The themes, namely the global perspective, success and understanding of social media, purpose and benefits of social media, the challenges and disadvantages of social media, social media

influence traditional media, preferred communication medium, impact of social media and the role of public relations are all key issues integral to the efficient and effective use of social media in public relations.

Furthermore, the purpose of these guidelines is to create awareness of some of the opportunities that social media presents for public relations as well as making all employees aware of how to manage the risks associated with the use of social media technology in NGOs. The guidelines focus on the guidance of social media within the South African NGO communication environment to improve and integrate NGOs participation and interaction with the public.

Above all, the literature confirms that social media has fundamentally changed the nature of information, how it is created, how it flows, how it is sourced, how it is used and how it is interpreted. The findings indicate that all nine NGOs interviewed use social media to communicate with their stakeholders. Social media such as facebook have enabled NGOs to communicate and engage with various stakeholders in two-way communication. The research finding indicated that NGOs have recognised the significance of using social media in relationship management.

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ANNEXURE 1:

Invitation to take part in social media research study

03 June 2014

Dear Sir/Madam

Developing a policy guideline for social media use in public relations practice at selected non-governmental organisations (NGO) in Gauteng.

My name is Mpumi Nchabeleng working on a PhD research study on the above-mentioned topic: the use of social media in NGO from a South African public relations context. I have identified your organisation as one of the 20 NGOs in Gauteng that I would like to include in my research study. Recent research has however, shown that most NGOs do not use social media to its full potential; however this topic still needs more investigation within the South African context. This research study therefore aims to understand certain expectations, opinions and perceptions about the use of social media as internal and external communication tool. The research is done from a public relations perspective.

If you agree to take part in this research study your organisation could benefit by the findings, results and the recommendations of the study. The idea is to firstly establish if the participants made use of social media as a communication tool. With that in mind, it is easier to move to the concept of social media channels are ideal public relations tools which serves as two-way symmetrical communication environment for non-governmental organisation.

Would you be so kind as to inform me if you would agree to take part in this research study?

Regards

Mpumi Nchabeleng

ANNEXURE 2:

Interview schedule

1. What does social media mean to you?
2. What is your population group?
3. How would you define social media? In your view what is the value of social media in your NGO?
4. What is your experience with regard to using social media in your NGO? , what is the dominant social media tool and applications that you consider to have the best chance of successful use in an NGO in the South African environment?
5. Which social media platforms are you able to use comfortably to communicate?
6. What is the role of a public relations practitioner in your NGO? , to what extent are public relations practitioner involved in communication strategy? , what qualifications do/does they have?
7. What is your view on the role of public relations practitioner in your NGO? , please explain the structure of your NGO? Where does public relations practitioner fit in? What is the culture of the NGO?
8. What social media training is provided to public relations practitioners in your NGO? How do/does management support PR with technology and other resources?
9. What are the attitudes and opinions of the users concerning how social media contribute or do not contribute to NGO success? Please describe your communication process between your NGO and its publics?
10. How would you describe the problems or potential risk pertaining to using social media tools in your NGO? Very briefly give real- life examples.
11. How important is social media in your NGO? Do you react to the external and internal input or comments on social media? If these a conflict or crisis, how do you usually resolve it using social media tool?
12. What is your view on the relationship between social media and traditional forms of communication? How do you integrate the old and new media?
13. What successes did you experience with social media since it has been in operation in your NGO? How would you measure the success of social media tool? Does it allow you to engage with your internal and external stakeholders by facilitating one of the following: communication, interaction, disseminating information?
14. What failures did/do you experience with social media since it has been in operation in to your NGO?

ANNEXURE: 3 Participant Profile

NGO	Person interviewed	Position	Gender	Race	Home language	PR/Communication department
Families South Africa Pretoria (FAMSA Pretoria)	Petro Theron Christa Potgieter	Director	Female	White	Afrikaans	• No specific communication/PR function. • The expertise of the person responsible for social media function proved to be problematic. • In a process of establishing a communication department. • Currently one person is responsible for internal and external communication functions. • This individual is fully involved with the whole management office day to day running. • The person responsible for communication had tertiary qualification in social work field, no communication qualification but learned about communication and public relations by means of experience.
Child Welfare Tshwane	Reneilwe Maluleke	Communications Intern	Female	Black	Zulu	• At the time of the interview this NGO is in a process of restructuring. • Communication department is currently being established. One person is responsible for communication/social media functions. • She is an intern therefore she did not have sufficient opportunity to make impact on social media Facebook page and other communication actions such as Twitter, Website etc. • She is responsible for attending all matters requiring the PR, social media. • One of her responsibilities include being a social media expert.

Refilwe Community Project	Kate Piscator	Office administrator	Female	White American	English	• Yes they use social media • No specific communication department • This individual is the head of office administrator responsible for communication strategy • Communications and fundraising department is combined. • The expertise of the communication staff is not rated high. • PR is seen as part of marketing. • In future NGO prefer to have one person to handle social media communication. • Poor infrastructure
SAVF	Marietjie van der Spuy	Marketing co-ordinator	Female	White	Afrikaans	• Yes NGO use social media • No specific communication function • PR is seen as part of marketing. • The individual is the head of marketing department. • The individual is the custodian of all communication management initiatives. • Responsibilities include understanding and incorporating social media in the organisation. • Three people handle communication • Outsource PR • Currently one person coordinates social media content
PEN	Janthinus Schrage	Operations & Communications Manager	Male	White	Afrikaans	• Yes NGO use social media • Communication and fundraising combined • The interviewee did not have any formal qualifications at all, but learned about communication and public relations by means of experience and training courses. • One person handles research and information department • This individual is classified as a social media manager • Responsibilities include sourcing best social media practices and implementing it with the NGO.

						• Manage the social media include content, usage and performance. •
Project Literacy	Lungile Moloko Thuli Kubheka Wendy Mashishi	Executive Director	Female	Black	Zulu	• Yes NGO use social media • No specific communication PR department • Two people handle communication • Two of the interviewees have tertiary qualifications but no PR background. • Concentration on publicity, persuasion and the dissemination of information
The Lonely Road Foundation	Michelle Walford	Marketing co-ordinator	Female	White	English	• Yes NGO is using social media • NGO is young, vibrant, run by youth • No specific communication function. • No PR department. • NGO value social media as part of their everyday life. • Everybody handles communication on social media platform • Importance of two-way communication, instead of information dissemination
Section 27	Butho Mpofu	Communication Coordinator	Male	Black	English	• Yes NGO use social media • Everybody in the organisation is technology savvy • Employees use social media for work and personal use. • Importance of information gathering and the dissemination of information. • Importance of PR is not realised. • Section 27 is a big organisation • At the time of the interview their website has been hacked. • The interviewee reported it will be up and running after two weeks. • No formal PR function. No plan to have it future.

						• These mutual understanding, collaboration, open system and responsibility. •
Treatment Action Campaign	Mark Heywood	Executive Director	Male	White	English	• Yes NGO use social media • Financial strain • No specific communication PR department • Only one person handles communication • Social media effective in campaigning for example textbook in Limpopo, against sexual violence targeting young girls etc.

ANNEXURE 4: PROOF OF CONVERSATIONS

Participant

No	Construct	Description	Significant quote
1	Meaning and understanding of social media	the participant described how she understand social media and what it means for the NGO	social media is informing and educating the the public about issues, to publish activity information or call peoples attention to the NGO
		identify the opportunities for communication	social media is used to encourage volunteering and event participation I understand social media as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
	Purpose of social media	the participants described her perspective on function of social media	I think social media is informing and educating the public about issues, to publish activity information or call peoples attention to the NGO
			social media is used to disclose the mission, history and organisational structure and encourage donations and fundraising
	Perception and expectations	This participant described societal perceptions of social media	I feel that social media is better used effectively by the youth.

	fear of using technology lack of resources. social media is able to build relationships	I think the young generation is more informed and well equipped and they understand social media than the older generation. for my role to be successful in NGO, I need people to trust and build relationships.
Experiences and thoughts on social media	the participant described her challenges and fears	I am a quite visitor on social networking sites. I seldom participate on social networking sites. the NGO has a website, the person responsible for not an expert in communication, no tertiary qualification social media sites could not protect them from being victimised the difficulty to distinguishing between a harmless and harmful content
Motivation to use social media	The participant shared how she goes about using social media.	Social media is used to inform the public about the upcoming NGOs events. To raise awareness, to raise funds and get donors
Failures and problems	the participant acknowledged the problem does not reside in social media itself, but in how people use it and how other people find a tool to carry out their wrong actions.	we are dealing with vulnerable people, it is not a good feeling to post everything on social media sites. For me I have been in the NGO industry to know what is for public consumption or not. The longer I have been in my role the more risk I have taken.

		I think the problem is with posting everything on Facebook for everybody to see. We have no dedicated PR practitioner for social media support.
Advantages	With respect to the range of social media available and opportunities to join in or observe communication participant noted that technology allows more people to join in.	Social media help me locate experts internationally Social media help broaden to reach new audiences. Social media help to deepen relationships with existing audiences.
Disadvantages	The participant shared her concerns with increased opportunities by larger audiences. PR/management is threatened by technology.	Anonimity, or uncertainty that online threats will play out as actions. Through internet you really don't know what the next person is thinking or if they are going to do anything...if they're actually going to what you asking them to do. There is a lack of knowledge regarding what information to share and with whom.
Role of social media on public relations	the participant shared the importance of social media that it allows information to be shared very quickly on multiple websites online social media allow public	We don't have a public relations practitioner in NGO We work under budget constraints. many NGO derail because they don't have the budget and therefore can't afford a professional PR practitioner.

relations to develop networking skills
to enable relationships

**Construct Participant 2
(P2)**

No

Construct
2 meaning and
understanding
of social media

Description

the participant describe how
social media have changed the
way individuals and corporations
communicate

Significant quote

Social media have changed the way people
communicate. Have the potential to educate,
inspire, and engage others.

looking at the way social media is
happening, people who do not know each other
can write, collaborate, think and work on projects
together.

through social media I have been able to talk
with other NGO members online.

Through social media we form networks of new
and old friends and turn to online communities
for input of personal and professional decisions.

purpose of social media

Participant perceive social
media more positively
an element of social networking on
Facebook is relational goals

I find that there are three important
elements in social media, anonymity,
engagement and connectedness.

	participant describe the goal of social media	participants log in to connect with friends and family members. Use social media to promote the organisation. social media facilitates the ability to hide behind the screen and websites and applications. social media give me perspective on what is going on around the company and the community. adopt other social media tools.
Perceptions and expectations	the participant described the general use of communication channels, their concept of social media and the use of social media as a communication channel for NGO	participant make use of telephone to communicate face to face talks are also viewed as important channel to communicate. The participant mentioned that face to face is easier for people to be open and truthful. through face to face we can limit misunderstanding, enhance mutual understanding it is important to communicate face to face and have a conversation with someone to see the reaction and engage to observe non-verbal cues and ensure that that right message is getting across and understood.
Experiences and thoughts	participants described her experiences and fears about using social media	I imagine that all youth are growing up digital

	Another experience was discussed in regard to how people use social media and how it can be unsafe when they add people to their social network that they do not know.	the participant noted that despite not accepting a friend request from a stranger, this unfamiliar person was able to view the participants pictures and post inappropriate comments on the Facebook page. I have been able to download the content shared online and use it somewhere else, and have been able to speak and engage with people online whenever convenient for me.
motivation to use social media	the main area which came through on this theme were; Office Communicator	Office communicator is a channel targeted at organisational environment. It allows for fast instant messaging between managers and employees. Office Communicator is used extensively when decisions need to be made in the organisation. to engage every employee in the organisation to be aware of important decisions to be taken. the main reason for the Office Communicator was to increase use of social media internally. to adopt other social media tools
	Reasons for using social media	participant suggested that social media is used to gain popularity, to be current, to be cool and or feel good about oneself.

		to promote NGO activities and services engage with the community social media is a direct channel of communication to the community who will get a better understanding of our vision, mission and what we really stand for. I communicate to build relationships as it is necessary to have healthy relationships with the publics. it is important to connect more socially and later share more information and communicate more effectively.
Failures and problems	the participant described being able to identify failures and problems of using social media in NGO.	I think the opportunities have not been equally distributed within South African NGOs, resources, education and socioeconomic are still low as a result of digital divide. social media has been difficult to use effectively in NGO sector.
	Resources and capacity to engage in social media	We have little knowledge to dedicate the future use of social media in NGO We have limited broadband internet services existence of electronic computer, website, tablet, laptop is limited. We cant afford all latest technology

			we lack control on the information dispersed about organisation on social media.
	Advantages	the participant spoke about the positive impact of using social media in NGO	We use social media to engage the public. We use social media to promote the organisation services. We use social media for fundraising we use social media to recruit new volunteers
	Disadvantages	the participant shared her perception that generally NGOs have no resources ability to dedicate to the future use of social media.	I am not sure how much money social media fundraising has generated because it is not evaluated. We are unsure how to track the funds. we lack control on information that is in the public domain. We have no dedicated practitioner for social media
	the role of social media on public relations		the least identified reason for using social media was to demonstrate transparency in NGOs
	Construct Participant 3 (P3)		
No	Construct meaning and understanding	Description	Significant quote
3		the participant shared her views	Social media offers opportunities to interact

of social media

of understanding social media.
She appear to have a mature
thinking about social media

with others, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube

social media has helped us empower those
whom we serve in NGO.

We should spend more time of social media
than we do.

purpose of social media

Participant perceive social
media more positively
an element of social networking on
Facebook is relational goals

social media has been useful in achieving our
mission

participants log in to connect with friends and
family members.

social media is important to our NGO

we use social media to help promote NGOs
image, programs and services they offer to
the community.

Perceptions and
expectations

the participant described the
general use of communication
channels, their concept of social media
and the use of social media as a
communication channel for NGO

through face to face we can limit misunderstanding,

social media is making our NGO more successful

Experiences and thoughts

the participant expressed the

we use social media for brand building

	importance of using two-way communication	we use social media to engage the youth and younger audience to get active in NGO activities
motivation to use social media	the main area which came through on this theme were; two-way communication to raise funds and spread the NGO message.	we have established and used social media to build relationships with publics. we use social media to build relationships social media has enabled me to engage in a dialogue, network, collaborate, building community, and gaining perspective. I don't mind asking for help on social media. Social media have helped me gain feedback on an idea and solve problem.
failures and problems	participant shared that lack of resources, lack of knowledge, fear of the unknown, fear of using technology, can affect organisation.	we were hesitant to use social media but has since adopted it and embraced it. we are still learning to use it. confidentiality concerns. some employees are not technology inclined because they don't understand social media
Advantages	the participant spoke about the positive impact of using social media in NGO	We use social media to engage the public. We use social media to promote the organisation services.

			We use social media for fundraising we use social media to new volunteers
	Disadvantages	the participant shared her perception that generally NGOs have no resources ability to dedicate to the future use of social media.	I am not sure how much money social media fundraising has generated because it is not evaluated. We are unsure how to track the funds.
	the role of social media on public relations		expirimenting with social media has enhanced the relationship between the organisation and different publics.
	Construct Participant 4 (P4)		
No	Construct 4 meaning and understanding of social media	Description the participant shared his views about using social media the participant expressed the importance of understanding what social media mean	Significant quote social media is valuable to their NGO social media is an integral part of the overall communication strategy we use social media to be online with the current trends of digital communication.

		the participants indicated that using social media has helped drive online traffic which is beneficial to create and raise awareness and spread the message.
the purpose of social media	the participant described the practical support he has put in place to ensure the purpose of social media is understood in NGO	Social media promote the organisation activities. engage with the public and the community to enhance relationships Social media - Facebook, Twitter, YouTube social media offers the opportunity to interact with people and public.
perceptions and expectations	the participant described that their use of social media would depend on the importance of the information to be communicated	I use social media but I tend to follow up with either emails or phone calls if information is urgent and important. social media is integrated into the strategic communication in NGO.
motivation to use social media	the participant described her ability to use the new channel	Being a communicator it is important to innovate and be creative. This way will be more valued in the NGO.

		social media is informal and people tend to open up and talk freely, this way they hide behind the screen, there is no hierarchy, they are in their comfort zone to express their feelings, attitudes.
failures and problems	the participant shared his problems and failures he experienced using social media that she lack experience with using social media to its advantage.	the employees do not always feel connected they don't have the emotional attachment to the organisation. employees must align their personal goals with that of the NGO goals values and culture of the organisation. the problem is employees need to understand that when they communicate online they are the voice of the organisation.
Advantages	he described the importance of using social media for NGO and also being able to benefit from using it as a new platform	We use social media to promote the organisation services to communicate with the different audiences. to engage with the community to enhance relationships.
Disadvantages	the participant described elements such as lack of resources such as money, knowledge as valid concern.	We work with limited budget and can't afford the latest technology we fear exposing confidential information

			social media is relatively new area of communication, we need to embrace it.
	the role of social media on public relations	the participant highlighted that social media are useful tools but require intelligence	I am still trying to find my role in the world of social media we don't have a qualified PR practitioner. although the main emphasis is still placed on traditional media, we do use social media to complement each other.
	Construct Participant 5 (P5)		
No	Construct 5 meaning and understanding	Description the participant shared her beliefs in a positive future and finding meaning in the the use of social media. social media a technology to build social networks a tool for knowledge management	Significant quote I am too old I believe social media platform is for the young upcoming generation. social media allows more people to join in the act of spreading the message. it allows information to be shared very quickly, on multiple websites it provides individuals with to be anonymous. it facilitates the ability to hide behind screen names. I am scared but believe the NGO can benefit a lot from using social media as a communication channel. one needs to be able to let go of the past and move on and embrace social media tools

the purpose of social media this participant shared her belief in a positive future

I understand social media as Facebook, Twitter

I have a strong believe that social media can be used for community engagement, for fundraising, transparency and to be accountable and open to to community and funders about what we do.

we can use social media to reach new supporters. Enhance relationships with internal and external publics.

the main purpose for social media use I believe is promoting the organisation, responsiveness, to communicate and collaborate, to advertise our services.

perceptions and expectations

this participant described her understanding of two-way communication and listening to employees needs and viewpoints

it is important to understand what social media tool will work best for your NGO.

networking
sharing information
sharing knowledge
peer to peer to communication
collaboration

different people have different preferences. It is really about understanding what its is that people need and then adapting the communication to that. not everybody wants to attend a formal meeting or sit in a form and hear other people talk. social media give us the flexibility.

for me it means talking to the employees but not just talking to them, also understanding their needs and communicate with them in the best method

		they prefer in order to reach the organisational goal.
motivation to use social media	the participant shared how she used social media for personal purposes, and realised how Facebook could be used for business purposes as well.	I use social media to increase funds, volunteers or community engagement. I also use it for rich content for newsletters, images, video I use social media to stay on top of the latest developments regarding communication, marketing trends. social media can be a communication channel where skills and interest can be identified because people may share more about them selves. Facebook is a direct channel of communication to the community who will get a better understanding of our vision and what we are doing.
failures and problems	the participant described the problems experienced in using social media in NGOs	social media offers unedited communication of messages I have no control of information once is on social media platforms it is clear that many people in this organisation are not using social media at work. I'm not comfortable using other social media tools

		I don't understand it and so don't use it.
		measuring return on investment (ROI) is difficult and a constant challenge in NGO.
advantages	the participant described the advantages of using social media and adjusting to the new platform easy communication knowledge acquisition	it is getting/ sharing information, problem solving, and getting feedback, the benefits of using social media is engaging in dialogue, communicating, networking in order to work efficiently. Manages knowledge sharing
disadvantages	social media is relatively a new platform, don't understand it and not comfortable using it lack trust lack of embracing social media	management still view the use of social media as a possible waste of time and a distraction for employees at work. management still view social media as damaging the organisation image when negative comments are posted on social media. we lack control on the information dispersed
the role of social media on public relations	the participant described the importance of using social media as a public relations Tool she expressed that technology has changed the communication	social media is a relatively cheap communication channel. social media is a less formal channel to use for communication in NGO. I think it is important public relations campaign have clear goals and objectives.

		in NGO	social media such as Facebook can provide an alternative channel to the traditional channels, communication is written, voice and video can be used to NGO advantage.
			social media such as Facebook is immediate
			the most important keys to the success of using social media as a communication channel lies in an organisation that use a culture of trust, openness and preparedness to listen.
	Construct Participant 6 (P6)		
No	Construct	Description	Significant quote
6	meaning and understanding	participant described the importance of meaning and understanding of social media in NGO context. the participant also shared believe that social media is communication enabler using technology it is a collaboration tool	I understand social media as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blog, Snap Chat, Instagram and more I use social media to promote this NGO It is useful as we are not using it only as a way of imparting information to the public but also to be able to get feedback social media allows individuals to share a variety of information and resources through rich content.
	the purpose of social media	the participant highlighted	We use social media for fundraising

	the main purpose of using social media as showing the human side of the organisation. which is communicating with others and organising work.	we use social media to promote the organisation services we use social media to recruit new volunteers to engage the community and network with other NGOs.
perceptions and expectations	the participant expressed that sharing is embedded in social media platforms.	nearly every social media platform contains similar functions and each platform allows users to share content with others through the use of application. the sharing of content and connecting with others characterise the foundation of social media. experimenting with social media has enhanced the relationship between the organisation and the public. the perception is that social media is intergrated in public relations in NGO
Motivation to use social media	participant provided a useful insight about using social media as a collaboration tool.	keeping track of developments to ensure your organisation is in the social sphere deliberate to network sharing information, sharing knowledge

peer to peer communication

failures and problems

the participant acknowledged the problems. further described that it was more difficult to influence via social media sites

I personally think it is harder to influence and build relationships through social media. Trust is a big part of PR relationship and is hard to build relationship in any other social media platform such as Facebook.

influence is determine by how many followers, visitors to website, likes you received on your social campaign. the problem is the time spent on social media and not sure if people will act.

We don't know how to monitor tools

Advantages

participant described the importance to integrate social media and many other platforms

the benefits of using social media is informational - sharing information, getting and giving feedback; is social - building community, self expression, and gaining perspective.

Facebook maybe the a better tool for communicating with employees and publics and boosting moral by sharing photos and videos of upcoming events.

	Disadvantages	participant highlighted that organisational culture is the Foundational values of the organisation.	if we have to use social media culture will have to change to accommodate the new system. Change mindset and attitude towards social media. social media allows for flexibility and innovation for the NGO.
	the role of social media on public relations	the participant described that the importance of social media in public relations is interactivity network which provide the ability to share information.	from a social media PR perspective the challenge is to create interesting and relevant content into the appropriate social networking sites. social media is utilised in the PR campaigns I have been in communications department for almost 10 years. traditional PR is still a priority in creating campaigns.
Construct Participant 7 (P7)			
No	Construct	Description	Significant quote

7 meaning and understanding

this participant described an overarching sense of meaning and understanding of social media in her NGO she described her positive outlook of using social media

I understand social media as Facebook, Twitter, Blog, Snap Chat Instagram etc
We are very active on social media such as Facebook for campaigns. We check visitors, 'Likes', retweets and how many followers and so on.

the purpose of social media

the participant described the purpose of social media as defining the goals which is engage the community.

we are a young generation running the NGO. Social media is part of this NGO success. Everything we do is done through social media. we use social media to engage the public and the community at large.

NGO social media initiatives are intergrated with other relevant strategies

We use social media for fundraising, campaigns, spread the message, lobbying, to recruit young new volunteers.
Most importantly to promote the NGO

perceptions and expectations

participant described two-way communication as important in sharing content

majority of my work is with experimenting with social media I use social media about 90% of my time.

		Being part of (monitoring) the conversation is what is important. it is important to be visible in the Cyberspace. social media is integrated into NGO
motivation of using social media	the participant described how people are motivated to make choices in their own self interest. the participant mentioned that NGOs are the most likely industry to quickly benefit from a social media presence, because of a flat structure and flexibility.	I generally recommend that NGOs which interface and deal with consumers use social media as a tool to identify opportunities, monitor reactions, view points and connect with various publics. this NGO recognised social media as an important part of their overall communication strategy.
failures and problems	the participant described lack of embracing social media as a problem lack of trust, time constraint	it is still difficult to determine true measurement of social media because it is continuous. We are learning is in progress have no end. Technology evolves every day. That's why social media has a second life, it perpetuates and spread

		quickly. Which lead to inability to store knowledge shared
Advantages	the participant described key aspects applied in social media participant highlighted that social media tools are only effective and powerful if they are used correctly and frequently in NGO	the key word in social media is social in order to gain attention. we need to aware that social network users do not want to be overrun with marketing material but they want to communicate on a social personal level I always put hot topics on social media to keep the conversation fresh and to reach key influencers and use them to connect with others. social media are important part of our communication strategy they are quick to reach audiences all over the world.
Disadvantages	participant described specific insights into the pitfalls of using social media	through social media we are able to respond to various clients interested in our services and assist. Social media is imperative for our community involvement getting everyone engaged in our mission, goal and objectives the problem is when few people use it will be difficult to help share information and build relations.

the role of social media
on public
relations

participant described public
relations as important in NGO
PR practitioners need to be
aware and know that social
networks should be determined
by who the audience is and
what you are promoting in the
online space.

NGO social media initiatives
are integrated with other
relevant strategies

I think any organisation should have
a social media PR focus.
Be interesting as PR and have
something valuable to say to attention.

communication is important in any NGO
to ensure information is shared among

I specifically find that building on the
relationships that I already have is
important and will help start a
conversation, build trust, people
open up to you.
it will also increase your following
online.

NGOs are using traditional media
and practising public relations with
their social media.

to ensure that the content on social
networking sites is in line with
organisations aims.

Construct Participant 8 (P 8)

No

8	Construct Meaning and understanding	Description	Significant quote
		the participant expressed the meaning and understanding of social media	social media is for large and small organisations. I understand social media as Facebook, Twitter, Blog etc. social media facilitate the flow of communication (commenting, sharing or posting information)
	the purpose of social media	the participant described that social media is a democracy where everybody has a right to comment and post	I believe that the purpose is to promote the NGO. I have to put the right interesting content to catch the attention of the public I wish to reach.
			social media enhances relationships It offers opportunity to interact with other people. we use social media to raise awareness
	perceptions and expectations	the participant indicated that social media was essential to their organisation and	social media such as Facebook have enabled NGO to communicate and engage with the public in dialogue

	highlighted NGO must build networks with various publics.	and two-way communication NGO has recognised the significance of social media in building relationships.
motivation to use social media	participant described that social media are used in this NGO to maintain relationships between the organisation and publics. the participant also indicated the usefulness of social media	social media are more effective way of spreading the information. through social media we managed to encourage stakeholders to attend and participate in various events. initiates using social media has so far yielded significant output. social media encourage users to participate in the content.
failures and problems	participant indicated that the reasons for not using social more often is due to lack of resources, lack of knowledge	we don't have full time staff to run with social media activities. staff has other responsibilities it is difficult to manage the NGO social media accounts. we don't have enough time to feed the social media content, its time consuming that's why we don't have a dedicated PR practitioners.

Advantages

participant indicated that their organisation use social media as a powerful communication tool

We have volunteers and anybody can post and tweet on social media.

we use social media to for informing different publics, for fundraising and promoting general information for those who do not know them.

through social media we are to communicate with interested publics

we are using feedback from social media to improve communication, to better service programs, to inform future campaigns, to improve strategic planning

feedback of advocacy issues at the grass roots help to take it up on a national level

social media manages knowledge sharing
easy communication
It allows employee exposure to technology
efficient client service

one of the benefits of using social media within the organisation it gives employees the opportunity to speak out
important issues can be discussed from bottom

Disadvantages

the participant noted that
lack of resources will hamper
adoption

up and took it up to the leadership of the
organisation.

we lack control on the information
dispersed about the NGO on social media.

we use standard technologies such as
email, phone line, desktop,
for much of the online activities
we cant afford the more advanced
technologies such as smartphones, 3G,
Ipad, Macbook etc.

lack of quality content
reputational risks
challenge is that social media always
changes
cannot be used in isolation
non secure platforms

if the management gave proper guideline
and clear objectives as to how the employees
can use social media, it could become a
success.

executives are not young and could possibly not
have techno savvy.

the role of social media
on public
relations

the participant shared how she
goes about using social media

social media platforms could be utilised to

to encourage conversation.
it is less formal. You can talk to
different people far and wide.

preferred communication
medium

face to face communication
written communication
SMS
Instant messaging
telephonic communication
What's App

enhance relations with existing audience
reach new potential supporters.

ANNEXURE 5: Letter from language editor

3 May 2016



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Re: Letter of confirmation of language editing

The thesis **Developing a policy guideline for social media in public relations practice at selected non-governmental organisations in Gauteng by G Nchabeleng (23545305)** was language, technically and typographically edited. The citations, sources and referencing technique applied were also checked to comply with university guidelines. Final corrections as suggested remain the responsibility of the student.

Antoinette Bisschoff

Officially approved language editor of the NWU since 1998
Member of SA Translators Institute (no. 100181)