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*How is Social Media Changing the
Public Relations Industry in Ireland:
A Case Study Approach*

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00159451



Institiúid Teicneolaíochta Chorcaí
Cork Institute of Technology

**How is Social Media Changing the Public Relations Industry
in Ireland: A Case Study Approach**

Thesis By
Linda Wright

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Masters of
Public Relations with New Media

Cork Institute of Technology

2013

(Submitted September, 2013)

Supervisors: Emmett Coffey & Gearoid O'Sulleabhain

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Cork Institute of Technology


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Author's Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of

Master's Degree (MA) in Public Relations with New Media

Is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for assessment for any academic purpose other than in partial fulfilment for the stated above.

Signed:  (Student)

Date: September 2013

Abstract

How is Social Media Changing the Public Relations Industry in Ireland: A Case Study Approach

Author: Linda Wright

This thesis explores how the evolution of social media technologies are impacting on the Public Relations (PR) Industry in Ireland. It attempts to identify if social media has changed the landscape in which PR Practitioners work and if they believe it has changed the PR Industry in Ireland.

This study attempts to fill the gap in Public Relations research and literature and to merge the social media technologies with the existing Public Relations communication tools.

PR Practitioners recognise the need to embrace social media. However a clear gap exists in the PR industry in Ireland. While some have embraced the platform social media gives, many are still experimenting with these technologies and have not integrated them into their communications strategies.

Social media is a rapidly developing and influences the way we communicate both with each other and with organisations. Much research carried out on social media and Public Relations has focused on the benefits of social media as a marketing tool. This study will argue the impact of social media tools on Public Relations, going beyond the marketing element, and how to use and manage them.

It can be concluded that Irish PR practitioners are currently using social media technologies as a two-way symmetrical communication tool. The research shows that social media is changing how we interact with traditional media, but practitioners believe that traditional media will still play an important role in supporting social media.

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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Question

Research into social media is only in the developing stages, much research is still to be carried out in Ireland. Social media has a growing influence over organisations and is crucially affecting the work of public relations practitioners in Ireland. It is important to continue to research social media as it is constantly evolving and changing the way PR is carried-out on a daily basis.

Indeed, research into this topic is only developing, with sufficient research yet to be conducted in Ireland. The growing influence of social media and the need for a more comprehensive study to be conducted, prompted the researcher to explore the evolution of social media in the PR industry in Ireland. Because social media has been in existence for a number of years now, it is important to take this research to the next level and investigate how exactly it is changing the PR industry and whether PR professionals are acknowledging it on a strategic level. The research question of this thesis is: "How is Social Media Changing the Public Relations Industry in Ireland?"

1.2 Rationale

According to Safko and Brake (2012, p. 4) Social media can be used to connect with other humans, create a relationship and build trust. Public Relations is a profession based upon communication, relationships and mutual understanding. Giving the parallel between what social media can do and what public relations aims to do, research in this area is essential for the industry.

Over the last few years, social media has become a global phenomenon. Facebook now boasts over 1.15 billion users, with over 699 billion users per day and 50 million business pages. (Digital Marketing Ramblings, 2013) Twitter has over 500 million users who send, on average, 400 million tweets per day. (Digital Marketing Ramblings, 2013) Its pervasiveness has proved useful for public relations professionals throughout the world as a tool for communication and promotion. However, some practitioners are beginning to see social media as more than just a tool for the promotion of brands and products. Yet, within the research on social media there is a lack of work which focuses on its impact on public

relations in Ireland. After identifying this gap in the research, it was decided that an exploration of the topic would be undertaken.

1.3 Context Overview

The use of social media has increased around the world, causing an increase in the adoption of social media as tactics and means of sharing information among many public relations professionals. Because this new form of communication is growing at such a rapid pace, it is important to analyse the effect of social media on the practice of public relations because communication is moving in a digital direction and those who understand this transformation will communicate much more effectively than those who do not. Public relations practitioners are in the business of communicating with publics and therefore must understand this transformation in order to communicate effectively. However, due to the fast-paced growth of social media it is difficult for these professionals to keep current.

The internet provides access to a variety of powerful tools and services that allow people to communicate and connect with each other. Social media facilitates interactive web usage, where passive consumers of content become active contributors. The internet has evolved from thousands of separate web sites to thousands of communities wanting to share information. People no longer simply receive information. Social media sites have become successful internet destinations, as each site offers a new platform to develop their own communities online by communicating and connecting with each other.

In a few short years, social media platforms have exploded in popularity. According to expandedrambelings.com, a digital marketing performance expert, social network usage has increased at a rapid pace in Ireland. Facebook membership has risen from 1.11 to 1.15 billion users alone in the past three months (June-August 2013). The communications industry has not escaped this revolution. Social media is altering the entire media landscape, placing the power in the hands of regular people who before had no voice against organisations. Social media has the power to bring about huge changes in many areas of public relations. Social media has expanded into a number of different forms including text, images, audio and video through the development of forums, photo sharing, podcasts, video sharing, wikis, social networks, professional networks and micro-blogging sites.

(Wright & Hinson, 2009, pp. 2-3)

The use of social media tools allows communications professionals to reach out and communicate directly with influencers and social media users. (Breakenridge, 2008) However, little is known about the impact social media is having on the PR industry in Ireland and there is very little knowledge as to whether PR professionals are embracing it effectively.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this study is to ascertain the role and impact of social media on public relations in Ireland using two case studies, Centra Ireland supporting Action Breast Cancer '*Pink Mittens and Get the Girls 'Round Campaign*' and Cow & Gate Ireland supporting Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin '*Spooky Smiles for Crumlin Appeal*'

The main objectives are:

1. To assess the impact of social media on public relations practice in Ireland.
2. To explore social media in the context of two chosen case studies.
3. To gain an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of using social media for strategic public relations.
4. To recommend a 'best practice' approach to social media for organisation's

It is felt that information obtained from this research will greatly add to the body of knowledge available in Ireland in relation to this topic. It is also believed that the findings will provide insight into how companies can adopt social media strategies into their communication plans. Finally, in exploring what role PR practitioners have in the use of social media, it is hoped that a more strategic role will be employed by PR professionals.

The main objective of this research is to discover how new media is changing the PR industry in Ireland. Furthermore, it aims to determine whether PR professionals are adopting and using these new media tools effectively.

1.5 Case Study Approach

Yin (2009) suggests that the multiple case study design uses the logic of replication, in which the researcher replicates the procedures for each case. The case study approach was chosen to investigate social media in a real life context; this allowed the researcher to explore the impact of social media on the public relations profession in a real life setting, using multiple sources. For this study the researcher chose two specific case studies in order to highlight best practice use of social media for public relations. The case studies were chosen under a number of conditions; social media must play a significant role in the campaigns, they must be Irish campaigns and have significant recognition for the use of social media.

Sage Publications (2009) describe that at least three situations create relevant opportunities for applying the case study method as a research method. First and most important, the choices among different research methods, including the case study method, can be determined by the kind of research question that a study is trying to address. Accordingly, case studies are pertinent when your research addresses either a descriptive question—“What is happening or has happened?”—or an explanatory question—“How or why did something happen?” As outlined in the previous section of this chapter the research question for this study is “How is Social Media Changing the Public Relations Industry in Ireland?” as a result this question needs a descriptive answer and a case study approach was chosen by the researcher. The case study approach began with the identification of two specific cases the following section will identify the chosen studies and give a brief background to both.

1.6 Background to Case Studies

1.6.1 Centra Ireland supporting Action Breast Cancer

Centra Ireland supporting The Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer demonstrated excellent public relations through their Action Breast Cancer initiatives. Centra established and maintained mutually beneficial relationships not only with Action Breast Cancer but with their publics. Centra re-designed their Facebook page in order to enhance their corporate responsibility image and worked with Action Breast Cancer to launch their new business page and a new image. Through their Facebook campaign they set standards for the rest of the PR industry. They employed a significant integrated communications campaign using two-way communication with its public to enhance the overall image and relationships

between the parties. Integrating the Pink Mittens and Get the Girls 'Round initiatives into their campaign Centra Ireland not only provided useful information and communication through their Facebook page but also raised funding for The Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer. As the 2011 Public Relations Consultants Association, Ireland (PRCA) award winner for best integrated campaign, Centra Ireland demonstrated excellent strategic public relations, thus, being a perfect campaign for research analysis and discussion.

1.6.2 Cow and Gate Ireland supporting Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin

Similarly Cow and Gate Ireland also engaged with an excellent standard of public relations, utilising a two-way communication Facebook campaign. Enabling Cow and Gate to inform its publics of the work Crumlin Hospital does while also appealing for funding. Through the 'Spooky Smiles for Crumlin Appeal' Cow and Gate invited parents to host a Halloween party and raise money at those parties for Crumlin Hospital. The Facebook page invited fans to post their 'spooky' pictures to their Facebook page. Cow and Gate donated €1 to Our Lady's Hospital for every photo that was uploaded, this gave fans an incentive to keep posting pictures and keep engaging through Facebook with Cow and Gate. As a nominee for the Board Gáis Energy social media awards 2013 under the best integrated Facebook campaign category, Cow and Gate demonstrated excellent online two-way communication integrating social media into their strategy, thus, making Cow and Gate a suitable candidate for research analysis and discussion.

Centra Ireland supporting The Irish Cancer Society - Action Breast Cancer and Cow and Gate Ireland supporting Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin were the two chosen case studies for examination due to their reputation in Irish society, their use of social media and having received recognition for their social media efforts; Centra won the PRSA Excellence Award in 2011 and Cow and Gate were nominated for their Facebook Campaign in 2013. Both campaigns incorporated the use of Facebook campaigns as the main social media tool for campaign communication. The case study content analysis together with a semi-structured interview process helped the researcher to develop themes and key findings, ultimately answering the research question.

1.7 Overview of Chapters

This thesis is divided into chapters and is categorised as follows;

Chapter Two will provide a detailed examination of relevant literature to the research. It will correlate literature on the two areas being examined; public relations and social media and provide a platform for the research.

Chapter Three will describe and analyse the research methodology chosen for this study. It will outline the research question to be addressed, the research methods used, the rationale for choosing them and how they were carried out.

Chapter Four will contain the research findings, this chapter will include the data obtained through the research study.

Chapter Five will analyse and discuss whether the research findings fulfil the objectives of this study.

Chapter Six will draw principle conclusions for this research topic.

Chapter Seven will draw recommendations for future study in this area.

CHAPTER 2:
LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine the relevant literature to this body of research with the expectation of gaining a deeper understanding of the topic. The literature related to aspects of public relations (PR) and Social Media are examined in detail to highlight the connection between the profession and social media. In order to understand the context of this study the researcher began by investigating public relations literature.

2.2 Defining Public Relations

One of the earlier definitions of PR by Grunig and Hunt (1984) defines public relations as “management of communication between an organization and its publics” (p. 6). Meanwhile, for the last 29 years or so, books and academic journals have identified PR as a management function. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2012) define PR as;

“The management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends.” (p. 5)

Many authors in the field have followed suit with an emphasis on PR as an element of organisational management. PR is two-way communication between organisations and its publics. Practitioners will communicate their message to the public but they must also be prepared to receive feedback from the public. To be successful in PR a practitioner requires an understanding of the interests and concerns of the client’s publics. The main PR objectives are to build product awareness, create interest, manage an organisation’s reputation, provide information and reinforce the brand. (Tench & Yeomans, Exploring Public Relations, 2009)

According to Theaker (2008), bad PR can have a negative effect on a story. PR professionals are often referred to as “spin doctors” but in the words of Cutlip, Center and Broom (2012) “to label all PR professionals as dishonest would be to ignore how all-encompassing and important their work has become to people and organisations of all shapes and sizes.”

PR has developed rapidly in recent years, partly because management of various commercial and non-commercial organisations have discovered a need for PR activities. PR has been used to promote new industries, services, technologies and new kinds of media, leaving a demand for able and versatile staff. (Jefkins, Egan, & Baines, *Public Relations Contemporary Issues and Techniques*, 2004)

More recently, in 2008, the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS) developed a new definition of the public relations practice, at the end of a thorough exercise to arrive at the new definition:

“Public relations is the strategic management of relationships between an organisation and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals and serve the public interest.” (Flynn, Gregory, & Valin, *About CPRS*, 2008)

The literature suggests that public relations is a management function, which ultimately aims to reach a set of objectives. Public relations practitioners need to understand and strategically manage relationships.

2.3 Strategic Public Relations

Strategy can be defined as the determination of the long term goals and objectives of an enterprise and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals. (Cutlip, Centre, & Broom, 2012, p. 314)

“Planning for PR programmes provides a framework that can stimulate thinking; it acts as a prompt for problem solving and it releases creativity while ensuring it is focused and purposeful.” (Tench & Yeomans, *Exploring Public Relations*, 2009, p. 493)

At the heart of PR definitions it is noted that PR has to be planned, “... is the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.” Gregory (2000) describes it as a deliberate, carefully thought-out process that requires sustained activity. She continues to describe how good reputations

cannot be earned overnight, it is something that has to be earned over time through the understanding and supported development. Gregory's reasons for PR planning are as follows; planning focuses effort, improves effectiveness, encourages the long-term view, assists productivity, reconciles conflicts, minimises mishaps and demonstrates value for money.

Strategic public relations involves integrating public relations strategy with the overall goals and objectives of an organisation's strategy. In the practice of public relations, strategy refers to the overall plan for the programme designed to achieve a goal. Tactics refer to the operational level, the actions and methods used to implement the strategy. (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2012, p. 314)

A well-conceived strategy, by providing overall direction, establishes a framework for decision making and action. It permits isolated tasks and activities to fit together, integrating separate efforts towards a common purpose. (Patton, 2002, p. 39)

Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2012, p. 314) states that "preparing a plan does not guarantee success" but explains that planning does greatly enhance the chances of success. Strategic planning is not a universally accepted public relations practice, often practitioners give excuses not to plan; "We don't have time", "Why plan when things are changing so fast?", "We get paid for results, not for planning." Planning is for the purpose of making something happen or preventing it from happening, for the purpose of exploiting a situation or remedying one. Having a framework provides structure and coherence. Having a plan shows professionalism and accountability. (Gregory, 2000)

"Public relations calls for long-term planning and programming in many areas, such as public policy and social problems, but crises often give birth to public relations planning. Preventative public relations is tied most often to long-term planning." (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2012, p. 314)

2.4 Media Relations

“In a social media driven world, the fundamentals of good media relations practice - relevance, authority, engagement and relationship – are more important than ever.”
(Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), 2012, p. 129)

A technique used in Public Relations that enables companies to gain media attention, known as media relations, provides a process of reaching out to journalists to pitch stories. They have to understand how to develop a story that is relevant to a journalists audience and knowing whom to approach and how to approach them. As described by Tench & Yeomans (2009) media relations comes high up on the list when defining Public Relations activities. Media relations tends to be the most public and visible aspect of PR practice. Yet it often condemned as ‘puffery’, ‘flackery’ or ‘spin’.

Dilenschneider (2010) believes the era of social media possesses the biggest opportunities for public relations practitioners to engage in media relations because technology now means that people are far more accessible than ever before.

Successful public relations depends on effective communication with a variety of audiences or publics. The most important method of communication is through media relations and liaisons. Like PR, media relations is both proactive and reactive. If a company is large enough or newsworthy, the media will be interested and will monitor its actions. The choice such a company has to make is whether to seek to work with the journalists or to keep them at arm’s length. The advantage of co-operating with the media is that the stories they publish are more likely to be accurate and sympathetic. (Black 1995)

Holtz (2002, p. 47) argues media relations no matter how much it can be enhanced on the web, is still primarily based on solid personal relationships with real-world contact. Practitioners need to continue to practice good solid Public Relations management and tactics. Similarly Breakenridge (2008, p. 62) notes that nothing can replace human interaction. She explains how the web gets us closer to face-to-face communication but PR is about people and personal relationships, it’s the personal meeting in person that can take a relationship to the next level. “Keep in mind in the human element is always the cornerstone of a relationship.”

2.5 Models of Communication

The focus of this study is to examine the link between traditional PR and social media, by attempting to determine how PR practitioners are incorporating social media into their PR campaigns. It is therefore necessary to provide an explanation of the basic PR communication theories. Early models of communication introduced key concepts of communication and were primarily focused on transmitting one-way communication. The broadcast models present the components of sender, receiver, medium, channel transmitter and are only concerned with persuasion as the outcome of communication, where the sender is seen as active and the audience seen as passive. (Theaker, 2008, p. 12)

Many theories found throughout the research literature can be linked back to research conducted by James E. Grunig and Todd Hunt in 1984. They were the first to typify the ways in which PR has been practiced throughout history. These theories can be found in their work; *Managing Public Relations* (1984). Grunig and Hunt found that there were four different ways in which public relations evolved and developed, these became known as 'Grunig and Hunt's four models of communication'. The four models are; Press agency/publicity model, the public information model, the two-way asymmetrical model and the two-way symmetrical model. These models have stimulated much debate in the PR industry; however they still remain crucial in the study of PR.

Press Agency is one-way communication without dialogue with the intended recipient. (Horton 2003) Similarly, the Public Information Model is also one-way communication as it involves the dissemination of information to the public. (Theaker, *The Public Relations Handbook*, 2008, pp. 24-31) The main function of this model is to inform rather than persuade.

Two-way Asymmetrical Communication first introduced the idea of feedback through two-way communication. The practitioner gets feedback from the public and then applies the latest communication to persuade the public. Two-way Symmetrical communication's main aim is to generate mutual understanding, this model attempts to achieve balance by adjusting the relationship between organisations and publics focusing on negotiating mutually beneficial outcomes. (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995, p. 41) Social media now acts as a new channel of communication, enhancing two-way symmetrical communication. Through social

media organisations can gain feedback from their publics and engage in online dialogues. Theaker (2008) states that:

“Feedback is critical in the process of communication, particularly in determining the effectiveness of a public relations campaign. It is crucial to know if the message was received, how it was understood and if changes in attitude or behaviour have occurred.” (p. 22)

PR practitioners play a key role in the two-way symmetrical theories. Through listening and observing, organisations can build strong relationships with their publics. This model addresses ethical questions by exploring the interests of both the sender and the audience as it relies on honest and open two-way communication rather than one-way transmission models. Organisations carrying out two-way symmetrical communication must be willing to make significant modifications in how they operate in order to achieve mutual understanding with their publics. Caywood (1997, p. 224) describes public relations practitioners must refine themselves to be highly relevant to new media and become the coaches, teachers, advisors and consultants who create and deploy new ways of practicing public relations.

Social media represents the shift from traditional broadcast communication to the two-way communication model. The process shifts from pitching to the consumer to a conversation based interaction, in turn cultivating relationships. (Breakenridge & Solis, 2009, p. 92) Kelleher (2007, p. 51) suggests that two-way communication is not just getting people engaged in a back and forth conversation but also keeping them engaged. In an online environment organisations need to establish and maintain two-way communication with their publics. Kelleher states that it is more than merely distributing press releases or attracting media coverage, in order for organisations to conduct themselves online they must identify and communicate with the communities that represent their market.

2.6 Defining Social Media

Many scholars have tried to place a definition on the term ‘social media’ however no concrete definition exists, many variations are still available. Safko (2012) describes social media as “word of mouth at the speed of light” he explains how social media is a new set of tools, new technology that allows us to more effectively connect and build relationships with

our customers. He continues to tell how social media is doing what traditional media has always done for us, but social media is doing it far more effectively. The Public Relations Institute of Ireland (PRII) defines social media as “the technology used to enable an individual reach a worldwide audience in an instant.” While the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) further describe social media as:

“...the term commonly given to Internet and mobile-based channels and tools that allow users to interact with each other and share opinions and content. As the name implies, social media involves the building of communities or networks and encouraging participation and engagement.”

The still-emerging phenomenon of social media provides various types of interactive media in which the audience is an active participant in the development and presentation of the messages. Social media comprises the tools for people to create, share and publish content online. Companies are finally learning how to use the internet as a tool for marketing and PR campaigns. The tools people use to share content online are the same tools PR practitioners use to reach them. PR has to go where the customers are, using the channels of influence that reach them. These tools offer a huge advantage to the PR industry over traditional methods used. (Breakenridge & Solis, 2009)

Breakenridge (2012, p. 2) quite simply defines social media as anything that uses the internet to facilitate conversation between people. She believes social media requires people to shift their mindset to unite communications and collaborative technology, adopting a new attitude and expanding knowledge and skills; resulting in successfully incorporating new social media practices. Solis (2008) also indicates that many companies and PR consultants still underestimate the resources, time, dedication and passion it takes to embrace social media.

According to Nations (2010)

“A social media site would be a website that doesn’t just give you information but interacts with you while giving you that information. Regular media is a one-way street where you can read a newspaper or listen to a report on television, but you have very limited ability to give your thoughts on the matter. Social media, on the other hand, is a two-way street that gives you the ability to communicate too”

While Tench & Yeomans (2009) recognise the opportunities that social media gives to an organisation for targeting specific markets and particularly youth markets, they also highlight the potential drawback in PR terms; the content generated by social media users can often have an inbuilt credibility gap. The perceived strength of going through traditional media channels is the credibility that is associated with it. They define social media as:

“... an umbrella name pulling together blogs, wikis, online discussion, forum or chat rooms and a host of other internet communities.”

Grunig (2009) discussed the relationship between digital media and PR, he talks about the opportunities these new technologies present to the PR profession, such as “making the profession more global, strategic, two-way and interactive, symmetrical or dialogical and socially responsible.” Grunig also believes that a lot of PR practitioners seem to not understand how to interact with social media. He sees practitioners as merely distributing their messages to their publics rather than interacting with them. He states that “for public relations to fully use digital media, practitioners and scholars must re-institutionalise publics interpretive paradigm”.

PR professionals need to be aware of the power of social media and be willing to engage with their publics by such means as online conversations, discovery, creation and sharing of content are key elements of social media. The mass media audience no longer plays a passive role and have been transformed into producers and distributors of media. (Tench & Yeomans, Exploring Public Relations, 2009)

2.6.1 Social Media in Public Relations

“In order to diagnose social media as the solution, PR practitioners have had to develop a deeper understanding of the business problem and not just the PR objective. This has placed a greater focus on audience behaviours, ethical considerations and the etiquette surrounding the use of social media in communications.” (Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), 2012)

Social media and multimedia are redefining PR and marketing communications, while also creating a new toolkit to reinvent how companies communicate with influencers and people directly. It represents a shift from a broadcast communication method to a more two-way communication model. The process shifts from pitching to conversation based interaction which enhances relationships, strengthens customer service and increases brand recognition and loyalty. (Breakenridge & Solis, 2009, p. 30) According to Breakenridge (2008) social media has provided an opportunity to truly out the public back into Public Relations by providing a mechanism for organisations to engage in real-time, one-to-one conversations with stakeholders. Breakenridge (2008) states that:

“Technology will enable the tools to continually change to better suit the online consumer preferences. Conversations are taking place in communities that once would have never invited companies to enter, listen and engage in intimate communication.” (p. 274)

Seiple (2011) finds that without a doubt, the web and social media are making it easier for businesses to communicate with their publics. At the same time, where there used to be a clear delineation between marketing and public relations, the impact of the web has resulted in a blurred line between the two industries. She continues to explain how people have always said good and bad things about brands, and now that social media has risen in popularity, it means people have another platform to talk about companies and their products or services. Seiple explains how the main difference with social media is the viral nature of the platforms. When someone mentions a brand in social media, there is much more potential for other people to notice, and it's easier for conversations to spread much more quickly. These conversations have the potential to reach a much larger audience than ever before. If companies are not participating in social media they are missing an opportunity to spread their message and missing valuable conversations that could be taking place about their company and its brand. (Seiple, 2011)

According to Scott (2010) Public relations practitioners were among the first people to embrace the power of social media and as a result they are often the ones leading the way in this space. Today, thanks to advances in technology, organisations can develop relationships directly with their consumers. Mashable, the social media news site, conducted a study on how social media is changing the face of PR in 2010, fourteen PR professionals were

interviewed about the challenges the PR industry faces. The result of this study showed that although the traditional press release is not dead, if a press release nowadays does not have a social element to it, it does not have momentum. (Swallow, 2010)

Social media expert Scott Stratten feels that the biggest mistake companies make is thinking that social media is just another channel for them to push their advertising message. He believes that social media is a two-way symmetrical model of communication as “it is a conversation, not a dictation”. (Stratten, 2011)

2.6.2 The Impact of Social Media on the Mass Media

Mass media is any medium used to transmit mass communication. Until recently, mass media comprised newspapers, radio, television, films and the internet. However, defining mass media is no longer as straightforward. The continued growth of digital communication technology is changing the way in which we view mass media. (Lane, 2007)

Solis and Breakenridge (2009) recognise that today’s major news outlets face a significant rise in citizen journalism as a result of active participation on social media sites. One example where users are actively participating in citizen journalism is Twitter. Twitter has become one of the most important news sites of the new media revolution. For example in 2009 a plane crashed into the Hudson River in New York, within minutes of the crash occurring Twitter users began ‘tweeting’ what had happened from the scene of the accident. These users were broadcasting the news ever before the authorities issued an official statement. The first images from the crash were published by Twitter users. The broadcasting of news to the masses is no longer just for official journalists; now with social media the everyday person has means to become a journalist. Citizen journalism is paving the way for individual voices to rise to a level of influence, that in some cases, covers that of most traditional media channels. Facebook, Twitter, Blogging, podcasts and video are developing into a new breed of media networks and are engaging audiences in an entirely new and immersive way. (Breakenridge & Solis, 2009)

2.6.3 Measuring Social Media

Social media measurement has grown in importance across the PR industry. Social media evaluation is now necessary to measure the success of PR and to justify budgets as part of the planning process. Management are reluctant to engage in social media unless the PR practitioner can show its effectiveness by measuring the results.

There is a widespread and almost universal assertion that effective evaluation starts with setting definable, measurable and quantifiable objectives. Dozier (1985, p.197) stated that “measurement of programmes without goals is form without substance, thereby making evaluation impossible.” Evaluation is not just an exercise to be carried out afterwards but should be built into the programmes at all stages.

According to Breakenridge & Solis (2009) engagement and relationships are the most difficult to measure. Noble & Watson (2007, p.208) argue that because most practitioners were born ahead of the digital era, they are not at ease with the internet environment. Numerous practitioners monitor online coverage as if it were print media. Quantifying, calculating and justifying social media strategies requires a new approach.

Solis (2008) recommends a new way of measuring online engagement, through the use of a conversation index:

“A conversation index indicates your placement, status, ranking and perception in the social media sphere. By tracking conversations based on keywords, it is possible to measure their frequency, tonality, locations and create a measurable baseline to compare future activity. The key is to establish measurable objectives.”

Communicators will be expected to integrate all tools, both online and offline to achieve measurable results. The integration will require a solid understanding of the new communication models and how to use them in conjunction with traditional tools to achieve measurable results. (Holtz, 2002, p. 48)

2.7 Chapter Conclusions

Channels of communication have been opened up thanks to the revolution of New Media. New Media is a broad term which refers to access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation. New media technology has provided new ways of communicating and networking via social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, blogging, video sharing among many others. This new phenomenon has provided public relations professionals with an abundance of new tools to carry out its activities and communicate with their publics. There are enormous possibilities to the New Media; the term spread across a wide array of tools and technologies. As a result the researcher chose to investigate social media and its effect on public relations.

The research of Wright and Hinson (2009) points out that a growing number of PR practitioners have accepted that social media is changing the way they communicate. According to the work of Wright and Hinson social media has transformed public relations into a two-way communication effort and made it possible to communicate more effectively with both internal and external audiences. This supports the theory that social media in particular is having an impact on public relations, thus the research will examine the impact of social media on public relations practitioners.

This chapter has provided a detailed analysis of the current theories related to social media in the PR industry. To summarise, social media is influencing many aspects of the practice of Public Relations. It has the potential to qualify as two-way communication as it offers direct channels of communication and opens up the opportunity for two-way discussions. Academics believe embracing social media can help build relationships with key publics. However many practitioners underestimate the resources, time dedication and passion it takes to engage and cultivate relationships.

The creation of social media platforms enables organisations to improve the management of their reputation. However academics hold mixed views as to what department should be responsible for monitoring online conversations. The lack of control online is a stumbling block for many PR practitioners. Even though the internet is user friendly and very economical, collaboration and the sharing of content is difficult to control in an online environment. This can expose organisations to new threats and challenges. Organisations face

new issues online where people have the ability to freely express their opinions and share experiences with each other. Online issues need to be addressed efficiently as negative comments remain forever online, as a result is vital for practitioners to keep a good relationship with their publics.

The literature defines that embracing social media requires an organisation to develop a strategy with clearly defined objectives. PR professionals must redefine themselves in order to become active educators and strategic advisors on the use of social media. It requires a new approach to measurement as traditional methods can no longer be applied. To conclude, social media is modifying many aspects of the practice of public relations and can provide a wide range of advantages when adopted effectively. Strategically participating in social media is critical in order to practice excellent public relations.

CHAPTER 3:
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss and justify the methods of research undertaken in this study and explain the rationale behind the use of these methods in order to provide a framework for this study.

3.2 Research design

Goddard and Melville (2004) believe that research is commonly misunderstood as the process of gathering information. This is an incorrect assumption as it is about answering previously unanswered questions or creating that which does not currently exist.

According to Philliber, Schwab, & Samsloss, (1980) research design is considered as a blueprint for research, dealing with at least four problems: which questions to study, which data is relevant, what data to collect, and how to analyse the results. There is a lack of previous studies exploring the use of social media in public relations campaigns, this study will assess the impact that social media is having on the public relations industry in Ireland.

The purpose of this research is to explore how the evolution of social media is affecting the public relations industry in Ireland, examining the use of social media in two case studies to identify its use and effectiveness or lack of. Research design is an arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a method that aims to merge relevance with the research question. (Brayman, 2005)

When looking at the design process it is important to look at alternative methods of research. Quantitative research looks at the numerical statistics while qualitative research tends to focus on the 'lived' experience and deal with emotion rather than numbers; it also tends to deal with smaller quantities of people. Qualitative research allows the researcher to share in the understandings and perceptions of others and explore how people give structure and meaning to their behaviour. (Berg, 2009)

For this study the researcher will take a core sample – those who make up the pivotal target group perhaps those who are leading in their profession, such as directors of PR Company's in Ireland. Through a series of Standardised open-ended interviews the researcher will examine their values and lived experience with social media as a public relations tool.

As discussed, there are two alternative research designs quantitative and qualitative, however there is a clear lack of existing research carried out in the area of social media; as a result it will be difficult to find existing statistics on how it is changing the PR profession. As described by Cohen et al. (2011) the issue is fitness for purpose; the more one tries to gain comparable data the more standardised the research method tends to become. For this research the researcher will examine the use of social media in the two chosen case studies, as well as using standardised open-ended interviews that will allow questions to be developed in context and emerges from observations and circumstances.

According to Saunders et al. (2009), a combination of both primary and secondary data is required for research projects in order to answer research questions and complete research objectives. The researcher started with secondary research following the advice of Malhotra and Birks, (2007) who state that a researcher should start off with secondary data and then proceed to primary data only when the secondary data resources have been exhausted.

3.3 Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the instrument of both the data collection and the data interpretation. Therefore, the credibility of qualitative methods hinges to a great extent on the skills, competence and cooperation of the researcher. The researcher's strategy includes having personal contact with the people and situation the study is based on. From the perspective of the advocates of a supposedly value-free social science, subjectivity is very antithesis of scientific inquiry (Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 2002, p. 14). Because it draws on the skills of the researcher, it opens up the possibility of more than one explanation being valid. Therefore different researchers might reach different conclusions, despite using the same methods. (Miles & Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*, 1994, p. 280)

3.4 Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research

There is much debate among academics with regards to the best way to conduct research. This debate is centred on the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. Both paradigms have strengths and weaknesses and may lend themselves to certain types of study. Quantitative research is based on testing theories; its focus is on numbers and statistics with an aim to determine whether generalisation of the theory is true. (Creswell, 1994, pp. 42-65). For this reason it is suited to hard science and may not lend itself well to social sciences. Qualitative research is often chosen for social research as it concentrates on words and experience. It is used to explore people's feelings and thoughts on a particular topic (Kumar, Research Methodology, 2008, p. 8). Qualitative paradigms are suited to research which aims to understand the context within the participants' actions, to understand the process by which events take place (Maxwell, 2005, p. 23)

It is important for a researcher to understand that the research paradigm should not be predetermined, instead it should be decided on the basis of what you are trying to find out. (Punch, K Cited in Doing Qualitative Research, D. Silverman, 2009)

The researcher has chosen the qualitative research approach as it is the most appropriate in meeting the needs of a relatively new research area. For the qualitative research approach, the researcher will need to collect in-depth information to be able to answer the research question, which is something that cannot be done if the researcher uses a quantitative approach instead. (Creswell, 1994, pp. 42-65) A particular strength associated with qualitative research is that the descriptions and theories that such research generates are grounded in reality. (Miles & Huberman , 1994)

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials including interview transcripts, case studies, recordings and notes, observational records and notes, audiovisual materials and personal experience materials such as artifacts and journal and diary information. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 4)

The interview technique is designed to get a participant's perspective on the research topic. During interviews, the interviewee is considered the expert and the interviewer to be considered the student. The techniques used by the researcher are driven by the desire to learn

everything that the participant can share about the research topic. Researchers remain neutral when asking the participants questions whilst listening carefully to their responses. They can ask follow-up questions based on their responses. Interviews are one of the most common qualitative research methods. One of the main reasons for their attractiveness is that they bring the human element to the problem under research. (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005, pp. 3-4) Following the researchers decision to carry-out a qualitative research study it is imperative that the research also chooses whom to study through this process.

3.5 Sampling Strategy

Qualitative research typically focuses on relatively small samples to permit inquiry into and understanding the phenomenon in depth.

A purposeful sampling strategy was used based on 'information rich' samples. This means selected samples offer a useful manifestation of the phenomenon of interest (Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 2002, p. 230). Creswell (2007, p. 154-157) outlines three considerations of the purposeful sampling approach in qualitative research; whom to select as participants for the study, the specific type of sampling strategy and the size of the sample to be studied. As part of the purposeful sampling strategy criterion sampling was used this involves searching for cases who meet a certain criterion, for this study *participants who had experience with social media and public relations were chosen*. People with demonstrative experience in the area of research were selected in order to obtain expert views. PR professionals and online communication experts who worked on the chosen case studies were selected. This approach provides evidence of validity for the purpose of this study. In total six interviews were carried out, five participants were public relations practitioners and one participant was a journalist who worked on social media. Following the research approach the researcher must decide how to gather and analyse the research data.

3.6 Data Gathering and Analysis

“Qualitative data collection methods are designed to describe and understand certain patterns of behaviour by assessing the beliefs, opinions, motives, values and rules that make actions meaningful.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 507)

In pursuing the qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main source of primary research, which was supplemented by the analysis of social media in two case studies. The interview content stemmed from the content analysis of both cases.

The analysis process firstly involved analysing the use of social media in the two chosen case studies, reviewing the use of the Facebook campaigns as a way to publicise both campaign activities. Interaction with their publics through social media was logged and each separate idea was given a theme label, similar ideas were grouped together into themes and were compared. (See Appendix F and G for full content analysis) Following this content analysis the researcher then devised the interview questions. (See Appendix D for Interview Schedule) Following completed interviews the researcher then reviewed the interview transcripts and field notes. The interview transcriptions were also analysed in a similar fashion, each similar idea was given a theme label and grouped with similar themes. Each theme was then compared and contrasted with the data gathered from the content analysis. The completed themes were then verified against the main themes uncovered in the literature to qualify the findings. (See Appendix E for Interview Transcripts)

The analysis gathered played an important role in analysing the case study. Key elements of best practice were identified and these were applied to the case study to examine if they were used as part of the online campaign. This approach helped to link the collected data to the case study and deepen the research of social media in the PR industry in Ireland.

3.6.1 Case Study Approach

“Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information...” (Creswell, 2007, p. 97)

Robson (2002, p.178) describes a case study as a strategy for doing research that involves an investigation of a particular phenomenon within its real life context using a number of sources. It was decided that the case study approach should be taken for this research as it would allow the research to explore the impact of social media on the public relations profession in a real life setting, using multiple sources. This research conducted a case study analysis into ‘Centra Ireland’s Action Breast Cancer Campaign’ and Cow and Gate Ireland’s campaign for Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital Crumlin Appeal. Both case studies also enabled the researcher to gain a broader understanding of the topic and to allow both positive and negative impacts to be taken into account. The case studies were chosen under a number of factors; social media had to play a significant role in the campaigns, they had to be in an Irish context and have significant recognition for their use of social media. The case study is an exploratory analysis, which aims to explore good practice in the use of social media. The case study is an integral part of the research because it highlights the extent of what represents best practice in social media and illustrates problems that occur when social media is not practiced efficiently. For the purpose of this case study, content analysis and semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most suitable data collection methods.

3.6.2 Content Analysis

“Content analysis can be defined as a research technique that is based on measuring popular art forms and can be used to learn about people by looking at what they write or produce” (Berger, 1998, p. 23)

Patton (2002) believes that content analysis refers to any methodology whereby qualitative data analysis attempts to identify connections, consistency and connotations in a dataset. Similarly Cutlip, Centre and Broom (2012) describe content analysis as an application of systematic procedures for objectively determining what is being reported in the media. They describe how press clippings and broadcast reports have long been used as the basis for content analysis. Content analysis can provide valuable insights into what is likely to be on the public agenda in the future. Public relations firms can help clients anticipate issues by doing their own media content.

“Themes and patterns are important in distinguishing characteristics and entities within the text; allowing the discovery of vital elements, thus, providing substance to the overall examination” (Foley, 2009, p. 34)

For both case studies chosen content analysis was used to analyse the use of social media throughout the campaigns. The use of Facebook was the primary source for the analysis.

Secondary research was carried out to inform and develop the theoretical knowledge of the research topic. The knowledge gained helped the researcher develop an understanding of the possible outlooks on the topic. As social media is rapidly developing, reading was treated as an ongoing process. The sources used for this secondary research were, websites, online studies, books and journal articles. Online sources were the most valuable as there were a limited number of up-to-date books on the topic. The researcher carefully selected the most appropriate literature to consider ensuring the sources were relevant to the topic.

3.6.3 Semi-Structured Interview

Berg (2009, p.100) describes interviews as conversations with a purpose. Interviews are particularly good at producing data which deals with topics in-depth and in detail. It can be a very useful technique for collecting data which would not be accessible using techniques such as observation or questionnaires.

Cutlip, Centre and Broom (2012) explain the advantages of interviews, they include high response rates, greater flexibility, more control over conditions over questions covered and an opportunity to observe and record reactions in the interview.

Semi-structured interviews have a flexible structure whereby questions are organised so that certain themes or areas of a topic are covered throughout the interview. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewees to be asked the same open-ended questions so that the interviewees are encouraged to speak freely regarding the topic and develop their own ideas. Semi-structured interviews are interviews that focus on a specific list of topics, while allowing the exploration of unexpected facts and attitudes through its open structure (Aaker & Keller, 1998)

For the purpose of this study the semi-structured interview method was chosen as it allows a list of themes and questions to be covered, for both case studies chosen the interview questions could vary and adapt for the participants' expertise. It also gives the researcher the opportunity to probe interviewees' for more detailed answers. Direct contact at the point of the interview means that data can be checked for accuracy and relevance as it is collected. As a result, the researcher gained valuable insights based on the depth of the information gathered and the wisdom of key informants. This proved particularly useful given that there has been little research carried out in this area, to date, in Ireland.

When developing questions the researcher was careful to ensure that they reflected the research questions. The researcher favoured semi-structured questions, which allowed the interviewer to be flexible in terms of the order the topics were covered and let the interviewee develop ideas and speak more widely on issues raised by the researcher. Open-ended questions were also used as they allow more flexibility throughout the interview. Each interview finished with a closing question to allow the interviewees expand on any areas or include information they felt needed to be submitted to the research topic. (See appendix D for a full list of interview questions)

The researcher's role was to locate, enlist and motivate the interviewees. Once selected each possible candidate was sent an email asking them to part-take in the research process with an explanation of the research objectives. Initial contact was made with each interviewee in June and interview dates were established.

3.7 Research Procedure

In order to complete the content analysis of the Facebook Campaigns for both Centra Ireland supporting The Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer and Cow and Gate Ireland supporting Our Lady's Hospital Crumlin, the researcher began by logging the Facebook activity for the duration of the campaigns. When detailing the Facebook activity the researcher also noted how many 'likes', comments and shares each post received, this gave the researcher an indication of 'best practice' social media i.e which posts received the most 'fan' engagement. Following the detailed logging of the Facebook activity, the researcher was able to divide the postings into themes. Once the content analysis was completed the researcher then devised a list of questions for the interview process.

In total six interviews were carried out, which included representatives from both case studies. Two of the interviews were carried out in person at suitable locations of the participant's choice, one interview was carried out via telephone, with the majority of interviews carried-out via email communication due to time constraints on the participant's behalf. The interviews took place over the first two weeks in July. In person interviews each lasted on average fourth minutes and were recorded on a digital recorder providing a permanent record of each interview. All participants were initially contacted via email to participate and a number of emails followed as the questions were asked. Following each interview, the researcher made notes and drew conclusion themes from the data. This allowed the researcher to obtain accurate information and direct quotations from the interviews. By conducting interviews in relation to two case studies, a holistic picture may be formed, which will allow us to investigate this current phenomenon. Bellow you can see a list of the participants and the reasons they were chosen for interview.

Case Study One

1. Neil O Gorman (PR Consultant, Bespoke with Direction)

Neil is an account director with Bespoke with Direction Marketing and PR. He is one of Ireland's public relations professionals and was lead in organising and controlling the online content for Centra Ireland's collaboration with The Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer in 2010.

Date: 29/07/2013

Method: In Person

2. Donna Parsons (Communications Executive, Fundraising, Action Breast Cancer)

Donna as a communications executive with The Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer worked with Bespoke with Direction providing content for the Facebook page and online media.

Date: 15/07/2013

Method: Via Telephone

3. Joyce Hosford (Communications Executive, Musgrave Retail Partners)

As a communications executive at Musgrave, Joyce oversees all campaign activities for Centra and Supervalu in Ireland. Joyce helped devise Centra's Action Breast Cancer Campaign both online and offline.

Date: 08/07/2013

Method: Via Email

Case Study Two

4. Sarah Wagstaff (PR Consultant, Pembroke Communications)

Sarah as an account manager at Pembroke Communications worked directly with Cow and Gate Ireland maintaining the online content for the Facebook campaign. Sarah saw the many benefits of using social media for a PR perspective.

Date: 02/07/2013

Method: Via Email

5. Paula McCarville (PR Consultant, Pembroke Communications (Former Position))

Paula previously worked with Pembroke Communications. A part of the team who devised the Cow and Gate Ireland campaign, Paula got valuable experience with social media.

Date: 16/07/2013

Method: Via Email

General Opinion

6. Eoin English (Journalist, Irish Examiner)

Eoin is a reporter with the Irish Examiner and has reported on several major events which made world-headlines; his extensive use of social media made him a suitable candidate for interview.

Date: 22/07/2013

Method: In Person

3.8 Research Validity & Reliability

The researcher addressed any threats to validity throughout the research by using the logic of triangulation. Triangulation can be defined as using more than one research technique to find the same information. Using multiple data collection methods researchers obtain a better picture of reality and a more complete array of theoretical concepts. (Berg, 2009, p. 5)

Triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. Studies that use more than one method are less vulnerable to threats of validity. Triangulation encourages the researcher to check findings from one method of research against the other. (Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 2002, p. 247)

According to Maxwell (2005):

“Triangulation reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating.” (pp. 93-94)

A number of data collection methods and sources were used in this study to allow a broader understanding and unbiased view of the research topic. Content analysis and interviews were conducted to form the primary research. Secondary sources such as books, journals and online content, were used to build a platform for the primary research and have been discussed in the literature review.

Semi-structured interviews were utilised in conjunction with the case study analysis. Throughout the interview process, the researcher ensured the interviewees came from a variety of angles of the chosen case studies. The researcher believes by getting a variety of opinions on the topic enables greater validity.

Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions (Hammersley, 1992). To eradicate this possible limitation the researcher allowed the interviewees to speak without interruption until the interviewee was satisfied he/she had answered the question. The researcher also ensured that their tone of voice, body language and responses reflected a non-judgmental reaction. Reliability is fundamentally concerned with issues relating to the consistency of measures. There are at least three different meanings to the term; Stability, Internal reliability and Inter-Observer Consistency.

Stability relates to whether a certain measure is stable over time. This is important so that the researcher can be confident that the results pertaining to the sample does not fluctuate.

Internal Reliability refers to whether the indicators which make up the scale are consistent. This way, the researcher can check whether the respondents' scores on any one indicator tend to be related to their scores on the other indicators.

Inter-Observer Consistency relates to the lack of consistency in decisions the people involved in the research might make. This could be an issue if the researcher is using someone else to transcribe their interviews. With this method, there is the possibility of a lack of consistency in the decision making process. (Brayman, 2005)

3.9 Chapter Conclusions

The literature review in chapter two of this study provided an in-depth insight into the main factors comprising the overall framework of this work. The online social elements within this research study mean that a qualitative form of research was suitable for analysing online communications. The focus on social media as a mechanism for mutual interaction between organisations and their publics required observation rather than interaction for this study, this observation is methodologically identified as content analysis for this thesis.

The methodology chosen for this research study has been selected due to its suitability to the online social media setting. Each phase of the selection has been thoroughly explored to discover connecting attributes to the examined subject matter. The aim of this thesis is;

To ascertain the role and impact of social media on public relations in Ireland using two case studies, Centra Ireland supporting Action Breast Cancer '*Pink Mittens and Get the Girls 'Round Campaign*' and Cow & Gate Ireland supporting Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin '*Spooky Smiles for Crumlin Appeal*'

The use of interviews was advantageous in the context of studying public relations practitioners' relationship with social media in Ireland. The decision to use semi-structured interviews was taken as they provide internal information. The content analysis carried-out for this research allowed the researcher to see how social media is being used for businesses in Ireland. Chapter four will outline the research data that the chosen research methods uncovered.

CHAPTER 4:
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings that arose from the primary research and analyses in light of the research objectives. The headings below show the general themes extracted from both the content analysis and the interview data to develop research findings. Data will be discussed in relation to theoretical constructs outlined in the literature review and organised according to each primary research objective. The primary research objectives are:

- To assess the impact of social media on public relations practice in Ireland.
- To explore social media in the context of two chosen case studies.
- To gain an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of using social media for strategic public relations.
- To recommend a 'best practice' approach to social media for organisations.

The themes extracted from the content analysis and interview process were as follows; social media, planning campaigns, media relations and models of communication. Throughout the interviews all participants discussed embracing social media and how social media has impacted how they do their job. All participants also spoke about the importance of knowing what you are going to do for a campaign "having a clear plan in place", similarly in the content analysis it was evident from the Facebook postings that the content was planned and that the posts were timed. It was also clear from the Facebook postings that traditional media still plays an influencing role in social media as many posts linked back to the traditional articles, many interviewees noted that traditional media has to adapt to take social media on board but that traditional media is not dead. It was identified that social media is a new channel of communication and has majorly impacted how PR practitioners communicate with their publics; as a result 'models of communication' arose as a theme. In the following sections the researcher will present thematically the findings, a great deal of information was gathered through the content analysis and interview process but the researcher felt it was necessary to theme the information and highlight what was most relevant. The interviewees who contributed to the primary research of this thesis are as follows:

Neil O Gorman, PR Consultant, Bespoke with Direction

Donna Parsons, Communications Executive Fundraising, Action Breast Cancer

Joyce Hosford, Communications Executive, Musgrave Retail Partners

Sarah Wagstaff, PR Consultant, Pembroke Communications

Paula McCarville, PR Consultant, Pembroke Communications (Former Position)

Eoin English, Journalist, Irish Examiner

4.2 Case Study Approach

The following section will provide details on Centra Ireland's Action Breast Cancer campaign and Cow and Gate Ireland supporting Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin Appeal. Case Study One: Centra Ireland supporting The Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer in 2010 to develop a campaign to drive awareness of Breast Cancer and raise funds through Centra's campaign initiatives. A strong national and regional PR campaign was implemented from September through to the end of October 2010 incorporating both the Pink Mittens and the Get the Girls 'Round initiatives. A range of innovative and engaging tactics were implemented to ensure maximum exposure for the initiatives which ultimately resulted in a strong positive PR campaign for both Centra and Action Breast Cancer. A Facebook campaign was devised, through Centra Ireland's page, which enabled Centra and Action Breast Cancer to drive awareness and fan engagement.

To highlight the availability of Pink Mittens at Centra and to engage with fans and stimulate online conversation, Centra fans were invited to tell others and post pictures about where their Pink Mittens had been. This resulted in an unprecedented amount of fans posting pictures and positive comments about themselves and their Pink Mittens. The Get the Girls 'Round part of the campaign was a call to action for women around the country to host a girl's night in and with the money that they saved on going out, donate it to Action Breast Cancer. A Get the Girls 'Round Facebook page was established to facilitate registrations, in November 2010 the page was ranked 45th of 83 pages listed in Social Media Monitor, overtaking established Irish charity brands such as Oxfam and Dublin Simon Community. Over 1635 fans were recruited to the page with many uploading photographs of their parties and suggesting ways to fundraise.

Centra's Facebook fans grew by 9,000 between the campaign launch (Sep 30th 2010) through to the end of October. Strong and positive engagement was evident throughout with regular

posts, likes and comments. See Appendix F for further detailed analysis on Centra's Facebook campaign.

Case Study Two: Cow and Gate Ireland supporting Our Lady's Hospital Crumlin with their Spooky Smiles for Crumlin campaign which ran from October 1st 2012 to November 30th 2012. Facebook was also the main tool incorporated for this campaign. Cow and Gate encouraged customers to get involved with planning a sponsored Halloween party; in turn Cow and Gate sent party packs as a thank you for the donation. Through the Cow and Gate's Facebook page customers were also encouraged to upload and share their pictures using the 'Spookify' section of the Facebook app, Cow and Gate donated €1 for each picture that was uploaded to Facebook. A number of larger parties were also held around Ireland to highlight the campaign and ensure maximum exposure for the appeal which ultimately resulted in a strong positive PR campaign for both Cow and Gate and Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin.

Cow and Gate Ireland's Facebook fans grew by over 10,000 between October and November 2012. Similarly to Centra's Action Breast Cancer campaign engagement levels were high with daily posts, likes and comments. This campaign was a huge success as through Facebook alone Cow and Gate raised €51,900.00 for Our Lady's Hospital Crumlin. See Appendix G for further detailed analysis on Cow and Gate's Facebook campaign.

The following headings will further outline the themes extracted through the content analysis and interview process developing the research findings:

4.3 Social Media

There was strong agreement among the participants that social media offers a wealth of opportunities for companies. Establishing an online presence enables an organisation to connect directly with key influencers. Social media opens up direct lines of communication allowing people to discover and connect to build relationships. When trying to determine practitioners' current understanding of social media, it was found that all of them are aware of the many social media tools and their benefits. However, they are not all actively using these tools as part of their PR campaign's. It was interesting to find that while all participants use social media, many do not engage, they just watch what is going on and take in the

information. It is important to note that those who use social media for their companies do not embrace it to its full potential; many stated they have a website, Twitter, Facebook and a company blog, however, when asked if they integrated all social media tools with their website the majority did not. Through the interview process the following opinions on social media arose;

“Social media has brought exciting changes to public relations, after all public relations is about engagement and communication and social media is about engagement and communication, it’s a natural fit.” (Sarah Wagstaff, Pembroke Communications)

“Social media has taken it straight back down to the public one-to-one basis, it has opened up the channels of communication.” (Paula McCarville, PR Practitioner formerly of Pembroke Communications)

“Advances in technology and in particular social media means we now can connect with people instantly, establish a presence online and communicate with our publics.” (Neil O’Gorman, Bespoke with Direction)

The study discovered that many advantages are achieved from engaging in social media; it provides direct access to customers, facilitates two-way communication, strengthens customer service, cultivates relationships, builds a network of influencers, helps maintain relationships and in general opens up a world of opportunities. The research analysis shows social media was embraced by the case study organisations at different stages. Cow and Gate adopted social media up to five years ago and engage through Facebook on a regular basis, conducting social media as part of their campaign strategy. While Centra Ireland was later to adopt the use of social media, launching a regular profile page four years ago but re-launching with a Facebook business page three years ago, using social media only for a promotional purpose with lower levels of engagement. The chosen campaigns for this research relied on Facebook as their primary source for dialogue with customers. This proved to be successful as the numbers of fans grew for both pages by 9,000 and 10,000 respectively.

The motivating factors behind embracing social media were mixed. Some participants adopted social media in a proactive approach by scanning the environment and recognising

its potential in the PR industry. Others embraced it as a reactive tactic, in order to counteract negativity towards their company online. They saw social media as an essential method of managing their reputation. Sarah Wagstaff states “It allows us to communicate on a wider basis than ever before, it allows us to connect with people all around the world.” There was a similar view from all participants that there are many benefits from using social media with a lot of companies gaining business and connections through it.

Quite a number of participants recognised that social media is about the quality of engagement rather than the number of friends or fans obtained through the platforms. In other words they recognise the benefits social media can have. Neil O Gorman emphasised that social media is not a numbers game; it is about building and maintaining relationships with people of importance to your company or clients. “PR is about communicating to build relationships; the R in PR is the most important aspect.” He further points out that “these people who are really committed and care, they are interesting and engaging with us.”

Throughout the interviews it was apparent that many practitioners may struggle to keep up-to-date with the revolution of social media. Neil O’Gorman and Eoin English both think that choosing a select number of online tools and managing those effectively is the easiest approach. Neil advises “Keep learning and keep switched on.” While other participants felt that actively attending social media conferences and training seminars to help them to keep up to date with all social media advances and ensures they are not missing out on impending opportunities.

There was strong agreement on the reasons why many PR Professionals have not embraced social media. Many believe the problem lies with the traditional mindset. Paula McCarville believes that there is often just a lack of knowledge regarding social media and huge discomfort in the exposure involved. They now need a whole new skill set to participate.

“Some people are in the wrong headspace and do not understand. They have very traditional mindsets and do not see social media actually enhances the practice of PR.” (Neil O’Gorman, Bespoke with Direction)

Throughout the interview process all participants believed that social media has infinite possibilities and each expressed their opinion as to which tool they found most effective for

communicating online. The responses received were varied but the majority of interviewees ranked Twitter as the most popular social media tool and then Facebook, followed by LinkedIn and Blogging. Many also identified the categories they associate with each social media platform; Twitter was viewed as more of a business and news tool, Facebook was more customer driven with LinkedIn solely see as a business tool for networking. The participants all seemed fascinated by Twitter and see it as the most effective means of communicating and interacting directly with people. Some still hold reservations when using it, Eoin English points out that not everyone using Twitter is who they claim to be and often are using it for their own means. He believes that there are both positive and negative sides to using social media, he thinks that social media is quite self-regulated and any negativity is usually overcome by the masses. Eoin notes that it is important to set the right tone when using social media, "it's vital for us news journalists to triple check the facts, that way when a tweet or update goes out from us our followers will know that it's a completely true story."

A key finding throughout the interviews was all participants recognised the idea that social media is not solely about the new media tools but rather people being social. They identified that the biggest shift in society was people. Sarah Wagstaff noted "the biggest change is the people in this space are now having conversations and that will not change." Donna Parsons agreed, she believes that "we as human beings are social creatures and social media now helps to satisfy the desire for social interaction."

Donna Parsons identifies that engaging in social media brings the personal touch back and helps to build loyal relationships that people see as true friendships and because of that they deserve to be treated with the utmost respect. Using Facebook Centra and Cow and Gate were able to create an opportunity for people on Facebook to interact with them. By developing an online community organisations encourage a two-way dialogue, building relationships with their publics. Facebook is a valuable tool to have once you engage with your audiences. Both campaigns got people to upload and share their content and opinions, both initiatives received positive responses with fans posting comments and photos every day. Facebook has such a large audience it was the simplest way to get the campaign out there and get people responding quickly. Facebook has become a core part of campaign activity in the past five years; it now enables practitioners to engage on a new level.

The research undertaken has resulted in numerous findings. Firstly, all of the practitioners are aware of the many social media tools available. However, not all of them actively use these tools as part of their PR campaigns. Many social media channels were discussed throughout the interview process and all interviewees had a good overall knowledge of the various channels, still not all are implementing them into their strategy. This is consistent with much of the literature published that implied that practitioners are only transferring traditional methods of public relations practice online and are not advancing these methods, social media is often seen as just a complement to traditional PR, however, a strategic approach to social media must be adopted. The following section will identify the findings in relation to a strategic approach to social media.

4.4 Strategic Public Relations

There is clear evidence to suggest the PR practitioners in Ireland are in the early stages of integrating social media strategically. Some experts believe social media is still a ‘buzz word’ within the PR industry in Ireland. Paula McCarville believes many companies have yet to adopt it strategically.

“Many people are jumping in without first fully understanding and without a plan in place. Most PR people want to be seen on social media platforms – they feel they have to use it and then get scared.”

Paula believes, however, companies should wait until they have a strategy in place;

“Companies need to have a long-term plan in place and clients need to know how to use the tools. There is no point jumping in without being prepared because once you turn it on you cannot turn it off.”

There was a strong indication that both Centra Ireland and Cow and Gate Ireland developed an integrate communications strategy for their campaigns. Both companies carried out significant research prior to the campaign launches and external consultants from Action Breast Cancer and Our Lady’s Hospital Crumlin exclusively advised them on the most suitable content to be used as part of the Facebook campaigns, both campaigns were managed by the sponsors Centra Ireland and Cow and Gate Ireland. Joyce Hosford of Musgrave Retail

Partners described how Musgrave Ireland began using social media without any plan; she admits it just did not work. “We needed a plan; we needed to know what to do and when we wanted to do it.” Now we build our online strategies and incorporate them with offline elements. We begin by carrying out social media audits, research the online landscape and then determine the most suitable strategy. She describes “for our Centra Action Breast Cancer campaign we knew exactly what we were going to do with the information Action Breast Cancer provided to us, whatever they told us we incorporated into our strategy.” Joyce continued to describe the importance of accurate information when they were working with a sensitive topic to a large audience. Neil O Gorman describes how companies should incorporate social media strategically, he believes it must begin with setting objectives and then identify strategies to achieve goals. He describes how practitioners must look to see if social media can enable them to meet their goals, if it can then it must be incorporated into their campaign strategically.

The main strategy for the campaigns was to inform people of the support and work that both Action Breast Cancer and Our Lady’s Hospital do on a daily basis. Centra Ireland’s objectives included; securing media coverage for both the Pink Mittens campaign and the Get the Girls ‘Round campaign, create a successful online communications campaign using Facebook and engage with the consumer and drive registrations to host a girl’s night in. Cow and Gate Irelands campaign planning also included a number of objectives that were to be met; increase overall awareness of the need for funds in Our Lady’s Hospital Crumlin, create a successful online communications campaign using Facebook, engage with consumers and drive donations to Crumlin hospital.

The findings show that the majority of practitioners consider social media as part of their PR strategy when creating public relations campaigns. However the literature discussed in chapter two affirms that social media is often seen as just a complement to traditional PR. In the next section the researcher has identified the findings in relation to the relationship between traditional and social media.

4.5 Media Relations

Media relations are something that has also been affected by social media. A common theme in the interview process was that those traditional media relations techniques are still at the

heart of PR. All participants expressed the opinion that social media compliments traditional media. However, many still view traditional journalists as a more credible source of information than regular tweeters. Nevertheless it was noted that Twitter's credibility appears to be on the rise as people acknowledge more influential voices.

Both Centra Ireland and Cow and Gate Ireland demonstrated their use of online tools, managing both their reputation and the reputation of the organisation to whom they were sponsoring. Centra and Cow and Gate established a very credible reputation as companies who took part in corporate social responsibility to enable these organisations continue their work.

Eoin English as a journalist himself believes that while traditional media will be around for a long time, it will still need to adapt and change in order to survive the changing online environment. Joyce Hosford believes that traditional media will remain a key influencer in Ireland, she argues that;

“For communication we still use the press release, it's the same as it always has been and we will always use it. I think social media is a great platform for communication but we cannot solely rely on a social media platform.”

Neil O Gorman who is a huge fan of social media believes that it is still important to use traditional media as well as incorporating social media to enhance it. He states that:

“Social media is fantastic, but for media relations I also use the traditional press release, journalists like to see it written out in front of them. After all there are still millions of people who are not using social media at-all.”

Both the Action Breast Cancer and Spooky Smiles for Crumlin campaigns allowed the organisations involved to build relationships and get the message out to a large audience quickly. There are two sides to media relations online, firstly organisations must build relationships with the people and then use the social media tool to get their story out. Organisations need to engage; network, upload, comment, like, tag and vote, to design their online reputation, it's like letting people get to know the organisation. Data analysis shows that Centra Ireland and Cow and Gate Ireland both handled their online representation of

Action Breast Cancer and Our Lady's Hospital Crumlin to good effect by actively engaging online through Facebook. The research shows each company posting accurate, timely information and promptly answering any queries from fans, ultimately using social media as an effective channel of communication.

4.6 Models of Communication

When asked about the way in which communication models have changed due to the use of social media the responses were overwhelmingly in favour of two-way communication. It was acknowledged that interaction and communication has been made easier due to social media. All participants illustrated that social media opens up the opportunity for two-way communication, articulating the use of social media as a one-way broadcast mechanism. Donna Parsons argues that "it is an information sharing tool, a platform for people to find out information they need rather than trawling through various websites." Neil O'Gorman believes "people will stop listening and tune off companies who use this platform to post their latest news and offers, and do not engage in two-way communication." He believes PR practitioners are learning how to re-communicate. He states "Some people do not understand what public relations is really about, building relationships".

Paula McCarville advocates that social media offers a true form of engagement. She recognises that there is a vast difference between building up an online presence, to building out online communities and engagement. One does not necessarily follow the other. Unless the communication is functioning as a two-way mechanism you cannot build up a true engagement.

Donna Parsons believes that social media has helped The Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer to engage and educate online in an entirely different way from what was possible before. She often finds people will post or tweet questions directly to them as they have access to expert information and opinions. Donna states that "sites like Facebook and Twitter aid with feedback we receive in our branches, often people find it difficult to meet with us face-to-face but find online convenient to find information." In terms of two-way communication Centra Ireland and Cow and Gate Ireland showed a good indication of interaction and dialogue. They actively listened and engaged with their online community and always employed a swift, accurate response to comments or posts. The Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer could not praise Centra Ireland enough, they were delighted

with the campaign and since 2010 each October Centra Ireland and Action Breast Cancer come together to form a similar initiative. Donna Parsons, communications officer Fundraising with The Irish Cancer Society said;

“Centra have been so generous contributing their time and efforts into our Action Breast Cancer Campaigns over the past years... Centra listen to the advice we contribute and recognise that while the money is important to continue to run our services we feel that awareness and support are of a higher priority to us.”

Joyce Hosford believes the reasoning for an inadequate amount of interaction and engagement is due to the lack of knowledge and expertise on how these tools work. All participants when asked about training and keeping up-to-date with technology had similar views that it is necessary to keep up-skilled, many commented they wished their employers would fund this training.

Throughout the interview process there was a sense that some participants and companies are often too focused on delivering the message and lack the skills to effectively interact and engage online. Neil O Gorman emphasised the challenge in creating interactive content throughout the social media platforms.

Joyce Hosford believes that people are beginning to understand that social media is not a numbers game, it is more about building relationships and adding value to these relationships. Sarah Wagstaff, Pembroke Communications, believes two-way communication with the online community enables a company to position themselves against competitors.

“By engaging and interacting, a company can build up loyalty with their online community and prevent them from choosing a competitors brand.”

Paula McCarville also illustrates an example of how two-way communication can help resolve issues with customers online. “By showing them you are listening and engaging with them can prove to be very beneficial in the long-run.” The content generated from both campaigns was both, informative and helpful, providing direct links to supporting sites and organisations, ultimately providing content that was beneficial to fans. All Facebook comments and posts were positive and no negative aspect was seen on any content.

4.7 Chapter Conclusions

This chapter highlights the impact of social media on public relations practitioners and its importance as a communication tool for all forms of organisations. It investigates the Facebook pages of two similar supporting organisations to understand how they communicate with their publics, known to Facebook as 'Fans'.

The findings show the majority of PR practitioners believe that social media has positive outcomes and can be very beneficial for two-way dialogue. Through this research study it was found that practitioners believe there are enough efforts being made to educate practitioners and that in most cases it can be a self-learning process. They also believe it is extremely important to keep up-to-date with advances in technology. Irish practitioners believe that the younger generations have an advantage as they know more about social media but with training and experience senior practitioners are bridging the gap. Practitioners believe that social media is adapting the way we view traditional media. However, it is felt that for the foreseeable future practitioners will still rely on traditional media, it just is adapting to incorporate the immediacy of social media.

The results were laid out in the same manner as they were examined. The themes were identified through the content analysis study and interview questions derived from the findings. Following the interview process four main themes emerged. See appendix F and G for a demonstration of the full content analysis for Centra Ireland's Action Breast Cancer campaign and Cow and Gate Ireland's Spooky Smiles for Crumlin campaign.

CHAPTER 5:
RESEARCH DISCUSSION

Chapter 5: Research Discussion

5.1 Views on Public Relations

To begin this study the researcher asked each of the interviewees to outline their own personal understanding of public relations. This question was crucial considering the nature of the study and because not all of the interviewees were from a public relations background. Despite this all interviewees agreed that public relations is the building and maintaining of positive relationships and communication between different publics and a particular brand.

Neil O Gorman defined PR as “a way of generating positive publicity for a company, using a positive messaging in a believable way to give reality to an organisation, that is where PR really comes in”.

Sarah Wagstaff added that;

“Public relations is about getting a particular message out to a particular audience about a product or service at a particular time. It's about defining the message and keeping that message in the minds of people in a positive way. It's about making people aware and keeping them aware of the core message.”

The literature written on the subject of public relations supports the interviewee's thoughts as it presents similar definitions of PR to those collected as part of the researcher's primary research. As discussed in the literature review, Gregory (2006) refers to PR as the “task of guarding and managing reputation and relationships” this is similar to the definition of PR put forward by the Canadian Public Relations Society (CPRS):

“Public relations is the strategic management of relationships between an organisation and its diverse publics, through the use of communication, to achieve mutual understanding, realize organizational goals and serve the public interest.”

5.2 Social Media in Public Relations

Throughout the interview process the majority of participants expressed views on social media as about the people not the tools. This view is fully supported in the literature review

in chapter two as Breakeyridge and Solis (2009) explain that it is about the people and relationships they provide, giving the opportunity to put the public back in Public Relations. In addition, the findings indicate that social media helps but the relations back in public relations as companies engage directly with people to build relationships. This corresponds with the Chartered Institute of Public Relations definition that social media involves the building of communities or networks and encourages participation and engagement.

The findings from both the content analysis and interviews indicate that social media is a natural fit with public relations. It enables an organisation to practice the true definition of public relations and opens up channels of communication that were never possible before. It is evident from the analysis of the Facebook pages that an organisations publics comment more openly on social media than before. This was also noted in the interviews as participants noted that they can now get more feedback as people comment freely on social media. Sarah Wagstaff stated “they express their opinion openly on social media – it must be to do with the anonymity of social media”. Cutlip, Centre and Broom (2012, p. 5) satisfy that PR is the management function, through which two-way communication can seek to develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between and organisation and its key publics.

During the interview process it was noted that the participants had varied opinions on which social media platform was the most effective communication tool. Each interviewee expressed their opinion and the researcher found that Twitter was the most popular social media tool and then Facebook, followed by LinkedIn and Blogging. This interested the researcher as the chosen case studies both used Facebook exclusively for their campaigns. When asked in the interview process about their decisions to choose Facebook the opinion was gathered that Facebook is seen as more commercial with Twitter being more for business and news.

The findings also indicate that there is a strong determination to understand and learn how to effectively adopt social media as many professional actively take part in training courses. This finds that the PR industry in Ireland will see an improvement in the adoption of social media in the future. This is supported by Solis (2008) who clearly indicates, that many companies and PR consultants dramatically underestimate the resources, time, dedication and passion it takes to embrace social media but are willing to adopt social media.

The research indicates that the very tuned in PR professionals recognise this and provide a real benefit to their clients. The need for strong engagement and interaction is strongly upheld in the findings and the literature. Paula McCarville highlighted the importance of showing people that you are listening to them and willing to communicate. Cutlip, Centre and Broom (2009) states, social media can help improve relationships as it creates dialogue and interaction; the essence of building and maintaining relationships. Donna Parsons of the Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer stated “...people view this as a true friendship and therefore deserve the utmost respect.” This view of maintaining mutual relationships is supported by Solis (2008) who emphasizes that relationships need cultivation and value from both sides and affirms that it is more about people and real life relationships with these people.

The research findings prove that social media is making it easier for organisations to communicate, as both campaigns have the ability to reach larger audiences through Facebook and received a greater response through social media than previous campaigns. Seiple (2011) also believes that social media is making it easier for businesses to communicate with their publics and these conversations have potential to reach larger audiences than possible before.

The findings further indicate that social media platforms enhance the personal touch. Companies who present their true personalities, encouraging fans to interact with them as real people not as faceless brands, will have a better relationship with their publics. Organisations now realise that it's not a numbers game, in order to enhance those online relationships companies need to adopt two-way communication and consistently add value to maintain strong relationships.

5.3 Strategic Public Relations

It was noted several times in the research that while those interviewed recognise the need for social media to be adopted strategically and carefully incorporated it into their campaigns, some practitioners in the wider circle of public relations still fail to embrace it strategically and often it fails to get the required interaction. This further strengthens the observations of Solis (2008) that many professionals underestimate the time, resources and skills needed to embrace social media effectively. During the interview process the interviewees noted that some PR practitioners still see social media as a ‘buzz more’ and fail to see its importance.

Neil O Gorman spoke in his interview about setting objectives and seeing if social media can meet those objectives. It was clear from the Facebook analysis that Centra Ireland did not recognise the importance of using social media strategically; Centra began using Facebook with a personal profile adding friends but soon realised this was the wrong approach and had to re-launch with a Facebook business 'fan' page. If Centra had a plan outline this could have been avoided.

The findings also show the majority of practitioners have moved beyond just traditional media and have integrated social media strategically within their campaigns. More and more companies recognise the need to adopt social media strategically. This indicates that PR professionals are embracing social media in Ireland and recognise its importance to the industry. Caywood (1997, p. 224) similarly identifies that PR professionals must redefine themselves to be highly relevant to new media in order to become strategic advisors. It was demonstrated by a number of participants throughout the interviews that PR professionals in Ireland are continuing to learn how to use social media tools to the best effect.

5.4 Media Relations

Throughout the interviews all participants expressed their opinions that social media compliments the traditional mainstream media and quite a number of participants illustrated how they have built up strong media relations with connections made online through social media. This view is supported by Solis (2008, p. 01) who emphasises the importance for PR professionals to develop relationships with the influencers online.

Many participants also mentioned the value of face-to-face communication; this is supported by an argument which was raised in the literature by Breakenridge et al, (2008, p. 62) and Holtz (2002) which the researcher believes PR professionals need to keep in mind. "No matter how much media relations can be enhanced on the internet, nothing can ever take the place of human interaction. Keep in mind, the human element is the cornerstone of every relationship."

5.5 Models of Communication

The research shows that Centra and Cow and Gate Ireland were able to establish lines of communication through Facebook. Cow and Gate were able to see the effectiveness of their

campaign as fans posted images to their Facebook wall. Centra Ireland had to investigate the comments left on their Facebook postings and see the levels of interaction; the more frequent Centra posted content the more responses they would get. This is supported in the literature as Theaker (2008) describes how feedback is a crucial element in determining the effectiveness of a public relations campaign.

The use of two-way symmetrical communication was evident in both case studies. Centra and Cow and Gate equally used social media as a tool for conversation, not only providing information, but answering questions and engaging with their publics. According to Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 23) “the two-way symmetrical model consists more of a dialogue than a monologue.” Similar to the literature found on social media, this research identified social media as a channel for two-way communication. The two-way symmetrical model “uses research to facilitate understanding and communication rather than to identify messages most likely to motivate or persuade publics.” (Grunig & Grunig, 1992, p. 289) During the interview process Eoin English described “if there’s something you’re not doing on social media it won’t be long till the public tell you, that’s one of the great things about social media, the public demand and we supply.” Both Centra and Cow and Gate Ireland were able to use Facebook as a channel for providing information whilst also receiving feedback and suggestions on how to improve their communication. “In the symmetrical model, understanding is the principle objective of public relations rather than persuasion.” (Grunig & Grunig, 1992, p. 289)

The findings of this research show that a number of companies using social media as a one-way broadcasting tool, setting up profiles to push their news and failing to interact with online communities. This makes excellent communication impossible as White et al (1998, p. 22) argues “excellent communication relies on two-way dialogue.” It was noted in the research that some participants demonstrate excellent communication skills through engaging with their publics online with special recommendation for the skills demonstrated on Facebook. Both Centra and Cow and Gate Ireland equally demonstrated excellent communication strategies interacting and engaging with their fans when appropriate. High engagement levels indicate loyal customers who are actively listening to what the organisations are saying rather than ignoring the content, this will enhance the existing relationships that each holds with its publics. Relationship management is closely linked with

two-way communication, where it was discovered that many professionals are interacting and engaging through elements of social media. Interaction and engagement levels for both campaigns were continuous and very successful. The tone and style adopted was extremely effective. There was very little 'hard sell' from the sponsor's perspective and as a result fans engaged openly to this original approach.

5.6 Case Study Approach

The case study is an integral part of the research because it highlights the extent of what represents best practice in social media and illustrates problems that occur when social media is not practiced efficiently.

Centra Ireland supporting The Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer demonstrated excellent public relations through their Action Breast Cancer initiatives. Centra established and maintained mutually beneficial relationships not only with Action Breast Cancer but with their publics. Centra re-designed their Facebook page in 2010 and in order to enhance their corporate responsibility image worked with Action Breast Cancer as a sponsor. Through their Facebook campaign they set standards for the rest of the PR industry. They employed a significant integrated communications campaign using two-way communication with its public to enhance the overall image and relationships between the parties.

Cow and Gate Ireland similarly engaged with an excellent standard of public relations, utilising two-way communication Facebook campaign. This enabled Cow and Gate to inform its publics of the work Crumlin Hospital does while also appeal for funding.

Both Centra and Cow and Gate Ireland utilised the human interaction element emphasised by Breakenridge (2008, p. 62) and Holtz (2002, p. 47) when they met with the organisations whom they were supporting face-to-face prior to the campaign launches. Both companies acknowledged Breakenridge (2008, p. 42) by communicating with facts, accuracy and integrity when dealing with online issues. The findings show recognition of two-way symmetrical communication as the most effective way of communicating with target publics.

In appendices E and F the text of the original Facebook postings of each organisation can be seen in tables. Details of the analysis provided for each posting includes; date, type of

posting, text of posting (produced verbatim), if the post was an original posting or a comment, code (this is used to identify particular postings themes), posted by organisation or fan, number of likes, comments and shares. To date Centra Ireland have 152,000 Facebook 'Fans' this number increased by 9,000 for the duration of the campaign alone. In contrast to this Cow and Gate Ireland have just 14,347 Facebook 'Fans' to date, similarly this figure rose by 10,000 for the duration of the Crumlin appeal. It was interesting to note while completing the analysis of each Facebook campaign the researcher found that the levels of engagement varied. For Centra Ireland there was a level of engagement of 526 in total whereas Cow and Gate Ireland's level of engagement was 3,079, the researcher found this to be interesting as Centra Ireland have a higher number of fans and would expect their level of engagement to be much higher than Cow and Gate's. For the duration of Centra Ireland's Action Breast Cancer campaign 2010, there were 16 organisational posts. In contrast Cow and Gate posted 36 original posts, however, Cow and Gate engaged in comments with their fans much more than Centra Ireland. Centra's approach was to post an original posting and let the fans engage amongst themselves.

Contrasting the organisations Facebook pages it was revealed that Centra Ireland's campaign interaction had 428 'likes', 98 comments and 0 shares. In contrast Cow and Gate Ireland had 2,854 'likes', 225 comments and 49 shares. The researcher found that both organisations engage, however, Cow and Gate Ireland have a higher engagement with their 'fans'. This supports the findings from the interview process where the participants were of the opinion that social media is more about the quality of engagement rather than the number of friends or fans obtained through the platforms. Neil O Gorman of Bespoke with Direction further emphasised in his interview that it is not a numbers game; it is about building and maintaining relationships with people of importance to your company or clients.

Social media platforms provide a space in which the users of an organisations product or service can interact with the organisation directly and each other. In this way people can have conversations regarding their needs and wants. Social media has opened up communication channels and it is important for the PR industry to take advantage of this. Overall it is making audiences more available to an organisation; organisations can gain valuable feedback from customers and customers can connect directly with the organisation.

5.7 Research Limitations

There was a threat of a number of limitations to the research. Primarily, there was a limited availability of literature on this topic with an Irish context. This possible research limitation was met by carrying out extensive primary research the researcher hoped to address this imbalance. However the researcher also found that there were possible limitations to using interviews as a research method. Obtaining interviewees also was difficult as many were unwilling to participate due to time restrictions on their behalf, interviewees could also be prone to bias and not be entirely truthful in their responses. Every effort was taken in asking the right questions to allow for minimum bias. Time management was also important for this research as it can be a time consuming process. Generalisations about the interview results were not made due to the small sample chosen. There were also some ethical issues to do with confidentiality and informed consent of the participant. The participant was entitled to withdraw from the research at any time during the research process; thankfully however this did not happen.

5.8 Chapter Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the findings of the research relevant to the themes found in the literature review. The main points of this discussion were as follows:

1. Social media has opened-up lines of communication for PR practitioners and provides a platform for two-way symmetrical communication.
2. Social media can help improve relationships, creating dialogue and interaction.
3. Public relations and social media are now more about the people and real relationships rather than then social media tool itself.
4. Planned campaigns that incorporate social media tend to be more successful than those that use social media without a plan.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

In order to reach a set of conclusions that were relevant to the research, conclusions were derived from the emerging themes within the research. After these conclusions have been reached, the overall conclusions of the whole study will be found and discussed. These will then be followed by the recommendations and the implications for practice and future study.

This study found that social media has a significant role in the impact on public relations in Ireland. Organisations need to monitor social media and integrated it into their overall campaign planning. While the use of social media as a communication channel has proved beneficial it is necessary, however, for all organisations to react to conversations about them via social media. For those who use social media simply as a monitoring tool, it will give them an insight into public reaction and help them devise a response. For those active, social media also becomes an alternative channel to distribute their message. It is clear that social media should be treated with the same integrity and importance as a traditional communication channel.

Facebook was the chosen social media site because of its popularity in the PR industry; thus presenting a useful means of communication with the public. Centra and Cow and Gate Ireland were the two organisations chosen for examination due to their reputation in Irish society and having won awards for both campaigns were deemed of excellent public relations. In total six interviews together with content analysis were carried out. Four key themes and factors were derived from the research study.

6.2 Social Media

By taking advantage of social media sites, online communities and other collaborative environments, organisations can further propel their PR efforts. Public relations must now focus upon engaging those within a community rather than merely speaking to them.

Results indicate that practitioners are aware of the various social media tools available to them, however, not all practitioners are actively using these tools as part of their PR efforts. Although the practitioners seem to have a good overall knowledge of these channels, some are not integrating them into their campaigns. This finding is consistent with much of the literature published on social media and online PR that implies PR practitioners are merely transferring methods of public relations practice online and not changing or advancing these methods.

PR professionals in Ireland are experiencing some major changes in the industry. However, social media is still very much in the beginning stages in Ireland. Practitioners recognise that social media provides clear improvements for the PR industry and while some are becoming true experts in the field, others are only beginning to experience its full potential.

This study demonstrates that social media can have a very positive impact on the PR industry when it is applied successfully. Findings show that it is a natural fit with the PR industry as it enables organisations to practice the true definitions of public relations. The adoption of social media facilitates an organisation to build and maintain a strong online reputation and beneficial relationships with key publics while maintaining due regard for the social good. The exposure that arises from embracing social media helps distinguish those who practice excellent public relations from those who do not. The beauty of social media is that PR professionals who practice excellent public relations run the risk of being exposed on the social sphere. This ensures that professionals learn to practice public relations appropriately, thereby improving the PR industry in Ireland.

This study has found that social media can help PR professionals build strong relationships with key publics but only when the concepts of trust, transparency and two-way communication are implemented. It is evident that some professionals are too focused on delivering messages and are lacking the skills to effectively interact and truly engage in order to build strong relationships with key publics online.

In relations to whether PR professionals are embracing social media strategically, this study concludes that professionals in Ireland are realising the benefits of social media and the potential advantages for relationships through online dialogue. However, many practitioners underestimate the time, effort and resources it takes to embrace social media effectively. PR

professionals who have adopted social media strategically set measurable objectives in advance, which undoubtedly are fundamental to measurement. It was determined that having a clear strategy in place is fundamental to the practice of social media.

In relation to what represents best practice in social media, Centra and Cow and Gate Ireland harnessed the power of social media to the highest standards throughout the two chosen campaigns. Both organisations had clear strategies in place that were firmly linked to their business objectives and the objectives of Action Breast Cancer and Our Lady's Hospital Crumlin respectively. Excellent communication was utilised throughout both campaigns in the means of two-way online dialogue, in particular on Facebook. It can be concluded that both organisations practiced excellent PR for the duration of both campaigns.

The research found that the majority of practitioners considers it extremely important for Irish practitioners to keep up-to-date with technology advances. The results reveal that practitioners are aware of many online and social media courses that are being held throughout the country. The majority also think that it is up to the individual themselves to keep up-skilled. Again this ties in with the literature that states whether or not PR practitioners choose to embrace these changes is up to them.

6.3 Strategic Public Relations

The literature states that organisations can use social media tools to develop their public relations campaigns that build perpetual momentum. The results show that the majority of practitioners consider social media as part of their PR strategy when creating public relations campaigns. The literature affirms that new media is far too often seen as just a complement to traditional PR and that a strategic approach to social media must be adopted.

A platform for the organisations future can be created through the cultivation of relationships. The benefits of using social media as part of a public relations campaign strategy are clear:

1. It can be used as a form of two-way communication. Organisations can engage with their stakeholders, building relationships and improving their reputation.
2. Social media can be used as a channel for feedback and research, allowing organisations insight into their stakeholders' needs.
3. Social media can be used to distribute important messages quickly, cheaply and easily

4. As many journalists are now online, social media can often replace the press release and phone call traditionally used by public relations practitioners.

6.4 Media Relations

Through the analysis of both primary and secondary research data, it was concluded that PR professionals need to approach the online community in a different manner to how traditional media were approached. It can be concluded that a number of organisations have built up strong relationships with publics online which are mutually beneficial. However some professionals in Ireland are still failing to utilise media relations to good effect and as a result have experienced negativity in the social sphere.

Research findings show that social media can improve the management of an organisations reputation through the use of online monitoring tools. Social interaction not only enables professionals to identify any negativity towards their organisation but also helps determine the needs of key publics. This study has demonstrated that when an issue is managed with excellent public relations, unfavourable feedback can be quickly converted into a positive experience.

6.5 Models of Communication

The research undertaken shows that social media is currently being used as a two-way communications tool by practitioners in Ireland. Feedback is viewed as an important element in two-way communication. However, this feedback is viewed in two different ways: those who choose not to respond and use it in an asymmetrical manner and those who consider a response vital and use it in a symmetrical manner.

The results further show that Irish practitioners are actively using social media to gain information from their publics. The practitioners have very clear objectives as to how they will use this information to enhance their PR efforts.

The first element of this research attempted to determine if PR practitioners engaged in two-way dialogue online. The literature states practitioners are utilising their communication capabilities and using social media to network, allowing them to create a connection with their publics which in turn allows them to receive honest feedback. Furthermore, practitioners

are using this feedback to make the necessary changes. The research undertaken also correlates with the assertion that; the majority of practitioners believe that social media is useful for two-way communication and that practitioners should participate in online dialogue.

The researcher correlates with the literature on the subject of dialogue. As suggested in the literature the majority of practitioners agree that participating in online dialogue is an essential part of their online public relations strategy. As a whole, practitioners believe that the internet can be an effective method of two-way communication. The literature stated that there is an element of risk involved when taking part in online dialogue. The results support this assumption with many practitioners taking great care with regards to this.

6.6 Overall Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to explore how the evolution of social media is reinventing the public relations industry in Ireland and to determine if PR professionals are embracing it strategically. The research also aimed to explore what represents best practice in social media through the examination of two case studies.

The in-depth analysis of both organisations revealed that engagement throughout the campaigns was timely, accurate and useful. The organisations carried out excellent PR on behalf of the Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer and Our Lady’s Hospital Crumlin respectively. Active and personal engagement with fans through Facebook lead to a large amount of interaction and funds raised for both organisations, leading to a huge amount of positive feedback and comments from fans. The focused analysis in this thesis presented two similar host organisations who, through their Facebook campaigns, strived to raise both the profile and funds for their sponsoring organisations. Centra re-launched their Facebook page and began creating their online image by working with Action Breast Cancer in 2010. Cow and Gate choose Our Lady’s Hospital Crumlin Appeal in 2011 as they were aware how much they needed the funds to continue their support services. Both organisations used Facebook as a communication tool, practicing excellent public relations. Thus, this thesis reveals that when done correctly; the use of social media by Irish organisations can be a mutually beneficial communication tool.

The conclusion of this research is that social media is changing many aspects of the PR industry and those who are tuned in and observing this new phenomenon are reaping the benefits. However a clear gap exists in the PR industry in Ireland, in terms of embracing social media strategically. While some professionals have progressed to effectively develop strategies, many are experimenting with the platform of social media and are not at the stage of integrating it into their communications strategies. It can be concluded that many professionals are in the learning process of how to practice social media to the highest standards. While some professionals are utilising social media to good effect others have failed to embrace it correctly.

To ultimately conclude the researcher feels that the PR industry will full embrace the advances of social media in the next couple of years as many professionals are actively attending training and social media conferences, indicating the willingness to learn more about social media, reflecting a strong determination to understand how to practice social media effectively in the PR industry in Ireland. Thus the findings from this research provide significant insight into the impact social media is having on the PR industry in Ireland and thoroughly resolves the question of this thesis.

The full implications of social media on public relations and its continuing evolution go far beyond the scope of this research. Social media is bringing about changes in everything related to social media and the PR industry will benefit from these changes. Solis and Breakenridge (2009, p.197-268) state that “The PR professionals of tomorrow should all be engaging in meaningful conversation using social and new media applications that enable forward-moving dialogue. In fact, every department of every business will soon find itself embracing social strategies.”

Therefore it can be concluded that:

- Irish Practitioners are currently using social media as a two-way communication tool. While all are using social media, the minority are passive users simply using it to monitor their publics, while the majority are actively embracing it, using it to gain information from their publics.
- Irish practitioners believe that social media is definitely adapting the way we view traditional media; however, traditional media will adapt and will play an active role in

Irish public relations for the foreseeable future.

- Practitioners in Ireland have a good knowledge of social media tools and their benefits; however, they need to embrace it fully to integrate it strategically.
- Practitioners are aware of the potential social media offers but if they are to be successful they must fully embrace social media.

From undertaking this research study the researcher has gained insight into how public relations practitioners perceive social media and how it should be used to best effect for organisations. The researcher can conclude from this study that 'best practice' use of social media is to have high levels of engagement with their publics. Following this study the researcher hopes to continue informing and educating other public relations practitioners of the importance of social media in public relations.

CHAPTER 7:
RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 7: Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

A number of recommendations can be made as a result of this study, they are as follows:

7.1.1 Recommendation One: Embracing Social Media

Research shows that social media usage is increasing at a rapid pace in Ireland. Therefore, Irish PR practitioners need to be more open to embracing social media in order to stay ahead of the technological changes. It is imperative that resources are made available because this will mean the difference between winning and losing clients in the future.

In order for practitioners to have membership with the Public Relations Institute of Ireland (PRII) it should be mandatory for all members to have social media training to an intermediate level. It is imperative that practitioners know what they are doing with social media and the implications for their online activity.

7.1.2 Recommendation Two: Employment

Public relations employers must make it an entry level requirement for employees to have social media training and experience. It is crucial for practitioners to be skilled with social media platforms.

7.1.3 Recommendation Three: Strategic Public Relations

In order to achieve best practice in the adoption of social media, professionals need to build social media into their communications strategy. PR practitioners need to set measurable objectives in advance in order to effectively measure the results. Monitoring is vital for survival on social media platforms and it is recommended that when engaging in social media usage that this is undertaken.

7.1.4 Recommendation Four: Education

To be successful in the world of social media, PR professionals need to constantly educate themselves on all the skills needed to embrace social media to the highest standards. It is crucial that PR professionals have a clear understanding of the level of commitment it takes

to productively embrace social media. Public relations and communications third level qualifications must have significant new media training, with particular focus on social media platforms. As it continues to grow those who are educated in public relations and communications need to have the skills required for the workforce.

7.1.5 Recommendation Five: Campaigns

PR Professionals should acknowledge Centra Ireland supporting The Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer and Cow and Gate Ireland supporting Our Lady’s Hospital Crumlin Appeal as case studies of example of excellence in public relations embracing social media. Practitioners need to remember the process of engaging with their publics and once a relationship is formed, maintaining those online relationships. To create a successful PR campaign it is recommended that both traditional and social media platforms to be used. In social media best practice it is recommended to actively engage and most importantly listen to your target publics. If organisations can engage with their audience rather than sending one-way messages they will gain valuable feedback.

7.2 Suggestions for Future Research

Social media and online technology is constantly developing. As a result, this piece of research will quickly become outdated. As new forms of social media evolve and as more organisations take social media on board as part of their public relations strategy, further research will be needed to investigate the impact on and role of social media on public relations. Also, with the use of more powerful tools, the content of social media platforms could be further examined.

Continuous research is recommended as social media will continue to develop, thus, changing the PR industry evermore. It would be valuable to compare other case studies that were awarded for the Public Relations Institute Ireland Excellence Awards and analyse how effective the campaigns were in terms of interaction and engagement.

Further research could look at the nature and extent of social media in terms of strategic planning for the public relations industry in 2014.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Invitation to Participate

Linda Wright
c/o Cork Institute of Technology,
Rossa Avenue,
Cork.

June 2013

Study Title: How is Social Media Changing the Public Relations Industry in Ireland: A Case Study Approach

Dear _____,

My name is Linda Wright. I am a master's student in Cork Institute of Technology studying Public Relations with New Media. I am conducting a research study as part of my masters and I would like to formally invite you to participate in a research study on how the use of social media in Public Relations campaigns is impacting on the practice of Public Relations and Journalism in Ireland. The focus for this study is on two public relations campaigns with significant social media activity. The chosen campaigns are; Centra Ireland supporting The Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer (2010) and Cow and Gate Ireland supporting Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin Appeal (2012).

If you decide to participate, you will be invited to meet with me for an interview; this meeting will take place at a convenient location for you and should only take a maximum of thirty minutes. Alternatively I can send questions via email for your convenience.

If you have any queries I would be pleased to answer them, thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please let me know.

Yours Sincerely,

Linda Wright
Masters of PR with New Media
Tel: +353 879191480

Appendix B: Consent Forms

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Written Consent Agreement & Signature

Study Participant

Do you agree to participate in this research study? Yes No

Consent to Use Name

Would you mind if I use your true name throughout this research and any presentation resulting from this research? Yes No

You may use my name.

Consent to Record Interview

I may wish to quote from the following interview in the thesis resulting from this research, I will use a digital recorder throughout the following interview, do you consent? Yes No

Please Read the following:

I understand that this research is intended for the study of Public Relations in Ireland, which is part of research conducted by Linda Wright for the Masters of Public Relations with New Media in Cork Institute of Technology.

As outlined above I understand that Linda Wright may identify information as well as the content from the interview. I authorise Linda Wright to use this interview for the purpose of research, which may be published.

Signature: _____



PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Written Consent Agreement & Signature

Study Participant

Do you agree to participate in this research study? Yes No

Consent to Use Name

Would you mind if I use your true name throughout this research and any presentation resulting from this research? Yes No

I don't mind.

Consent to Record Interview

I may wish to quote from the following interview in the thesis resulting from this research, I will use a digital recorder throughout the following interview, do you consent? Yes No

Please Read the following:

I understand that this research is intended for the study of Public Relations in Ireland, which is part of research conducted by Linda Wright for the Masters of Public Relations with New Media in Cork Institute of Technology.

As outlined above I understand that Linda Wright may identify information as well as the content from the interview. I authorise Linda Wright to use this interview for the purpose of research, which may be published.

Signature: 

Appendix C: Information Pack

INTERVIEW PERMISSIONS AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Linda Wright

**How is Social Media Changing the Public Relations Industry in Ireland:
A Case Study Approach**

**Masters Research for Cork Institute of Technology,
Department of Media Communications**

Project Description:

This research study looks at how social media is impacting on public relations practitioners and how they are incorporating it strategically with traditional media into their campaigns. The research undertaken will attempt to establish how is social media changing the public relations industry in Ireland and if practitioners are embracing social media.

Confidentiality:

The data that the researcher will collect for this research study will be used only for this study. Interviewees may remain anonymous if they wish however the research will use interviewees' identities if suitable.

Results:

If you are interested in this study and wish to obtain a copy of the final results, please provide your contact information.

Researchers Information

For questions relating to this research study please contact me directly. Email will guarantee the quickest response.

Linda Wright
c/o Department of Media Communications,
Cork Institute of Technology,
Rossa Avenue,
Cork.
Email: linda.wright@mycit.ie

Principle Thesis Advisor
Mr. Emmett Coffey
Department of Media Communications,
Cork Institute of Technology,
Rossa Avenue,
Cork.
Email: Emmett.coffey@cit.ie

Appendix D: Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule: How is Social media Changing the Public Relations Industry in Ireland: A Case Study Approach

Participant Name:

Date of Interview:

Time:

Venue:

My name is Linda Wright; I am currently completing my thesis research as part of a Masters in Public Relations with New Media. I will ask a few open questions to which you may respond or not. This interview will be recorded and will remain confidential.

1. What do you use the internet mainly for at work?
2. What is your knowledge of social media? What do you think is the purpose of social media?
3. Do you think social media is beneficial to the journalism and PR industries? Are there any negative aspects to it?
4. Some suggest that social media either complements or conflicts with traditional media, what is your opinion on this?
5. Do you think there is a generation gap when it comes to online media?
6. In Relation to the Queen's Visit in 2011, how did social media impact on her visit?
7. Were there any negative impacts of social media for the Queen's Visit?
8. Do you think the internet could be utilized more in PR? Do you think it's effectively used here in Ireland?

9. Do you think there should be more of an effort made to educate PR Practitioners in Ireland on online and social media?
10. Is it important in your opinion to keep up-to-date of technology advances? – Do you think mobile technology will continue to increase?
11. How do you use the information gained through social media?
12. In what situations do you think online PR is not effective?

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. If you have any further questions about this study please feel free to contact me.

Please Note: The schedule of questions was adapted for each participant according to his or her profession and level of expertise in the area of study.

Appendix E: Interview Transcripts

Interview Transcription

How is Social Media Changing the Public Relations Industry in Ireland: A Case Study Approach

Participant Name: Neil O Gorman (Bespoke with Direction)

Date of Interview: 29/07/2013

Time: 10:00

Venue: Electric Bar, Cork City

My name is Linda Wright; I am currently completing my thesis research as part of a Masters in Public Relations with New Media. I will ask a few open questions to which you may respond or not. This interview will be recorded and will remain confidential.

1. What do you use the internet mainly for at work?

I'm always online, working in PR I feel it's important to keep up-to-date with things. I use email, news sites and the internet in general for researching, on-course I'm always checking in on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn as well. If I go on YouTube, I just start watching videos and my day is gone so I tend not to check that until my work is done for the day.

2. What is your knowledge of social media?

I have a little training, mainly just the courses I have time to attend. I must say I love learning and like to keep up-to-date with technology. I use Twitter and Facebook the most. I suppose if I had to pick which site was the best with regards interaction between business and customers it would be Twitter now, if you had asked me a year or two ago it would have been Facebook but Twitter has come on leaps and bounds in the past few years. Sometimes I think Twitter could be a little bit easier as its more personal and people feel free to engage whereas Facebook is more for those you really know like close friends, but I guess business pages get around that issue.

3. Do you think social media is beneficial to the PR industry?

I would say there are quite a number of benefits really, it opens up a lot of doors for us and it's very accessible. It's simple really, you can log on with social media anytime and there is an audience ready and waiting there. There are a huge amount of benefits, I really think anyone can be successful with social media if they have the right strategy, it's all down to planning who you want to target and what you're going to say to them that will interest them and make them want to engage with you. Small organisations can have just as much say as large multinationals, so social media has really levelled the playing field I guess. Social media takes the cost out of advertising, it can be an effective way to get the message out there without paying for all the bells and whistles. I find one or two people can manage our social media here effectively, whereas before it took a whole team to get campaigns going, and it also took a whole lot of money.

Social media allows companies now to listen to their customers; you'll find there are websites with comment sections but more often than not people won't comment there, with social media however it opens up dialogue and people come forward and express their opinions, they are a little bit braver to give feedback, a bit more comfortable to give their views. Through social media people will say "I don't like this or I don't like that" or perhaps they will say "I really like a certain thing." It really makes a connection and companies can know what they are doing right and what people just don't like. I do think they have to do a little market research to engage that way.

Before companies would have to outsource their market research but now they can do it directly and it is much easier and they can gain really useful information.

I work with a lot of different companies in a lot of different industry's doing their PR and I always tell people the same thing "start listening" you can ask a lot of questions and get opinions back on them and if you have enough of a response then you'll know what your customers want. I know the companies I advise do listen to their customers and take on board the feedback; they would be foolish not to listen to them.

4. Do you think organisations are embracing social media strategically?

I think there are a lot of companies that are just coming in now that started out on social media, even companies that don't need their websites anymore which is quite interesting. I often tell smaller organisations to have a regular presence online and maybe they don't need their website as you can connect very easily with the customers through social media. If you are in a consumer industry, I think it works better through Facebook. I find Facebook very good for business and for linking things from it. I think it is mainly consumers from Twitter but there are lots of connections as well. I'd say social media is a little bit stronger for the consumer. I think Twitter is mainly for consumers again, but with lots of connections as well, you will pick up some of the network connections, so social media is a little bit stronger for consumers. I think the social media strategy begins with setting objectives; you identify strategies to achieve goals. You look to see if social media can enable you to meet those goals. If so, then it becomes integrated into the overall strategy. You identify tactics that will be used to meet those objectives. You then look to see what online tools can help you meet those objectives.

One of our clients did very well through it, it made them more of a social thinker and they have achieved over 5,000 and gained over 300 in a month now – that was a very good one. I can see friends who have worked in the industry and have worked up in Dublin and they are very well connected through it. A lot of people would have gotten contacts through it and the interaction through it is great for business. You would obviously need to be online for the interaction and want them to come to the website to keep it going. I feel that anything that is a way of communication is going to work well all round. Although I must say social media is not a numbers game anymore, it is about building and maintaining relationships with people of importance to your company or clients. PR is about communicating to build relationships; the R in PR is the most important aspect.

There are a lot of benefits from social media but there is a line there too and I advise people to keep it friendly. I know someone who says that a lot of people would know his name and know his profile and he expects that but he doesn't want people to know all about his family and where he spent his holidays. My advice is to separate business and keep private life private. The thing is you should use both your websites but in a

different way, like sometimes there is a different audience there. I'm the same with mine, my Facebook one is mainly for advertising because I think that is more consumer driven as they are in the frame of mind when they are in that channel for Facebook. While if they are in it for leisure they are not in the frame of mind for shopping. I think it works really well to have your business separate. Then again, if you are setting up jobs, you should see what market you are appealing to and that really worked very well on Twitter and Facebook. You do have to know your boundaries if you are trying to sell something and not to be seen like it is some sort of scam or having people thinking that you are a stalker. I do think you have to gain respect on Twitter and Facebook and it has to be mutual. The thing is firstly to meet people on it and then you get to know them better and have respect for them, and them for you. I think you can get to know people online by respect and then that respect will have to grow and to continue, and that is how things go. The people who are really committed and care, they are interesting and engaging with us. I know a lot of large companies that have a large following on Twitter and it has helped them a lot, like Vodafone and O2. They have done very well through social media, it's very good for their customer service, now people can get issues resolved via social media rather than calling up. Advances in technology and in particular social media means we now can connect with people instantly, establish a presence online and communication with our publics.

I would definitely advise my customers to engage on Twitter though I always advise them to have respect and be conscious of how you tweet and be compassionate to people. It has to be personal and individual and you have to have a personality and voice and you have to be yourself. At times I do see them doing things wrong but it is not always their fault; with social media, they say that they have to keep the guidelines, and if something is private and confidential, to keep it that way. From the start, you have to be very aware with everything you post or tweet. I see a lot of it in forms also and we have to tell them to go back and clean up the mess. I feel the important thing is to make them very aware of it from the start and make sure that before you say something, you think first. I feel I have a verbal contract with people and I have to consider what I say before I say it. We would have had comments that had not been thought out properly and got a bit of a reaction from it. You have to make sure to have proper attention to detail for clients. You have to be careful about

political or religious comments too, it's something people can react to in a positive or negative way. I do think people get better over time as they start getting conscious of what they are doing.

5. Which social media site do you use mostly to engage with your publics?

I suppose I prefer Facebook and only because there is so much more you can do with it. I like Facebook because you have the calls, the interacting thinking; you have got more to day with social media. I know in some companies I worked with where the thing they did wrong was setting up a profile instead of a business page, huge mistake. It is much better to keep things professional and that's why business pages exist. I think once you get the interactions going and people trust you, then they will be loyal and come back again and really engage in what you are doing. With regards SEO for social media, it has already impacted things – especially if I do any training I teach people a little bit about SEO. It would have a bigger impact on the larger companies and people should always read their blogs and keep in contact about things and keep keywords in the main contents and keep them in the title. Your wording in the contents is very important to keep people interested.

6. Some suggest that social media either complements or conflicts with traditional media, what is your opinion on this?

In my opinion social media complements traditional media completely. Now I do feel that traditional media has had to adapt somewhat to accommodate social media but I don't really think traditional media is going anywhere fast. Every morning I'll still troll through the papers to see what's going on in the world and you can bet I'll get the full story. Then throughout the day I will use online news sites and the news apps I have on my iPhone – it's very handy. But through social media I always find you only get a summary of the story and I still don't trust the everyday tweeter. So I guess for me I will get some of the story online and then the following morning get the complete picture in the actual papers or hear it on the radio or television.

7. In relation to Bespoke with Directions work on Centra's Action Breast Cancer Campaign, can you tell me about that?

Well Centra Ireland had a regular Facebook profile, basically the same as you or I, until 2010. Bespoke was asked to come on board and basically overhaul their online

strategies with special effort to their Facebook situation. So we devised the Centra Pink Mittens and Get the Girls 'Round Campaign in support of Action Breast Cancer. We knew that this would attract fans to 'like' the new Facebook business 'like' page we developed for Centra Ireland and the campaign would also send a positive corporate responsibility image to our target audience.

So, we had a number of objectives for both Centra and The Irish Cancer Society that we had to meet. We had to secure substantial media coverage, increase fan numbers through Facebook, build on Centra's reputation, as well as engaging with consumers to provide information on behalf of Action Breast Cancer and answering any queries which meant a lot of back and forth between ourselves, Centra and The Irish Cancer Society. We implemented a strong PR campaign from September through to the end of October back in 2010 which incorporated both the Pink Mittens campaign and the Get the Girls 'Round campaign. The main focus was a Facebook campaign, this campaign enabled Centra and Action Breast Cancer to drive awareness and fan engagement.

8. For the Campaign, did you see a major impact through social media that couldn't have been done before?

Of-course the whole campaign could not have been done without social media. The main part of the initiative was the Facebook campaign. We got all our information directly from the Irish Cancer

9. Were there any negative impacts from Facebook Campaign?

No none at-all thankfully, for such a great organisation such as the Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer all the feedback was positive. I think so many people are affected by cancer or at least know someone who is, that they can sympathise and people even if they couldn't donate it was relatively easy to go to Centra and pick up the pink mittens for a fiver. People loved the idea thank god and so did we, I think that's why it was such a great campaign to work on – it has been just so refreshing to see peoples generosity and kind feedback.

10. Do you think the internet could be utilized more in PR? Do you think it's effectively used here in Ireland?

Some people are in the wrong headspace and do not understand the social media side of things, people can have very traditional mindset and do not see social media actually enhances the practice of PR. Obviously I disagree, I think the majority of those in the PR biz are using social media tools effectively and really making an effort to engage with their audience. All we can do is try – some of us certainly jumped onto the social media band-waggon without really knowing what to do but thankfully we are now reaping the benefits.

11. Do you think there should be more education and training for PR Practitioners in Ireland on social media?

Well honestly I think if we keep learning and keep switched on it is easy to keep up-to-date with the changes in technology. I find that choosing a select number of online tools and managing those effectively is the easiest approach, sometimes if we try to control all the platforms at once it can be a little confusing, so for me its controlling the big platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Blogger and keeping up-to-date with them does me fine for now – but we never know what the future holds.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. If you have any further questions about this study please feel free to contact me.

Interview Transcription

How is Social Media Changing the Public Relations Industry in Ireland: A Case Study Approach

Participant Name: Eoin English (Journalist at the Irish Examiner)

Date of Interview: 22/07/13

Time: 10:00

Venue: The Irish Examiner, Cork

My name is Linda Wright; I am currently completing my thesis research as part of a Masters in Public Relations with New Media. I will ask a few open questions to which you may respond or not. This interview will be recorded and will remain confidential.

1. What do you use the internet mainly for at work?

I would use the internet for, well mostly for research, we would as part of our daily job use Facebook, Twitter, obviously email and other news sites to see how they cover particular events. We would reference international news websites to see if there was any Irish angle to them. But mostly, it's for checking in to see what Facebook is doing, what Twitter is doing, what Twitter is saying, what the trend are what they might be, how people are reacting to your stories, if there are stories out there that you think we should be doing. So that's what I use it for, but more and more were using the internet as a tool in our own right, were also using Twitter to break some stories. I used Twitter myself last week to do a picture exclusive on artists impressions for the regeneration of pairc ui chaoimh, so the GAA gave them to us and I, in consultation with the news desk, used Twitter to send out the first image as a teaser, and then we broke that story with a bit more detail on our own internet site and then generated a conversation on social media about whether it was a good thing to do or a bad thing to do, to regenerate pairc ui chaoimh and then included some of that conversation in our printed edition the next day. So more and more were using the internet and part and parcel of our daily job.

2. What is your knowledge of social media?

I've done some training on it, I suppose at the start I just dived in like everybody else. I wasn't using social media as a work tool; I was using Facebook as a personal thing. I joined Twitter because I thought that because of the work I do you know I needed to be aware of what was going on and being said, didn't really engage, but then started to engage and found it hugely beneficial to the job that I do. But I haven't any major training in it, the last training I got was last week I actually did a course with a guy called Christian Payne, he's on Twitter as Documentally and he uses various social media platforms to, what he calls 'make stories' and the course that I did was a social media maker course, it was how to use your smartphone to gather content, so we did a course on how to use various different video apps, photography apps, audio booze, storify, with a view to use that as part of your daily job. It's like a back stage pass to some of the news stories of the day and then cover it in print the following day. That's really the only formal training I have that course with Christian.

3. On Twitter do you encourage a conversation or are you simply pushing content out there?

Oh from day one it was the conversation that I wanted to eavesdrop on, just to see what is it that people are talking about, how are they talking about it and deciding then whether or not the print side of our business should either report on the conversation or maybe use what was said as part of the conversation to inform on how we report the stuff, but more and more I see it as a conversation you know. You throw something out there and you see what you get back, it just adds to the whole mix of how we cover news. It's definitely a conversation. I don't always engage, if people are respectful and have something worthwhile to say I'll engage but like you would in a pub you know if there are nutters out there you just ignore them. There are a lot of nutters out there but it is a very useful tool.

4. Do you think social media is beneficial to the journalism and PR industries? Are there any negative aspects to it?

Well social media is really beneficial however people do use it to their own ends at times, they can have a certain agenda and as a journalist you have got to root out people who are on Twitter not as themselves, people who are using Twitter to push agendas and that's the job of the journalist really to try and cut through all of that, to try and present the truth and present a story that's balanced. We've all seen the negative side of Twitter and social media and all the

rest of it, but I think if you approach it with an open mind and if you treat it like a room full of strangers you know you talk to the people who are level-headed and respectful and you don't to the people who aren't. I find myself that it moderates itself, I remember covering a story a few months ago about bishop Paul Colton the church of Ireland bishop who was a very very avid Twitter user, he used it to engage on all sorts of levels and he got some abuse or there was abuse directed at clerics in general and he took it personally and he stepped back from Twitter, but he's back on now and I think he just needed some time away, he made some very valid arguments about why he stepped back from it but like I said earlier I think if you engage with it respectfully and treat other people with respect I think it's a great tool.

5. Some suggest that social media either complements or conflicts with traditional media, what is your opinion on this?

I think the traditional media needs to embrace social media and uses it properly. There's no doubt that if something happens across the street chances are it will be tweeted about and there will be a picture up within a couple of minutes and obviously because of print deadlines you have to wait till the next morning or the next evening to get it into print. I think you also have to be careful, there's definitely a place for citizen journalism, but when people tweet about some they've seen they don't always have the full picture and it's the job of the journalist to if they can witness the event, verify it, check it again and again, double check the facts with reliable sources and only then can somebody be in a position to say look this is definitively this is what happened.

There are a lot of examples where people, well meaning, have tweeted about something and that has become almost fact, it is just so easy to press retweet and for it to go around the world and for that then to become fact. It's only when people's whose business it is or who are paid journalists go away and do the fact checking, sometimes only the full facts emerge then. What initially seems the case may not always be the case. That's not to say that people who use Twitter do it maliciously, they certainly don't. I remember covering the Cork Airport plane crash, Twitter was a great source of information in the early stages of that, in the first twenty minutes half an hour we got incredible on the scene photographs of the crashed plane but people were tweeting that it was this kind of aircraft and it wasn't, people were tweeting that x amount of people had die and they hadn't and its only when journalists got on the scene, I think I was the first to the airport that morning and when you check with people you know are reliable sources, people who you trust and hopefully they trust you back that you

can begin to get the full facts and its then that we start tweeting about it. The urge is always there to tweet immediately but the training as a journalist should allow you to follow a particular procedure you should double check the facts, check them with somebody else if you can, triple check the facts and then only then use Twitter to break it. So is Twitter going to challenge the traditional media? I don't think so, The Examiner has its own Twitter handle, I have my own Twitter handle, if we use them properly I think they can be complementary. Now I think that print might have to change its slant to more analysis because breaking news is as the name suggests breaking, it's done now on Twitter; The Examiner has its own news website. If I hear of a story I will probably break it on Twitter or use our website to do it. Maybe just tweeting the bare details, maybe just the first paragraph 145 characters if you can, but then you try and go into a bit more analysis in print the next day to give people something to read.

6. Do you think the internet could be utilized more in PR? Do you think it's effectively used here in Ireland?

Well I think there really is no substitute for sitting down looking at somebody in the eye and having a one-to-one conversation with them. For our part journalism is about telling stories and you can't get that one the internet, you can't interview somebody, you can't get a feel for somebody, you can't get a sense of somebody from behind a computer screen. So there really is not substitute to meeting somebody or going to an event or being at an event and seeing first hand what happened, who it's happened too , who's involved, what their motivations are, how they felt, how they looked, you can't beat that. The internet does have a very important role now, I'd be lost without it, you couldn't email, or do the odd check on Google, we couldn't check Twitter, Facebook. So I suppose I don't think we can do anything more other than blending the various different platforms that the internet gives you with the print or traditional media that's the challenge that this industry faces, how do you blend everything how do you use Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Google Capture, how do you use all these tools and blend them as a product while still maintaining the sales, that's the challenge.

7. Do you think there should be more education and training for both Journalists and PR Practitioners in Ireland on social media?

I do, absolutely ya. God I'd love if my employer paid to send me on all these different courses ya. I don't think you can ever stop learning and the more skills you have the better, the more strings to your bow you have the better. It's always important to up-skill, it's important to be relevant, to stay up with the most recent developments – that's why I done the course recently up in Dublin with Christian. So ya it would be great if employers would pay for training, my employer did pay for my course last week but it would be great if they done more of it. Every journalist worth his/her salt should be perusing further education and should be trying to get trained-up and skilled-up always.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. If you have any further questions about this study please feel free to contact me.

Appendix F: Content Analysis, Case One

Centra Ireland supporting the Irish Cancer Society – Action Breast Cancer

The category of analysis identifies how the organisations intentionally use their social media as a public relations tool in order to advertise and communicate with their ‘fans’

Centra Pink Mittens and Get the Girls ‘Round for Action Breast Cancer 2010

The following were the specific PR objectives:

1. Secure substantial media coverage across all forms of media (online, print and broadcast) for both the Pink Mittens campaign and the Get the Girls ‘Round campaign.
2. Create a successful online communications campaign using Facebook and increase fan numbers.
3. Build on Centra’s position as a destination for great nights in
4. Engage with the consumer – active and passive engagement. Ultimately driving footfall into stores and registrations to host a girl’s night in.

A strong national and regional PR campaign was implemented from September through to the end of October 2010 incorporating both the Pink Mittens campaign and the Get the Girls ‘Round campaign. All aspects of the campaign had to be exciting, innovative and different, spread across traditional and new media. A range of innovative and engaging tactics were implemented to ensure maximum exposure for the initiatives which ultimately resulted in a strong positive PR campaign for both Centra and Action Breast Cancer.

A Facebook campaign was the main use of social media for the campaign, this campaign enabled Centra and Action Breast Cancer to drive awareness and fan engagement.

Facebook Campaign

To highlight the availability of Pink Mittens at Centra and to engage with fans and stimulate online conversation, Centra fans were invited to tell others and post pictures about where their Pink Mittens had been. This resulted in an unprecedented amount of fans posting pictures and positive comments about themselves and their Pink Mittens. Pictures were even

posted by fans on holidays in Dubai wearing their mittens and from one fan in her wedding dress on her wedding day.

The Get the Girls 'Round part of the campaign was a call to action for women around the country to host a girl's night in and with the money that they saved on going out, donate it to Action Breast Cancer. A Get the Girls 'Round Facebook page was established to facilitate registrations, in November 2010 the page was ranked 45th of 83 pages listed in Social Media Monitor, overtaking established Irish charity brands such as Oxfam and Dublin Simon Community. Unfortunately this Facebook page is no longer active so an analysis could not be completely carried out of that particular page. However the research did show that over 1635 fans were recruited to the page with many uploading photographs of their parties and suggesting ways to fundraise.

Centra's Facebook fans grew by 9,000 between the campaign launch (Sep 30th 2010) through to the end of October. Strong and positive engagement was evident throughout with regular posts, likes and comments. See table below for further detail on Facebook campaign.

Other Comments and Posts

Both the Get the Girls 'Round with Centra and the Pink Mittens campaigns featured on a number of social media platforms, media sites, blogs and forums. Comments and posts appeared on other high traffic sites such as boards.ie, weddingsonline, the gloss and Beautciuture.ie

Social Media Advertising

Three Ad Space Units (ASU's) for Pink Mittens were use on Facebook targeting Irish users only age range 25+

Get the Girls 'Round adverts featured on high traffic sites such as MSN.com, Daft.ie and Menu Pages.ie

Table 1.1: Centra Ireland Facebook Analysis

Total Page Fans	152,000
Average number of people talking about this (PTAT)	23
Total Engagement on Brand Posts	526
Brand Posts (Over chosen period of time 23/09/2010 – 03/11/2010)	16
Engagement	33
Most Engaging Content Type	Status Post with Photo

Table 1.2: Summary of Facebook Postings on Centra Ireland Facebook page

Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Posting or Comment	Posted by Organisation / Individual	Number of 'Likes'	Number of Comments
23/09/2010	Text and Image	We're in good form here in Centra Towers. Check out what this season's must have item is as reported in KISS magazine :0)	Original	Org.	22	3
24/09/2010	Text and Images	THE NATION SET TO GO CRAZY FOR MITTENS!	Original	Org.	47	15
25/09/2010	Text and Images	Mittens on the Loose!	Original	Org.	59	18
28/09/2010	Text and Image	The Star newspaper are clearly mad about our mittens too. Check out what they said about them in their Chic magazine at the weekend!	Original	Org.	27	5
30/09/2010	Text and Link	Hey guys, today is the launch of Get the Girls Round, a great fundraiser for action breast cancer click on the link below or head to Centra.ie for more information!	Original	Org.	26	0
01/10/2010	Text	Our bright pink mittens are going on sale (for only €5) in your local Centra on Monday, make sure to get a pair and support Action Breast Cancer!	Original	Org.	44	14
07/10/2010	Text and Image	We've been happily Mitten spotting out and about. Seen them out and about for Arthur's Day the other week!!! (Centra Ireland always advocates sensible drinking)	Original	Org.	22	15
08/10/2010	Text and Image	Spotted last Friday... mittens taking over the Late Late set, cheeky buggers. Ryan must be cross! Any more mitten sightings facebook family??	Original	Org.	16	5
11/10/2010	Text and Image	Congrats to the beautiful Nuala Dillon Lynch who donned her pink mittens on her wedding day last week to show her support!! Stylish AND caring. If you have any pics of your mittens in wonderful places email them to us at centra@radical.ie and we will post them to our wall. Thanks Nuala	Original	Org.	31	5
15/10/2010	Text and Images	Breaking news - JOHN ROCHA, PAUL COSTELLO, FRAN AND JANE, KATE AND AVA and REBECCA DAVIS have customised Centra's hugely popular mittens! Seen here is the jewellery designer Rebecca...	Original	Org.	20	0

Table 1.2: Summary of Facebook Postings on Centra Ireland Facebook page

Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Posting or Comment	Posted by Organisation / Individual	Number of 'Likes'	Number of Comments
15/10/2010	Text and Images	Take a look at some of the great photos we have gotten in with people proudly wearing their pink mittens. You might even spot a few famous faces ;) Mail your pics to centra@radical.ie	Original	Org.	7	1
19/10/2010	Text and Images	A big thanks to the amazing John Rocha, Paul Costello, Louise Kennedy, Fran & Jane, Kate & Ava and Rebecca Davis for designing their own version of the Centra mittens. Which ones are your favourite?	Original	Org.	17	0
20/10/2010	Text	WIN PRIZES - Just to let you know that we will be giving away some fantastic prizes over the course of December right here on our page. Please stayed tuned for updates over the next while...	Original	Org.	52	15
22/10/2010	Text and Image	More people getting on the pink train. We like!	Original	Org.	16	0
28/10/2010	Text and Images	Take a look at this! The mittens do 7* star luxury in the Burj Al Arab in Dubai....who knew you were all such an adventurous lot :)	Original	Org.	10	2
03/11/2010	Text and Link	Hi everyone! Just sending a reminder that you can still win your favourite pair of designer mittens. Simply visit Centra.ie for details!	Original	Org.	12	0
Total Campaign Interaction		16 posts			428	98

Table 1.3: Analysis of Centra Ireland Facebook Postings for Action Breast Cancer Campaign Sep-Nov 2010										Form of Relationship Management		Public/ Groups Involved		
Organisation	Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Post or Comment	Code	Posted by Individual / Organisation	Number of Likes'		Intentional use of site for PR	Unintentional use of site PR	General News / Comment Unrelated to Nature of Site	General News / Comment Related to Nature of Site	Organisation	Fan-Fan
CABC	23/09/2010	Text	We're in good form here in Centra Towers. Check out what this season's must have item is as reported in KISS magazine :0)	Original	C1	Org	22	3	X	X		X		
CABC	23/09/2010	Text	PS - these go on sale Oct 4th!!!!!!!!!!	Comment	C2	Org			X	X		X		
CABC	23/09/2010	Text	they r lovely great idea	Comment	C3	Fan				X			X	
CABC	23/09/2010	Text	great idea will be looking out for them in our centra store	Comment	C4	Fan				X			X	
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	<u>THE NATION SET TO GO CRAZY FOR MITTENS!</u> (3 photos)	Original	C5	Org	47	15	X	X		X		
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	Sarah McGovern and Aoife Coogan together with a group of girl friends, lent us their hands, to launch these funky pink mittens...	Comment	C6	Org	5		X	X		X		

Table 1.3: Analysis of Centra Ireland Facebook Postings for Action Breast Cancer Campaign Sep-Nov 2010							Form of Relationship Management			Public/ Groups Involved					
Organisation	Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Post or Comment	Code	Posted by	Number of Likes'	Number of Comments	Intentional use of site PR	Unintentional use of site	General News / Comment	General News / Comment	Organisation		Fan-Fan
													Fan		
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	How much are they?	Comment	C7	Fan					X		X		
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	€5 - bargain!	Comment	C8	Fan					X				X
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	Wow that's great	Comment	C9	Fan					X				X
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	WOW!!!	Comment	C10	Fan					X			X	
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	i love them i will def b buying some. great cause	Comment	C11	Fan					X			X	
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	kool there lovley	Comment	C12	Fan					X			X	
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	Oh my god these are so cute!! Can't wait to get mine!!	Comment	C13	Fan					X			X	
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	christmas presents sorted ☺	Comment	C14	Fan					X			X	
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	i work for centra	Comment	C15	Fan					X			X	
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	i work for centra so please support	Comment	C16	Fan					X			X	

Table 1.3: Analysis of Centra Ireland Facebook Postings for Action Breast Cancer Campaign Sep-Nov 2010										Form of Relationship Management			Public/ Groups Involved	
Organisation	Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Post or Comment	Code	Posted by	Number of Likes ¹	Number of Comments	Intentional use of PR	Unintentional use of PR	General News / Comment	General News / Comment	Organisation	Fan-Fan
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	oh i like....i will buy!!!they look so warm n comfy n its going 2 a gud cause!!! Xxx	Comment	C17	Fan					X		X	
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	i work fr CENTRA TOOOOOOOOOOOOOO. PLZ SUPPORT GREAT CAUSE	Comment	C18	Fan					X		X	
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	very good cause...think pink!..also work in centra	Comment	C19	Fan					X		X	
CABC	24/09/2010	Text	i love centra killeshandra an all d staff r brill u want a bit of nus r a laugh ask 4 angela in centra an of course all d others der	Comment	C20	Fan					X		X	
CABC	25/09/2010	Text & Img	<u>Mittens On The Loose</u> (3 photos)	Original	C21	Org	59	18	X	X		X		
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	Mittens are being spotted all over Dublin!	Comment	C22	Org			X	X		X		
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	love that ☺	Comment	C23	Fan					X		X	
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	They are deadly!	Comment	C24	Fan					X		X	

Table 1.3: Analysis of Centra Ireland Facebook Postings for Action Breast Cancer Campaign Sep-Nov 2010										Form of Relationship Management			Public/ Groups Involved		
Organisation	Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Post or Comment	Code	Posted by	Number of Likes'	Number of Comments	Intentional use of site for	Unintentional use of site for	General News / Comment	General News / Comment	Organisation		Fan-Fan
													Fan		
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	Need to get me some mittens!!!	Comment	C25	Fan					X			X	
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	where can i get those mittens there so cool	Comment	C27	Fan					X			X	
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	Mary Louise I think they go on sale on Oct 4 th	Comment	C28	Fan					X				X
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	Oh cool thanks keep me posted if u find out more.	Comment	C29	Fan					X				X
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	u should b able 2 get them in centra down in rushbrook links	Comment	C30	Fan					X				X
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	All very welcome in Centra Old Bawn;-))	Comment	C31	Fan					X				X
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	will be able to get them in centra millmount mullingar will be looking out for them. great cause	Comment	C32	Fan					X				X
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	goin 2 buy a pair of those seen ryan showing them on the late late last nite	Comment	C24	Fan					X			X	
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	Thanks for all the positive feedback guys!! These go on sale Oct 4th and are €5 a pair. All proceeds go to breast cancer. But you'll have to hurry!	Comment	C25	Org					X		X		

Table 1.3: Analysis of Centra Ireland Facebook Postings for Action Breast Cancer Campaign Sep-Nov 2010							Form of Relationship Management				Public/ Groups Involved			
Organisation	Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Post or Comment	Code	Posted by	Number of Likes ¹	Number of Comments	Intentional use of site for	General News / Comment	General News / Comment	Organisation	Fan	Fan-Fan
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	will they be available in all centra stores	Comment	C26	Fan				X			X	
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	They will;-)	Comment	C27	Fan				X				X
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	will they b available in centra stores in wexford??	Comment	C28	Fan				X			X	
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	Hi Catherine. They're going to be avaloable nationwide but we expect they'll sell out fast! You better get in quick Monday	Comment	C29	Org				X		X		
CABC	25/09/2010	Text	says There still available at Centra Enfield.	Comment	C30	Fan				X		X		

Appendix G: Content Analysis, Case Two

Cow and Gate Ireland supporting Our Lady's Hospital Crumlin, Including Spooky Smiles for Crumlin Appeal.

The following were the specific PR objectives:

1. Increase overall awareness of the need for funds in Our Lady's Hospital Crumlin.
2. Create a successful online communications campaign using Facebook and increase Cow & Gate fan numbers.
3. Engage with the consumer – active and passive engagement. Ultimately driving donations and online registrations to host Spooky Smiles Parties.
4. Raise €15,000 through Facebook picture posts and shares.

A strong national PR campaign was implemented from October 1st 2012 to November 30th 2012. Facebook was the main tool incorporated for the campaign. Cow and Gate encouraged customers to get involved by planning a sponsored Halloween party; in turn Cow & Gate sent party packs as a thank you for the donation. Through the Cow and Gate Facebook page customers were also encouraged to upload and share their pictures using the 'Spookify' section to the Facebook app, Cow and Gate donated €1 for each picture that was uploaded to Facebook. A number of larger parties were also held around Ireland to highlight the campaign and ensure maximum exposure for the appeal which ultimately resulted in a strong positive PR campaign for both Cow and Gate and Our Lady's Children's Hospital Crumlin.

Table 1.4: Cow and Gate Facebook Analysis

Total Page Fans	14,347
Average number of people talking about this (PTAT)	31
Total Engagement on Brand Posts	3,079
Brand Posts (Over chosen period of time 01/10/2012 – 30/11/2012)	36
Engagement	49
Most Engaging Content Type	Status Post with Photo

Table 1.5: Summary of Facebook Postings on Cow & Gate Facebook page

Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Posting or Comment	Posted by Organisation / Individual	Number of 'Likes'	Number of Comments	Number of Shares
04/10/2012	Text and Link	Our first Spooky Smile of the Week is Cormac-Stein! Spookify your child's photo to be in with a chance of becoming next week's Smile of the Week. For every 'Spookified Photo' that is uploaded we are donating €1 to Our Lady's Children Hospital Crumlin.	Original	Org.	19	10	0
05/10/2012	Text and Link	Why not check out this morning's Ireland AM feature on Spooky Smiles for Crumlin? Remember, we will donate €1 for every person who uses our Spookifier up to a maximum of €15,000. You can also make a donation or sign up to hold a sponsored Halloween party - every cent goes to benefit Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin. Click on the app at the top of the page for details!	Original	Org.	28	0	1
08/10/2012	Text and Link	So far we have raised €240 for Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin. For every 'Spookified Photo' that is uploaded we are donating €1 so get spookifying your photos!. Also, each week we will be choosing a 'Spooky Smile of the Week' to appear in our Cover Photo.	Original	Org.	25	7	2
10/10/2012	Text Link & Image	We are busy in the office today getting the Spooky Smiles for Crumlin party packs ready to send out. If would like to hold a Halloween party or event in aid of Our Lady's Children's Hospital, go onto http://www.smilesforcrumlin.ie/get_invol... See More	Original	Org.	80	12	19
11/10/2012	Text & Link	Today we are going to donate €2 to Children's Medical & Research Foundation, Our Lady's Children's Hospital for every photo that is uploaded to our Spookifier! And don't forget we will be choosing our Smile of the Week tomorrow! Share this and help us raise vital funds for Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin.	Original	Org.	28	5	3

Table 1.5: Summary of Facebook Postings on Cow & Gate Facebook page

Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Posting or Comment	Posted by Organisation / Individual	Number of 'Likes'	Number of Comments	Number of Shares
12/10/2012	Text & Image	Here is our second Spooky Smile of the Week. Upload your child's photo to our spookifier to be in with a chance of becoming next week's Spooky Smile of the Week.	Original	Org.	10	0	0
15/10/2012	Text & Link	Every weekday this week, we will be choosing one Spooky Smile each day and will donate €100 to <u>Children's Medical & Research Foundation, Our Lady's Children's Hospital</u> , on their behalf. Here is our first €100 Spooky Smile. Spookify your child's photo today and help raise vital funds for Crumlin Children's Hospital.	Original	Org.	12	0	0
16/10/2012	Text & Link	Here is today's €100 Spooky Smile. Aren't they adorable! We have donated €100 to <u>Children's Medical & Research Foundation, Our Lady's Children's Hospital</u> on their behalf. Spookify your child's photo today and help raise vital funds for Crumlin Children's Hospital.	Original	Org.	13	0	0
16/10/2012	Text and Image	Have any of your little one's decided what they are dressing up as for Halloween yet? We think this photo of a toddler dressed up as bubble bath is so cute!	Original	Org.	233	11	1
17/10/2012	Text and Images	Here is today's €100 Spooky Smile. What a spooky Mummy! We have donated €100 to <u>Children's Medical & Research Foundation, Our Lady's Children's Hospital</u> on their behalf. Spookify your child's photo today and help raise vital funds for Crumlin Children's Hospital.	Original	Org.	22	2	1
17/10/2013	Text and Link	Host a Halloween party to raise vital funds for Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin. Register for your free party pack today and join the hundreds of other's taking part this year! Every little helps so please do get involved!	Original	Org.	12	7	1

Table 1.5: Summary of Facebook Postings on Cow & Gate Facebook page

Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Posting or Comment	Posted by Organisation / Individual	Number of 'Likes'	Number of Comments	Number of Shares
17/10/2012	Text & Image	Our next coffee morning in Imaginosity is Halloween themed and takes place on Friday 26th October from 10am-12pm! This event is FREE for all parents and children under 3 years but places are limited so you do need to register. If you're looking to meet parents of other fussy eaters and have your pressing questions answered by an expert nutritionist then book NOW! There will be Halloween treats for all and fancy dress is encouraged! To register please contact Imaginosity at info@imaginosity.ie or call 01 2176133.	Original	Org.	41	5	1
17/10/2012	Text & Image	Another 100 party packs were put into the post this afternoon and are on their way around Ireland. If would like to hold a Halloween party or event in aid of Our Lady's Children's Hospital, go onto http://www.smilesforcrumlin.ie/get_involved , tell us a little about your event and we will send you out a party pack with a poster, sponsorship card, balloons and a decoration to get you started. Every little helps so please do get involved!	Original	Org.	60	0	3
18/10/2012	Text & Image	Tell us your happiest memory from your first year of parenthood....	Original	Org.	36	14	1
18/10/2012	Text & Image	Here is today's €100 Spooky Smile. What a cute little witch! We have donated €100 to Children's Medical & Research Foundation, Our Lady's Children's Hospital on their behalf. Spookify your child's photo today and help raise vital funds for Crumlin Children's Hospital.	Original	Org.	22	3	1

Table 1.5: Summary of Facebook Postings on Cow & Gate Facebook page

Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Posting or Comment	Posted by Organisation / Individual	Number of 'Likes'	Number of Comments	Number of Shares
19/10/2012	Text & Image	Here is today's €100 Spooky Smile. What a scary Vampire! We have donated €100 to Children's Medical & Research Foundation, Our Lady's Children's Hospital on their behalf. Spookify your child's photo today and help raise vital funds for Crumlin Children's Hospital.	Original	Org	13	1	0
19/10/2012	Text & Image	We're having our office fancy dress party tonight to raise vital funds for Crumlin. Have you signed up yet to host a party in aid of Our Lady's Children's Hospital? What kind of events are you holding? If you want to get involved: http://www.smilesforcrumlin.ie/get_involved	Original	Org	136	0	3
22/10/2012	Text & Image	One of our fans has decorated their garden and house for Halloween and are donating the proceeds to the Spooky Smiles for Crumlin appeal. They are also having a party in their house.	Share Fans Photo	Org	28	0	0
22/10/2012	Text & Link	This week's Spooky Smile of the Week is Abbey. Upload your child's photo to our spookifier to be in with a chance of becoming next week's Spooky Smile of the Week. So far, we have raised over €3,000 euro for Children's Medical & Research Foundation, Our Lady's Children's Hospital	Original	Org	6	0	0
22/10/2012	Text & Image	This week's Spooky Smile of the Week is Abbey. Upload your child's photo to our spookifier to be in with a chance of becoming next week's Spooky Smile of the Week. — with Debbie Arrigan and 12 others .	Original	Org	24	10	1
23/10/2012	Text & Link	The final day to sign up for your Spooky Smiles for Crumlin pack is this Thursday. So there is still time for you to get involved to raise vital funds for Children's Medical & Research Foundation, Our Lady's Children's Hospital .	Original	Org	39	10	0
24/10/2012	Text & Image	Halloween is right around the corner - What are your little one's dressing up as this year?	Original	Org	154	17	1

Table 1.5: Summary of Facebook Postings on Cow & Gate Facebook page

Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Posting or Comment	Posted by Organisation / Individual	Number of 'Likes'	Number of Comments	Number of Shares
25/10/2012	Text & Image	Today is the last day to sign up for your Spooky Smiles for Crumlin party pack. There is still time for you to get involved to raise vital funds for Children's Medical & Research Foundation , Our Lady's Children's Hospital Register your Halloween event today to receive your party pack.	Original	Org	24	0	0
25/10/2012	Text & Image	We would love to see some photos of the Halloween parties you are having for the Spooky Smiles for Crumlin appeal! The Fragolini School of Dance in Cork just shared this photo with us of all the fun they have been having this week in aid of Children's Medical & Research Foundation , Our Lady's Children's Hospital	Original	Org	26	0	0
26/10/2012	Text	LIKE this if your baby is the most beautiful thing you've ever made.	Original	Org	834	13	1
26/10/2012	Text & Image	Tracton baby and toddler group held a spooky smiles Halloween party lots of fun, smiles and treats	Original	Fan	5	2	0
28/10/2012	Image	Halloween Spooky Smiles for Crumlin!	Original	Fan	19	4	0
30/10/2012	Text & Album Images	We are receiving lots of photos from people who have hosted Spooky Smiles for Crumlin events around the country. We would love to see your photos - either post them to our wall or email them to help@cowandgate.ie	Original	Org	49	2	0
30/10/2012	Text & Image	Here is this week's Spooky Smile of the week - Carys! You can still spookify your little one's photo at www.smilesforcrumlin.ie	Original	Org	8	0	0
31/10/2012	Text & Image	Happy Halloween everyone! What are your plans for the day? Trick or treating, a party, dressing up.....	Original	Org	576	16	33
01/11/2012	Video Link	An oldie but a goodie! How would your little one's react if you told them you ate all of their sweets from trick or treating?	Original	Org	5	0	0
01/11/2012	Text & Link	TV3's Ireland AM camera's were at the Spooky Smiles for Crumlin Halloween party in Our Lady's Children's Hospital yesterday.	Original	Org	7	0	0

Table 1.5: Summary of Facebook Postings on Cow & Gate Facebook page

Date	Type of Post	Text of Post	Original Posting or Comment	Posted by Organisation / Individual	Number of 'Likes'	Number of Comments	Number of Shares
02/11/2012	Text & Image	We have 20 Cow & Gate Cuddly Cow's that need new homes! The first 20 people that email their details to help@cowandgate.ie this morning will receive a Cuddly Cow.	Original	Org	137	62	1
05/11/2012	Text & Image	We are starting to receive all of the money raised from Spooky Smiles for Crumlin Parties across the country. Thank you to everyone who hosted a party and a huge well done! So far we have raised €20,369 for Children's Medical & Research Foundation , Our Lady's Children's Hospital.	Original	Org	66	7	0
05/11/2012	Text & Image	This is our Spooky Smiles for Crumlin Party in the CPI Centre in Castlefin, Co. Donegal. So far we have raised close to €700 !!	Original	Fan	8	3	0
05/11/2012	Images	Cow & Gate Ireland added 21 photos to the album Spooky Smiles for Crumlin Parties 2012.	Original	Org	49	2	0
Total Campaign Interaction		Total number of campaign posts: 36			2,854	225	49

