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## The Role of Public Relations in Integrated Marketing Communications

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Cork Institute of Technology

**The Role of Public Relations in Integrated Marketing  
Communications**

**Claire Healy**

**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the  
degree of:**

**MA in Public Relations with New Media**

**Department of Media Communications  
Cork Institute of Technology**

**Supervisors: Mr. Emmett Coffey  
Mr. Frank O' Donovan**

**September 2010**

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## 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 that stated above.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> Sept 2010

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PR – Public Relations

IMC – Integrated Marketing Communication

MPR – Marketing Public Relations

CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

## LIST OF TABLES

**Table 3.1:** Contrast and Comparisons of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodologies.

## ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with analysing the integration of public relations and marketing practices currently being undertaken by various organisations in Ireland. The concept of integrated marketing communication has been debated in the literature and in organisations for many decades.

This study employs both primary and secondary research methods on gathering findings that focus on the increasingly fundamental role of public relations in marketing initiatives, and highlights the areas where conflict and tension exist. These conflicting areas are having a negative effect on organisations maximising from this integration.

This research gathered both public relations and marketing perceptions on how the integration process is to be implemented and it also examines areas to see if integration has been taking place. The findings from the research identify areas of conflict as well as synergies that exist between both disciplines.

A significant finding is that marketing professions are not only integrating corporate public relations, but are now also deploying consumer public relations initiatives into their strategies. Stakeholders are now demanding organisations to be more responsible and ethical, and marketing campaigns are now being integrated into corporate social responsibility programmes.

The success of the integration relies heavily on organisational culture and on the emphasis that management and marketing professionals place on public relations.

An unexpected area of discussion was the use of consultancy services for public relations and the failure of such companies to adapt to the current economic climate. A further elaboration outlined that Ireland is not as progressive in this area as its European counterparts.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is a concept that has been in existence for many decades; however, organisations are now increasingly implementing these IMC strategies. Traditional marketing initiatives such as advertising and direct mail are decreasing in effectiveness and thus marketing departments are becoming more reliant on public relations tactics to communicate their messages to their publics (Kolah, 2004:17 and Baines et al., 2004:5).

However, whilst a certain element of public relations activity is to assist the marketing department in communicating with its publics, the fundamental element of public relations is to establish and maintain relationships, not to solely assist the marketing function (Cutlip et al., (1985), cited in Fill, 2006:247).

The aim of this study is to research the importance of incorporating public relations and marketing functions into an IMC strategy. The main focus will be to determine the impact IMC has on the effectiveness of an organisation and to see how this strategy is incorporated into communicating with stakeholders.

### 1.2 Background to Research

The researcher intended to utilise both primary and secondary research to differentiate between the marketing and public relations departments and to highlight areas where their roles overlapped.

The recent decline in public awareness of marketing activities has led to an increase in the need for public relations strategies to be implemented into marketing campaigns. Marketing professionals argue that these strategies are to complement marketing

ventures, whilst public relations professionals are adamant that these activities are separate to their colleague's actions.

In recent years public relations communication strategies have become a more prominent function in business practices. Prior to this, many people had believed that public relations was an unnecessary activity that only increased organisational expenditure. It was only when a crisis occurred that the public relations function was appreciated and seen as an essential role. Now, with organisations competing to gain the public's attention in an increasingly difficult and competitive environment, companies have been forced to revise their communication strategies and tactics. Thus, resulting in the cohesion of both the marketing and the public relations departments.

Marketing Public Relations (MPR) has been found to have a greater influence on consumer purchasing decisions than other methods, such as advertising, which is performed by the marketing department. This has led to a phenomenal increase of MPR initiatives being incorporated into marketing disciplines.

### **1.3 Justification for Research**

IMC is an adversarial topic within marketing and public relations professionals. Whilst the benefits of incorporating the strategy are greater than the disadvantages, there is still an enormous amount of conflict within both disciplines as to how it should be implemented. Ideally, all organisations should operate a cross functional integration strategy. However, due to tension over management roles and resources between the two departments, this strategy is rarely implemented.

Marketing and public relations disciplines are often confused and mistaken for being the same thing, but, as this research outlines, they have two different objectives:

Marketing is "the analysis, planning, implementation and control of programs designed to bring about desired exchanges with target markets for the purpose of personal or mutual gain" (Kotler, 1989:4), whilst public relations is "the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organisation and its publics" (cited in Fill, 2006:241 and Tench and Yeomans, 2006:251).

Whilst certain functions of both departments can be used in both disciplines, it is imperative that organisations understand the differences and can distinguish between the two roles.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the role of public relations in the marketing function
2. To identify the conflicts and tensions that exist between the two functions
3. To analyse the integration of public relations in marketing strategies

#### **1.5 Research Focus of the Study**

There is an increasing focus on utilising IMC strategies in various organisations; this study is concerned with focusing on the effects of integrating marketing and public relations functions. The researcher used both primary and secondary research methods for this study. The primary research consisted of five semi-structured interviews with participants from both marketing and public relations professions. The secondary research carried out was a review of the current literature available on this area and this formed the basis for the areas of research.

On achieving the above objectives, the researcher aims to gather findings on both academic and industry views on how effective IMC strategies are and to outline any gaps that may occur in literature.

The researcher also acquired current analysis of these industries working in unison in the current economic climate and outlined if the economic downturn has had a positive or negative effect on the integration process. To justify the reasoning behind this study, the researcher focused on accumulating information on Irish companies as the amount of literature is limited from an Irish perspective.

## **1.6 Chapter Outlines**

**Chapter One, 'Introduction'** presents the introduction to the research area and the researcher's justification for examining this area. This chapter also outlines the background to the research, the research objectives and focus of the study.

**Chapter Two, 'Literature Review'** consists of a summary of the relevant literature on IMC, the relationship between marketing and public relations and the overlapping functions of MPR. This chapter highlights the conflicts and synergies that exist between marketing and public relations. This forms the basis of the research aims and objectives.

**Chapter Three, 'Research Methodology'** outlines the research methodology used in this study. This chapter describes the techniques and methods used in designing, collecting and analysing the data generated from the interview participants. In this chapter, the researcher also justifies the use of using a qualitative method and the outlines the validity of the research.

**Chapter Four, 'Findings and Analysis'** outlines the main findings resulting from the primary research. These are based on the data collected from each of the interview participants. These answers are compared and contrasted with relevant literature.

**Chapter Five, 'Conclusions'** presents the researchers conclusions of the findings. This chapter also provides the researchers recommendations for the marketing and public relations industries and how IMC can be better implemented. The researcher also highlights areas of this study which may be investigated or researched further.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to review the relevant literature concerning the relationship between public relations and marketing and to highlight the areas where integration is taking place. To fully understand the research objectives of this thesis, it is imperative that readers obtain an understanding of what theorists and specialists in both fields have previously researched and reported.

Whilst the majority of previous literature deals with the close proximity of both functions and how they are best implemented, this literature review consists of various aspects of marketing and public relations and takes an in-depth look at the overlapping functions such as public relations, marketing, marketing public relations, communication, media relations and integrated communication. These areas are often subject to a lot of conflict regarding who should handle and manage each entity.

The wide area of research illustrates the importance of the two functions and the increasing amount of disciplines that are currently being managed by both departments.

#### 2.2 Public Relations

There are various definitions of public relations but the most concise definition found was from The Chartered Institute of Public Relations in the UK who define public relations as "the planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organisation and its publics" (cited in Fill, 2006:241 and Tench and Yeomans, 2006:251).

The definitions are continuously evolving and expanding to incorporate the further advances of the public relations function. More recent definitions include the importance of reputation management and communication strategies which are vital areas of public relations practice. "The Chartered Institute of Public Relations (2005) expand their definition to include further principles of the public relations profession: 'Public relations is about reputation, the result of what you do, what you say and what others say about you'" (cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2006:325, Medcalf, 2004:235).

Public relations are imperative in building credible relationships and trust amongst stakeholders. Organisations and marketing departments are realising the worth of investing in public relations and have started to implement public relations strategies into their marketing campaigns. "The tools that public relations professionals have at their disposal are increasingly seen to have the capacity to communicate with consumers in a way that other marketing disciplines cannot match" (Tench and Yeomans, 2006:427).

These public relations concepts are not new additions to marketing communications. Kotler outlined in 1989 that public relations were "one of the most cost effective components of marketing communications" (cited in Gregory, 2004:17). Tench and Yeomans (2006:412) outlines that public relations are "the first among equals in the quest to connect with consumers" thus emphasising the importance of organisational involvement and commitment to the public relations function. Yet, with all the evidence of public relations strategies becoming a focal point of marketing communications, there is a continuous debate regarding its functionality and management disciplines.

In order for public relations strategies to be implemented to the best of the practitioner's ability, there is a need for close communication amongst other departments and management. For public relations to be effective, it is imperative that it has good communication skills with the publics and all departments within an organisation (Davis 2004:124 and Gregory 2004:50).



Management have also begun to see the importance and need for public relations involvement. As Grunig and Huang's (2000) outlined "public relations makes an organisation more effective by building relationships with strategic publics" (cited in Ledingham and Bruning, 2000:30). Ideally, the most senior public relations practitioner should be a member of the dominant coalition as the vast range of public relations functions is immersed throughout the organisation, therefore underlining the importance of public relations in the decision making process (Davis, 2004: 33, Tench and Yeomans, 2006:148)

Kolah (2004) argues that "public relations draws on expertise and experience from many fields and it frequently overlaps with other disciplines, including marketing"(cited in Gregory, 2004:16). From the literature reviewed it is clear that the marketing and public relations functions are often overlapping, yet there is hostility between the two functions. Marketers argue that public relations is a sub section of marketing and frequently views public relations activity as "any non-paid communication between the firm and its publics constituencies" (Robinson, 2006:249).

As a result of the lack of knowledge of public relations activities, two forms emerged; corporate public relations and marketing public relations.

Cutlip et al., (1985) defined corporate public relations as "a function of management seeking to identify, establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between various publics on whom its success or failure depend". They also define marketing public relations as "not only concerned with organisational success and failure but also with specific publics; customers, consumers and clients with whom exchange transactions take place" (cited in Fill, 2006:247)

The growth in recognition and use of public relations in recent years is outlined by Harris (1998) who says public relations "has the power to cut through the message clutter" (cited in Ouwersloot and Duncan, 2008:312). Organisations are becoming increasingly dependent on this method of communication as people are inundated with

millions of messages each day and traditional advertising and mass media communications are not having the effect they once had. Baines et al., (2004:5) indicated that there has been an “increase in the demand for public relations consultancy services over the last 20 years”.

## **2.3 Marketing**

Marketing is defined by Kotler (1989) as “the analysis, planning, implementation and control of programs designed to bring about desired exchanges with target markets for the purpose of personal or mutual gain” (cited in Kelly,1991:158). There is a general assumption by non-marketing professionals that marketing is only concerned with promoting and advertising products. Kolah (2004) outlines that marketer’s view their role as “a whole company or organisation activity whereby the goals of the organisation are achieved through first achieving customers’ goals” (cited in Gregory, 2004:19).

Whilst traditionally advertising was very effective at promoting products and generating sales, this concept has been altered. “Advertising doesn't build brands, publicity does. Advertising can only maintain brands that have been created by publicity.” (Ries and Ries, 2002: xi). This highlights the importance of marketing departments collaborating with public relations in order to continue to promote products and entice people to purchase.

Kotler (1989) outlines that this relationship will continue to grow in importance as marketing practitioners are becoming increasingly dependent on public relations initiatives to market the product. This is due to the fact that other promotional tools, such as advertising, are less effective at marketing a product and public relations initiatives appear to counteract this (cited in Gregory, 2004:17).

## **2.4 Promotion in the Marketing Mix**

Davis (2004:128) outlines that “much public relations activity is directed at supporting marketing, where it is assigned to that part of the ‘marketing mix’ called promotion”. The public relations function of promotion is to engage in communication strategies with stakeholders to inform them of products and to build relationships with those publics. “The degree of trust and confidence generated by public relations singles out this tool from others in the communication mix as an important means of reducing buyers’ perceived risk” (Fill, 2006:242). Thus public relations can assist marketing departments to generate awareness and to create product understanding to the public which in turn help to generate sales.

Management often assume public relations is a sub section of marketing as it assists with the promotional aspect of the four P’s (product, price, place and promotion). This type of public relations activity is commonly known as marketing public relations (MPR) and was created to distinguish this form of public relations from its other functionalities. Regularly, people are of the illusion that this is the only form of public relations but there are various other initiatives that rely on public relations involvement such as corporate social responsibility programmes and crisis management techniques. Baines et al., (2004:39) state that “such categorisation can hide the wider role of public relations as a form of communication designed to aid in generating understanding amongst publics rather than just achieving awareness and publicity”.

## **2.5 Marketing Public Relations**

Marketing public relations (MPR) is defined by Harris (1993) as “the process of planning, executing and evaluating programmes that encourage purchase and consumer satisfaction through credible communications of information and impressions that identify companies and their products with the needs, wants, concerns and interests of customers” (cited in Medcalf, 2004:235). Whereas Kotler (1991) defines MPR as “a healthy offspring of two parents: marketing and public relations. MPR represents an opportunity for companies to regain a share of voice in a message –satiated society. MPR not only delivers a strong share of voice to win share of mind and heart; it also

delivers a better, more effective voice in many cases” (cited in Kitchen, 2005:136 ). Shrimp (2007) summarises this by outlining that “in short it is the marketing orientated aspect of public relations”.

The various definitions outline the contrasts and debates that surround the concept of MPR. Theorists argue over whether it is a marketing or public relations discipline. From conducting a large literature review on this topic, the researcher hopes to gain an insight into both academic and industry views as it is one of the main areas of conflict amongst marketing and public relations professionals.

As outlined by Cutlip et al., (1985), MPR deals by communicating with “specific publics: customers, consumers and clients with whom transactions take place” (cited in Medcalf, 2004:236). This indicates the importance of public relations involvement as it generates awareness, enhances corporate reputation and helps to build credible relationships with the various stakeholder groups. Often, people are of the perception that MPR is a new public relations concept but it has “been utilised on a regular and consistent basis for decades but was practiced under perhaps a different name by the majority of public relations consultancies” (Kitchen and Papasolomou, 1997:137).

Baines et al., (2004:38) outline that MPR was created in the U.S. to distinguish it from other areas of public relations, now known as corporate public relations.

Harris (1993) explains that the expansion of MPR in the 1980’s was due to “the recognition of its intrinsic value by business executives and the ability of public relations professionals to devise programmes to support marketing strategies” (cited in Kitchen and Papasolomou, 1997:71). During this time an article featured in PR Week stated that “the proven power of public relations and it’s cost effectiveness in contrast to advertising motivated the advertising industry to add public relations departments to their operations in order to help alleviate it’s financial woes” (cited in Kitchen and Papasolomou, 1997:72). Whilst Kitchen and Papasolomou (1997:73) found that MPR complements the marketing initiative as they state that it gives a “product or service

added credibility, exposure and newsworthiness". These elements can be argued that they are traditional public relations tactics as they are a form of publicity, the first model in Grunig and Hunt's (1984) models of practice.

There has been a phenomenal growth in the marketing dimension of public relations in recent years, which can be viewed as marketing professionals now acknowledging the impact public relations can have on their promotional aspect. This argument concurs with Davis (2004:131) argument that it "represents a quantum leap in the argument for deploying public relations skills in the service of marketing". However, conflict still remains as marketing theorists such as Doyle (2000: 87) argue that public relations "nature of creating cost efficient promotional activities are also their weakness as they are not in control of media interpretations".

Conflict also exists in theorist's opinions as the whether MPR is a public relations entity in its own right or whether public relations is a sub section of marketing and should be placed under marketing control. Kotler (1989) a marketing academic, is of the opinion that public relations is part of marketing, whereas Grunig (1992), a public relations academic, outlines that public relations activities can be distinguished from marketing and implies that both are essential elements fundamental to organisational success (cited in Kitchen and Papasolomou, 1997: 78). Kotler's view is also reiterated by Smith (1998) who "suggests that product public relations (MPR) is the responsibility of the marketing manager while corporate public relations tends to be the responsibility of the corporate communications director" (cited in Medcalf, 2004:236).

Whilst the battle continues over ownership rights of the MPR function, it is rapidly becoming a growth area with many overlapping functions with the marketing department. Organisations are more aware that consumers and other stakeholder groups are now analysing the organisation as a whole and the need for corporate image, identity, reputation and brand public relations is at the forefront of consumer's minds when making purchasing decisions.

### 2.5.1 Image

As indicated earlier in the literature review, stakeholders are becoming increasingly conscious of the image portrayed by organisations and this is affecting how previous reputable brands are now being conceived. Davis (2004:1) defines an image as “a composite mental or sensual interpretation, a perception, of someone or something; a construct arrived at by deduction based upon all the available evidence, both real and imagined and conditioned by existing impressions, beliefs, ideas and emotions”.

The role of public relations is to build a positive image of the organisation in stakeholder’s minds. This element needs to be handled with sensitivity and professionalism as it can take a lot of time and resources to build up, but can be quickly destroyed by an event or activity the organisation engages with. Whilst many companies spend increasing amounts of time trying to enhance a good image of the organisation, the image is the perception created by the individual. Tench and Yeomans (2006:153) indicate that the “image can change from individual to individual and also throughout time”. The importance of creating a positive corporate image has been realised even amongst the smaller companies who were happy to stay out of the corporate limelight. “According to Oliver (2001) smaller companies that have adopted a low profile are assessing their corporate image because of its importance and the credibility it gives an organisation” (cited in Davis, 2004:35).

Davis (2004:35) further highlights that an image can translate “the organisation into a personality, with qualities and values that provide foundations to expectations of its behaviour”. Haywood (1998:13) indicates that public relations is “the projection of personality in the organisation”, which reiterates how important it is that this MPR function is carried out by public relations professionals who have undertaken specialist communication strategies and build up a rapport with publics, which could all be diminished if the role was to be undertaken solely by a marketing professional.

### **2.5.2 Identity**

There is often confusion by both practitioners (marketing and public relations) and the public to the difference between image and identity. We have already seen that the literature defines image as a mental picture of the corporation, while identity is what people use to distinguish one organisation from another.

Varey (1997) defines corporate identity as “the strategically planned and operationally applied self-presentation of the organisation on the basis of a desired image” (cited in Davis, 2004:35). It is how the organisation represents itself. Gunning (2007:247) believes that it is a “physical manifestation of the company and should be instantly recognisable”.

This brand identity is important to maintain and it is usually the responsibility of the whole organisation to ensure that they are representing each entity of the organisation professionally. When people are assessing an organisation they take various factors into consideration. It is the role of the public relations practitioner to ensure that stakeholders and external publics are getting a true reflection of the organisation and to be aware of any aspects that these groups may not be content with (Johnston and Zawawi , 200:151).

### **2.5.3 Reputation**

“Organisational reputation is arrived at by considering the sum total of images an individual has accumulated over a period of time that help that individual form an opinion about an organisation” (Tench and Yeomans, 2006:254). Reputation is an organisation’s most valuable asset which is created by individuals’ interactions and experiences with an organisation. For organisations to create a good and credible reputation it takes time and resources, but like image and identity, which help to frame a corporate reputation, it can be quickly destroyed by a crisis or a corporate scandal. Christensen et al., (2009:209) highlight the importance of corporate credibility in recent years due to the economic decline in many countries. Grunnig (2007:231) further highlights that “CEO’s are now increasingly under the spotlight and

increasingly in the need for first class public relations” to maintain or salvage their reputation.

Public relations also look after a company’s reputation – “with the aim of earning understanding and support, and influencing opinion and behaviour” (Institute of Public Relations in the UK, cited in Medcalf, 2004:235). Public relations is responsible for creating a positive reputation amongst stakeholders. Often this requires public relations practitioners to engage in two-way communication strategies and to “persistently communicate with facts, accuracy and integrity on behalf of their clients” (Breakenridge, 2008: 261).

With many organisations currently being put under public scrutiny, it is imperative that they can be accountable for their actions. A recent example of an organisation trying to overcome reputational damage is Anglo Irish Bank. Although the banking sector in Ireland is trying to reform itself from the recent scandal, Anglo Irish Bank is consistently viewed as being dishonest and untrustworthy by the general public. Debreceeny and Cochrane (2004), further accentuate the importance of having a reputable image, as they state that “with public doubt about corporate America at an all time high, public relations professionals and marketers must collaborate to shape, manage and protect corporate reputation as well as brand image”.

#### **2.5.4 Brand Public Relations**

Marketing public relations is concerned with promoting brand and corporate values. Increasingly organisations are becoming more aware of how people are assessing the organisation through various mediums. Public relations can help to enhance brand promotion and sales as psychic value, an attribute that people consider before purchase, is created by the public relations communications (Gunning, 2007:15). “By helping to project human qualities on to a company, product or service, public relations can play an active role in the fascinating world of brand development” (Tench and Yeomans, 2006:422). When new brands are being created it is essential that public relations professionals are involved in the naming and decision making processes as



“communication, corporate communication, corporate image, trade and customer relations, and many other aspects of public relations are all involved” (Baines et al., 2004:46).

Marketing is often viewed as the most important element in new branding tactics as it creates the advertising means to promoting the new product and is involved in the brand planning and implementation processes. However, Ries and Ries (2002:XI) argue that “you can’t build a new brand with advertising because advertising has no credibility...you can launch new brands only with publicity or public relations”. Kitchen (1997) highlights that “corporate and brand images interact to enhance overall ambience and influence the bottom line” (cited in Davis 2004:134). This statement outlines that public relations methods if executed correctly can directly influence a companies’ profitability, an aspect which all companies are concerned with.

### **2.5.5 Relationship Management**

Literature derives that relationship management is a public relations function under the MPR concepts. Moss (2004) outlines that in mature economies organisations are finding it more difficult to distinguish their products from competitor’s and are reliant on the reputation and relationships that are established with stakeholders to drive corporate success (cited in Phillips, 2006:213).

Fill (2006:246) outlines that “traditionally public relations has been used as a means of managing communication between both parties, whereas now communication is regarded as a means of managing relationships”. This outlines the adaption of public relations practices and focuses on the importance of good communication strategies between organisations and their publics. Ehling (1992) states that “the relationship perspective represents a shift away from manipulation of public opinion and toward a focus on building, nurturing and maintaining relationships as the core function of public relations” (cited in Ledingham and Bruning, 2000:56).

Marketing theorists such as Doyle (2000) argue that “marketing is the management process that seeks to maximise returns to shareholders by developing relationships with valued customers and creating competitive advantage” (cited in Phillips, 2006:214). This statement signifies another aspect of MPR that neither marketing nor public relations academics can agree upon. Each discipline is claiming ownership rights to relationship management, when they should be working in unison to ensure that the communication strategies are complementary and achieve organisational effectiveness.

## **2.6 Communication**

A fundamental element of public relations is to communicate with all stakeholders. In order for the communication to be justifiable and credible, public relations practitioners must be aware of the communications processes such as public agency and public information. Shannon and Weaver identified the basic communications structure in 1948, commonly known as the communications loop, where “the sender of the message is linked with its receiver, backwards and forwards between the two” (cited in Davis, 2004:79). This communication model is imperative for public relations practitioners to ensure that the messages they are distributing are being received appropriately to its desired targets. Shannon and Weaver (1949) have identified the importance of this model by stating that it is “the foundation of modern theories of communication” (cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2006:144)

Grunig and Hunt (1984) outlined four distinct types of public relations communication practices. (cited in Davis, 2004:82, Tench and Yeomans, 2006:147, Fill, 2006:245)

### **1. Press Agency/Publicity**

This concept originated in the 1830’s when propaganda was used to communicate with stakeholders. In this model there is little respect for truthfulness. Tench and Yeomans (2006:147) describe how organisations use this form of communication “to disseminate a particular point of view through the media and other channels”.

This type of communication is traditionally viewed as how public relations incorporated communication with stakeholders. This communication is one way and

does not encourage feedback or interaction from stakeholders once the message is received. Whilst this form of communication may be used by certain public relations practitioners such as Max Clifford, it is not commonly used for professionals communicating with stakeholders as credibility and reputation are at risk for those who use this model.

## **2. Public Information**

This method of communication is used to inform “disseminate truthful facts, figures and advice on behalf of the organisation” (Davis, 2004:83). Government bodies used this method of communication to inform the public about areas that are important to know about. It is a form of one-way communication and does not encourage feedback from receivers. In this form of communication “truth is fundamental” as the information communicated is used to inform or educate the public on a particular issue.

## **3. Two-Way Asymmetric**

This approach involves “messages going in both directions but there is an imbalance in favour of the sender” (Davis 2004:83). This method gives public relations specialists the opportunity to use ‘power of persuasion’ to encourage receivers to see from the organisations perspective. This communication method is used more frequently than the abovementioned methods. Public relations specialists engage in this form of two-way communication as it “aims to generate agreement between organisations and its audiences by bringing them round to the organisation’s way of thinking” (Tench and Yeomans, 2006:147). As it is a form of two-way communication feedback is an essential element to this method. Stakeholders get the opportunity to communicate and discuss the messages received and the organisation can use this to gage the reaction of the public opinion of the organisation. The feedback is mainly used by organisations to “adapt communications strategies to be more persuasive, not to alter organisation’s position” (Tench and Yeomans, 2006:147)

#### **4. Two-Way Symmetric**

Cutlip and Centre introduced this concept in 1952 when they discussed the two-way flow of communication. It is a “mutual understanding and respect, where both parties to the dialogue are relatively equal and mutually respectful” (Davis 2004:83). As receivers are becoming more educated and can access accurate information quickly, organisations are being forced to incorporate this communication method to relate to their stakeholders and to build reputation and credibility. Communicators and the recipients view this method of communication as the “most acceptable and mutually rewarding form of communication. Power is seen to be dispersed equally between the organisation and its stakeholders” (Fill, 2006:245). This method of communication is generally used when organisations are unsure of stakeholder reactions to a specific action e.g. environmental issue. McDonalds was subject to a lot of negative media coverage throughout the years as they were hit by crisis after crisis. Their public relations specialists engaged in this form of communication in order to avert another crisis hitting the organisation (Cooper, 2009, 80 - 104).

The demand for organisations to engage in communication processes with stakeholders is rapidly increasing. As Christensen and Langer (2009) argue: “contemporary organisations adapt to the growing demand for information and stakeholder insight through strategies of consistency, that is by formalising all communications and pursuing uniformity in everything they say and do” (cited in Christensen et al., 2009:209). This emphasises the requirement for a common-wide organisation communications strategy.

#### **2.7 Media Relations**

An organisation’s media communication strategies should be carried out by public relations practitioners as it requires professional communication techniques as well as relationship management techniques. “Good media relations requires a skilled practitioner or team of practitioners to tune into the media’s agenda, to develop relationships with appropriate journalists and editors and to develop and deliver

effective stories, images and comments to the right media at the right time and by the right means (Tench and Yeomans, 2006:314).

Whilst many people believe that media relations is to utilise good media coverage of the organisation, U.S. author and communication consultant Hotlz (2002) goes further: “Contrary to the apparent belief of many observers, the role of an organisational media relations department is not to make the company look good in the newspapers....Ideally the job of media relations department is to help reporters and editors to do their jobs. That objective is entirely consistent with the broader goal of public relations, which is to manage the relationship between the organisation and its various constituent audiences” (cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2006:315).

Media relations is now a necessary element of the organisational structure as traditional methods of informing publics of new and innovative products is no longer effectively achieved through advertising. This entails a stronger emphasis on public relations messages being conveyed through the mass media. Although Angwin and Hallinan (2005) express that “the readership of daily newspapers is shrinking” (cited in Robinson, 2006:248), Baines et al., (2004:4) emphasise that “there has also been a considerable increase in the means by which public relations messages can be conveyed – for example, through satellite, cable and internet media – as the mass media generally has paradoxically fragmented and globalised simultaneously”.

Since the decline in advert effectiveness, public relations techniques are being employed more frequently as they are perceived as being more cost effective and as an enhanced way of reaching target audiences.

## **2.8 Relationship between Public Relations and Marketing**

Academics from both public relations and marketing outline the necessity for both departments to work in unison, as they compliment one another. Corporate success is dependent on the relationship between the departments and therefore, organisations

must ensure that the academic conflict of roles and responsibilities does not transpire into work practices.

As we have seen from the above literature, public relations and marketing departments have common functions that frequently overlap and can cause confusion and conflict among the two disciplines. Davis (2004:138) distinguishes the two functions by highlighting that marketing targets one group; customers, whilst public relations target various stakeholder groups, not just customers. "Marketing will continue to concentrate on attending to customer's needs and wants of its products and services by way of exchanges, while MPR will persist in its focus to generating and enhancing relationships through meeting customer's expectations and fostering awareness, understanding and goodwill towards the company and its offering".

"Generally advertising (as part of the marketing department) and public relations functions have tended to work to different objectives. More recently with the introduction of integrated marketing communications programmes, their purposes have become increasingly intertwined. Generally public relations aim to educate and inform in order to create understanding" (Baines et al., 2004:21). Although the literature outlines difference in objectives for both disciplines, the departments are coming together more frequently as marketing departments are becoming more dependent on public relations initiatives as traditional advertising methods are decreasing in impact. Ries and Ries (2001) argue that a "seismic shift is underway, which will result in a diminished role for advertising in the future as companies look for more sophisticated ways to promote their products and services" (cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2006:415). Heath (2001:206), states that the differences between marketing and public relations are declining and they have "began bumping into one another with greater frequency and competing more directly for organisational resources".

The diminishing differences are causing conflict among the sectors as they are unsure of who should manage and overlook the MPR initiatives. "Marketing (not just advertising) scholars and practitioners are methodically redefining the field of

marketing as public relations. Employee communications is now internal marketing (Gronroos, 1981), crisis management is now crisis marketing (Marconi, 1992) and virtually the whole of public relations is now relationship marketing” (Heath, 2001:211).

From the literature it is evident that there has always been controversy over MPR. However, this may increase as more public relations roles are being diverged into marketing roles. Martha Lauzen, an American academic, argues that “marketing is attempting to subsume all public relations’ roles and functions. She defines this as marketing imperialism which “is the intrusion of marketing into the activities traditionally within the domain of public relations” (Lauzen cited in Baines et al., 2004:18). Heath (2001:211) observes that “marketing and advertising’s lack of acknowledgement or even recognition of their reinvention of public relations is due largely to the general lack of understanding of what public relations is and does”. He further outlines that marketing academics are partially responsible as they have “traditionally mistaken publicity or marketing related public relations as the whole of public relations, often portraying public relations as an after-thought to an advertising campaign, designed to garner whatever ‘free advertising’ can be generated to compliment the basic ad campaign” (Heath, 2001:211).

However, the conflict may be lessening as Tench and Yeomans (2006:417) delineate that “it is increasingly appreciated in marketing circles and textbooks that public relations is a diverse practice that when successfully applied can grab attention, get people talking and move them to action”. This indicates that there may be a transformation in the relationship amongst marketers and public relations professionals.

Kotler, a marketing academic, further emphasises this revolution as he claims that “advertising is losing some of its effectiveness: ‘the public knows that advertising exaggerates and is biased. At its best, advertising is playful and entertaining; at its worst it is intrusive and dishonest’. Companies overspend on advertising and under spend on public relations” (cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2006:427). Effective public

relations is now seen as assisting the complete marketing role by “maintaining relationships through gauging awareness, attitude, mitigating crises, controlling damage, enhancing opinions or through other specific objectives not directly linked to sales” (Walker, 2009). As companies are seeking innovative ways of reaching their audiences, Kolah (2004) argues that “we are more likely to see more resources switched into public relations programmes and away from ‘hard sell’ marketing techniques” (cited in Gregory, 2004:40).

This amended marketing vision may reduce the tension that exists among marketing and public relations practitioners thus resulting in better communication amongst departments and overall organisational effectiveness. Management need to be aware of the two distinct roles that the departments operate and thus need to outline the roles and encourage communication at cross functional and managerial levels. The elements that distinguish the functions are often not recognised and the ‘interchangeable use of terms marketing and public relations ‘often result from historical precedence and reflect little understanding of their differences’” (Cutlip et al., 1997).

Kotler and Mindak (1978) were the first to address the importance of the two functions merging together. They outlined five models of how the functions relate to one another:

- Marketing and public relations are distinct but separate
- They have separate but overlapping functions
- Marketing is the dominant function and public relations a subset
- Public relations is the dominant and marketing is the subset
- Marketing and public relations are converging functions

Regardless of how the functions operate together, organisations need to ensure that there is cooperation and communication amongst the two departments at both management and personal levels. According to Ouwersloot and Duncan (2006:314), public relations managers usually report to the president of the organisation and advertising managers typically report to a vice president of marketing. There is a need



for constant communication among the departments to ensure that the messages being sent to the public are consistent and not contradictory as this can imply that the organisation is disorganised and or being dishonest and thus resulting in stakeholders having an unfavourable image of the company.

## **2.9 Integrated Marketing Communications**

The American Association of Advertising Agencies was one of the first to define integrated marketing communications (IMC) as “a concept of marketing communication planning that recognises the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations – and combines them to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impacts through the seamless integration of discrete messages” (cited in Torp, 2009:196).

Schultz and Kitchen (2000) further define it to emphasise the communications with various stakeholder groups comprising of internal and external targets, not just customers. They outline that IMC is “a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated measurable, persuasive brand communication programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects and other targeted, relevant and internal audiences” (cited in Tench and Yeomans, 2006:504).

There is a perception that the idea of integration is something novel and short lived, yet marketing academics such as Haney (1920) and Weld (1921) have been discussing the concept of integration since the 1920's (cited in Torp, 2009: 191).

Christensen et al., (2008) outline that the “idea of integration is in fact inherent in the marketing concept and has to do with the alignment and integration of the four P's (product, price, place and promotion) and the alignment and integration within each of the four P's” (cited in Torp, 2009: 192).

The purpose of integration is to ensure that communication strategies are consistent. Multimedia Marketing (2009) describes IMC as “integrating all the promotional tools, so that they work together in harmony”.

Marketing academics such as Ouwersloot and Duncan (2006:308) outline that

“IMC is helping to introduce to marketing practitioners some of the concepts that public relations professionals have known about for years, such as the importance of stakeholder relationships. Marketing people are discovering the power and value of marketing public relations – that is brand publicity- to deliver highly cost efficient messages. At the same time, public relations people are learning more about the marketing and are using marketing concepts such as branding and positioning to build corporate communication strategies”.

It can therefore be argued that the use of IMC strategies can reduce the possibility of conflict as the two departments can cooperate more effectively and thus enhance corporate success.

Although integration seems to be reinforcing internal corporate relations, Christensen et al., (2009:209) argue that “the most powerful driver behind integration seems to be a potent combination of inquisitive publics asking for insight and information, and critical media and journalists zealously looking for gaps, contradictions and ambiguities in corporate messages”.

Organisations that do not use IMC strategies have “disjointed messages that weaken impact and confuse, frustrate or irritate the organisation’s audiences” (Smith 1996; Balmer, 1995; Ind, 1997; Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Mitchell, 1997; Harris and Chernatony, 2001) (cited in Christensen et al., 2009:208).

Again, public relations academics are claiming the use of IMC strategies is a “form of marketing insofar as it seeks to subordinate public relations under a new marketing umbrella” (Duncan, Caywood and Newsom, 1993; Laurzen, 1991; Rose and Miller, 1994) (cited in Heath, 2001:205; Torp, 2009: 195).

The term IMC is now referred to as integrated communication (IC) as it emphasises the importance of “various stakeholders beyond customers and the understanding that public relations was not simply a marketing function” (Grunig et al., 2002:269).

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## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

The purpose of this research is to examine how integrated marketing communication strategies in public relations and marketing disciplines are being implemented in organisations. In order to carry out empirical research, the researcher chose a qualitative research design as the literature outlined that it is the most appropriate method due to the nature of the study.

#### 3.2 Qualitative V's Quantitative Research Methods

In order to justify the researcher choosing the qualitative research approach as the most effective for this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods will be compared and contrasted.

Qualitative research is defined as

*“Multi method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, historical, interactional and visual texts – that describes routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual’s lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand”*

(Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:5).

In contrast, quantitative research findings focus more on the amount and quantity rather than gathering viewpoints, and most often is associated with gathering numbers. Creswell (1994) defines quantitative research as “an enquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a hypothesis or theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the hypothesis or theory hold true” (cited in Naoum, 2007:39).

Bryman (2001:285) outlines in the table below the contrasts and comparisons of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies:

<i>Qualitative</i>	<i>Quantitative</i>
Words	Numbers
Point of view of participants	Point of view of researcher
Researcher close	Researcher distant
Theory emergent	Theory testing
Structured	Unstructured
Rich deep data	Hard, reliable data
Natural setting	Artificial setting

**Table 3.1:** Contrast and Comparisons of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methodologies.

As this research is grounded in relationship and work ethics amongst the two distinct disciplines (marketing and PR), an in-depth analysis of the organisational structure, work practices and personal opinions are required to research this area.

“Qualitative research allows the researcher to share in the understanding and perceptions of others and explore how people give structure and meaning to their behaviour” (Berg, 2009:269).

### **3.3 Data Collection Methods**

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 and Lincoln, 2005).

### **3.3.1 Interviews**

The primary data collection method used by the researcher was semi structured interviews. Due to the nature of this study, it was deemed the most appropriate method to gain the required information from participants as it enabled interviewees to express their opinions and allowed the researcher to gain an insight on the chosen topic, without influencing the participants to give specific findings.

The advantage of semi structured interview techniques is that the researcher has an interview schedule prepared prior to the interview process, outlining a range of topics and specific questions which act as a guide to ensure the relevant topics are being discussed (Kumar, 2005:126). This enables the interviewer to ask “questions that are not included in the guide...if an area of interest occurs that may not have been foreseen by the interviewer” (Bryman, 2001:314).

This aspect of the interview technique is especially relevant to this area of study and the method of data collection. Due to the nature of the study, participants may interpret the question wrongly and this method enables the interviewer to amend the question to ensure the validity of the responses. This format also enables the researcher to ask probing questions on an area they may not have anticipated arising and to also ensure the validity of the responses.

The structure of the interview also enables the researcher to change the format and sequence of the questions being asked to ensure they are gaining accurate data and not misinterpreting the interviewee’s opinions.

The interview process consisted of open ended questions to allow for interviewees most honest and personal answers. A draft of questions was drawn up prior to the interview to ensure that the questions did not influence participants to respond in a particular way and also to ensure that the questioning did not outline the researcher’s opinion which may persuade respondents to answer in a particular way. “Research is a social activity that can be powerfully affected by the researcher’s own motivations and

values” (Blaxter et al., 2006:14). Bryman (2001:143) outlines that open ended questions “allow unusual responses to be delivered”. Since the nature of the study was based on relationships and personal opinions, it was imperative that the researcher derived personal accounts and opinions in order to make the research reliable.

### **3.3.2 Secondary Data Type**

Secondary data collection methods were used to gain an insight and expertise into the areas of research. In order to ensure that the questions and topics being analysed were adequate, the researcher used books, journals, articles and online sources to gain a knowledge and understanding of the current literature available in this field. These articles helped the researcher to establish the questioning techniques and also provided relevant material which could be used to further expand on topics that were of importance for this study.

A vast range of literature is available in both marketing and PR publications. Therefore, the researcher had to ensure that the appropriate literature was used to create a basis for the questioning techniques and to create a greater understanding of the conflicts and issues that occur between the two disciplines.

### **3.4 The Researchers Role**

At the initial stages of obtaining participants for this study, the researcher compiled a list of suitable candidates in the area of chosen research. As the study focuses on the relationship that exists amongst public relations and marketing professionals it was imperative that the participants came from either a marketing or a public relations industry, to ensure validity and reliability in the area of study.

Each candidate was contacted via email asking if they would like to participate in the research study and candidates who showed interest were then contacted by telephone and the purpose of the study was outlined to them. A suitable meeting time and place was also arranged. At this stage, the researcher also sought the permission of

candidates to record the interview process on a digital recorder for validity and accuracy purposes.

Five interviews took place in July and August 2010 and each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. As stated previously, the interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy of the data and this also enabled the researcher to concentrate on the candidate's responses and to take note of the points that needed elaboration.

Immediately following the completion of the interviews, the researcher transcribed each interview verbatim by playing back the recording. The researcher then categorised each interview to find commonalities among the interviewees and to help distinguish each topic that was discussed.

### **3.5 Sampling Strategy**

The researcher chose to interview both marketing and public relations professionals to ensure that the data being collected was credible and reflected the industry. This ensured that the research was unbiased and a balanced conclusion could be made at the end.

Qualitative research methods focus on gaining in depth analysis from a small number of participants and the emphasis is on the quality of the data obtained and not the quantity. For the purpose of this research a purposeful sampling strategy was chosen to gain information from experts and 'information rich' professionals. Patton (2002: 230) describes this sampling strategy as "information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling".

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

The data generated from the interviews was analysed using the grounded theory method. Daymon et al (2002:117) outlines that it's the most appropriate method from



“public relations research studies because the theory developed represents a close connection to the empirical reality”.

As previously outlined, each of the five interviews was transcribed verbatim from the digital recordings. These transcripts were then reviewed and categorised. The use of categories helped the researcher to distinguish findings and also made it easier for the researcher to see commonalities and contrasts from their research findings (Daymon et al., 2002:126).

The categories represented an area that had an impact on the objectives outlined for the purpose of this research. Once the interviews were categorised the researcher was able to link the findings from the data collection methods to the literature reviewed previously in this area.

The researcher could then find similarities and emerging concepts from the literature reviewed, thus enabling the researcher to validate this literature to the current industry findings.

### **3.7 Validity**

Whilst conducting the research, the researcher ensured that all data and literature collected was both reliable and valid to the research purpose.

The researcher carried out in depth interviews with industry experts who had been working in their profession for a sufficient period to ensure that their views and opinions were viable.

Throughout this study, the researcher continued to review relevant literature to ensure that the findings were consistent with materials previously discussed and that it was reliable. Reliability is “concerned with the question of whether the researcher is obtaining data on which he or she can rely” (Mc Kinnon, 1988: 36)

To ensure that both marketing and public relations viewpoints were accounted for, the researcher sought interviews from professionals in both disciplines as this enabled a broad scope of both functions. Thus incorporating reliable and valid findings when discussing the relationship amongst both industries.

The in-depth interviews were carried out face to face as it is a more personal approach and enabled the researcher to gain further and more detailed information compared to quantitative methods, such as questionnaires that often gather only yes/no responses. The interview techniques allowed the researcher to probe areas of interest or confusion.

The use of digital recorders and the collection method of transcribing ensured that the researcher was able to obtain direct quotation from interview participants and thus ensured validity of the research.

### **3.8 Limitations**

The researcher found that one of the greatest limitations to this research was obtaining interviewees. The researcher found it difficult to gain access to public relations professionals who worked in conjunction with the marketing department, as the number of in-house public relations specialists had greatly been reduced in recent budget cutbacks.

A further limitation, acknowledged by the researcher, is the method of interviews as the main research methodology. The level of knowledge and detail obtained in each interview was dependant on the researcher's skill at ensuring the interviewees were at ease with divulging information, and that it was appropriate to the topics of the study in order to make it viable. "The credibility of qualitative methods hinges to a great extent on the skills, competence and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork" (Patton, 2002:14).

The use of semi-structured interview techniques and open ended questions meant that the researcher had to ensure that it related to the research topic and also to ensure that

the interviewee was answering relevantly and not misinterpreting the questions. Thus, ensuring the research was credible and justifiable.

The transcribing and categorising of each individual interview was time consuming as each recording had to be replayed numerous times to ensure accuracy and to avoid misquoting the participants.

### **3.9 Ethics**

Blaxter (2006) outlines the importance of ethical research stating that it “should be the goal of all social researchers”. The researcher ensured that the research methodology was ethical in all concepts when dealing with interviewees. All interview participants took part voluntarily after being informed of the reasoning of this study at the initial stages of contact. The researcher sought permission before the interview to record the interview for validation purposes and to ensure accuracy in direct quotes. This informed consent justifies that the participant selection and data collection methods were carried out ethically (cited in Patton, 2002:311).

The researcher ensured that any company sensitive information provided for explanatory purposes by the interviewee would not be published. Any information regarding company’s competitive advantage tactics were not outlined to ensure that competitors could not access information deemed as confidential.

The format and methods used in this research methodology was conducted under an ethical standard and adheres to the code of ethics conducted by Cork Institute of Technology and the Public Relations Institute of Ireland.

# **CHAPTER FOUR**

## **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The primary research findings from the five semi structured interviews on how organisations are implementing integrated marketing communication strategies are presented in this chapter.

The findings are analysed according to the research objectives outlined in chapter one.

The objectives are:

1. To examine the role of public relations in the marketing function
2. To identify the conflicts and tensions that exist between the two functions
3. To analyse the integration of public relations in marketing strategies

The findings and analysis comprises of direct quotations from interview participants and comparisons to the literature outlined in chapter two. The inclusion of direct quotations ensures validity of the researcher's findings, as Patton (2004:5) outlines that "direct quotations are a basic source for raw data in qualitative evaluation".

### **4.2 The Role of Public Relations in the Marketing Function**

Traditionally public relations and marketing departments were two separate functions in an organisation that did not communicate with one another. This concept has now changed and we find more and more companies are integrating the two departments to increase organisational effectiveness.

The area of marketing public relations (MPR) has seen huge growth in recent years and is an aspect of public relations that is closely linked to the marketing department.

This research found that there were inconsistent opinions by the participants as to where in the organisations structure the public relations function was most suited.

*“Public relations is part of the marketing department and reports to the marketing director. There is a lady who is head of public relations in Musgraves, but it all sits under the marketing function which is absolutely the right place for it”.*

**(Evelyn Moynihan, Brand Manager, Musgraves)**

Another interview participant agreed that public relations is an important aspect in marketing but disagreed with Moynihan’s view of the placement of public relations under the marketing discipline.

*“Public relations is a complimentary tool to marketing initiatives but public relations should ideally be a separate function to marketing”*

**(Liz McAvoy, Programme Manager, Cork Marketing Partnership)**

A further interview participant concurs with this view that it should be a separate entity.

*“Public relations should be stand alone as you can do it by itself, not just for marketing purposes”*

**(Peter Dineen, Communications Officer, HSE)**

This research outlines that there are conflicting opinions as to where the public relations function should be placed in the organisation and who should be managing it. The marketing participants believe that public relations should be part of the marketing function, whilst the public relations participants strongly outline that it is a separate entity.

These conflicts are also evident in the literature and the findings are dependent on the background of the academic. Kotler (1989) a marketing academic is of the opinion that public relations is an element of marketing, whereas Grunig (1992) a public relations

academic, implies that public relations can be distinguished from marketing and thus should be treated as a separate entity (cited in Kitchen and Pappasolomou, 1997: 78).

This conflict makes the implementation of IMC strategies more complex as both professions argue that public relations should be placed in different disciplines. Thus making management decisions and workplace cohesion between the two disciplines harder to manage. In order for true integration to occur, both marketing and public relations personnel must acknowledge that they have to work together to achieve organisational effectiveness.

This study has found that all of the respondents were in agreement that public relations can complement and add value to marketing initiatives.

*“In the marketing campaigns we have carried out to date there has been a strong reliance on the public relations aspect to ensure the public are receiving our messages”.*

**(Liz McAvoy, Programme Manager, Cork Marketing Partnership)**

This was further enforced by another interviewee who stated that

*“We always use the public relation tool to complement our marketing initiatives”*

**(Paula Cogan, Director of Marketing, River Lee Hotel)**

Whilst the respondents agreed that it was complementary, one interviewee expressed concern about people over analysing the role as to whether it is a public relations or marketing function.

*“There are all different words being banded about whether it is marketing or public relations, its all semantics. If you try to box it away it is never going to be fully integrated”.*

**(Aideen McGrath, Director of Public Relations, H & A Marketing)**

The research also found that all interviewees were in agreement that public relations functions are being integrated into the marketing aspects of the organisation and campaigns. Peter Dineen outlined how public relations is being utilised in the planning stages of marketing campaigns. This represents a significant advancement for public relations, as previously, marketing departments seldom deployed public relations techniques into a campaign prior to its commencement. This view was also reiterated by another interviewee.

*“We have had clients divesting their budgets into public relations. The days of big bang advertising is over and public relations is taking a seat at the corporate table of a lot of organisations, and rightly so”.*

**(Aideen McGrath, Director of Public Relations, H & A Marketing)**

The importance of integration is evident from both the literature and the research findings. However, in order for the organisation to be truly integrated there is a need for public relations to be included in the campaign planning stages and to be represented at management level. Ouwersloot and Duncan (2006: 314) outline that “where there is no cross functional organisation, advertising managers may have little or no contact with their counterparts in public relations”.

### **4.3 The Conflicts and Tensions that Exist**

The findings highlighted that the biggest challenge of public relations from a marketing perspective is that it is difficult to measure and therefore it makes it challenging to evaluate the success of the campaign.

*“Every cent we spend has to be justified, it has to be effective and it has to deliver a positive return on investment. This is where public relations comes under its biggest challenge as it is not the easiest thing to measure”.*

**(Evelyn Moynihan, Brand Manager, Musgraves)**

Whilst all interview participants concurred with this challenge, it was also highlighted that the public relations industry and personnel are aware that they need to justify the cost and are now using different techniques to try and overcome this obstacle. Unlike marketing, public relations results were often intangible and public relations practitioners had no physical way of measuring if the campaign was effective. When an advert was used by the marketing department it was much easier to evaluate as the rise in sales and revenue generated was linked to the success of the advert.

One interview participant expressed concern at the lack of evaluation methods to date and was keen to highlight adequate methods to show the return on investment in public relations.

*“It is not about showing the number of press clippings and it is not about showing the equivalent advertising value. It is about showing whether it was a positive or negative piece, where in the paper it was located and if it reached the target desired. You also need to examine how the feedback has been, how you have shifted opinions among the media and have you been talked about online; these are all metrics that should be part and parcel of a public relations campaign”*

**(Aideen Mc Grath, Director of Public Relations, H & A Marketing)**

From the findings generated in this study it is evident that the marketing participants were concerned over the lack of evaluation being carried out by public relations professionals, but the public relations participants have acknowledged this concern and are creating new evaluation techniques to combat this issue.

This study also highlighted the disputes that occur in organisations when determining budgets. All the respondents agreed that an area which required clarification was whether budgets were going to be assigned separately or collectively.



*“There has always been a debate that comes down to resources and whether the funds should come out of marketing or public relations budgets, how much element of a plan should be public relations or marketing will never change, that debate will always exist”*

**(Paula Cogan, Marketing Director, River Lee Hotel)**

One interview participant emphasised that whilst the argument may exist at the initial planning stages of the campaign the argument should not be debated once decisions are made.

*“Once it is well planned out, once budgets are assigned, debated and approved then there is no real argument. You have your public relations budget for the year and you know how you are spending it”.*

**(Evelyn Moynihan, Brand Manager, Musgraves)**

This view was opposed by a public relations participant who was of the opinion that whilst budgets are assigned they can be redistributed after the initial approval stages as there may be a bigger reliance on one of the other functions.

*“There is a fierce battle at the moment as we (the public relations department) are trying to take the budget from the marketing department known as Health Promotion”*

**(Peter Dineen, Communications Officer, HSE)**

This research found that a lot of the conflict that exists amongst the two departments is due to the lack of resources and the debate over who should manage and control these budgets.

These findings are also reflected in the review of the literature in chapter two. Heath (2001:206) states that both marketing and public relations functions have “began bumping into one another and competing more directly for organisational resources”.

A further point emphasised by Paula Cogan was

*“It would be superb if we had a two year public relations strategy that we could put in place but the budget does not allow for this so we have to look at it on a project by project basis and again we probably won’t have any public relations in the next three to four months”.*

This statement outlines that the marketing budget has not allowed for public relations to be incorporated within the specified time frame. This budget outline should have the scope to be reviewed, if necessary, to enable organisations to implement other strategies such as public relations into their campaigns. Budgets should allow a certain element of flexibility as a planned strategy may need to be changed to reflect the current industry and the targets.

The research found that public relations is being utilised more frequently by marketing departments to add value and credibility to their campaigns. The respondents differed in opinions on how they believed public relations had been affected by the current climate.

One respondent highlighted that public relations has been effected negatively by the recent economic downturn and stated that

*“In the last two years it has been one area that has been cut back a lot in organisations”*

**(Paula Cogan, Marketing Director, River Lee Hotel)**

An additional marketing interviewee also permitted this view and stated that

*“I think everyone in public relations has to work a lot harder than they used to”*

**(Evelyn Moynihan, Brand Manager, Musgraves)**

Another participant, a public relations specialist contradicts this view and states that

*“In terms of marketing a lot of clients are retrenching because they do not have the budget for advertising and more and more they are looking at their money and*

*thinking how can they spend it better. Public relations is a good option as it is more cost effective than advertising”.*

**(Aideen McGrath, Director of Public Relations, H & A Marketing)**

The public relations participant's views are equivalent to the findings in the literature review. An article featured in PR Week stated that “ the proven power of public relations and its cost effectiveness in contrast to advertising motivated the advertising industry to add public relations departments to their operations in order to help alleviate its financial woes” (cited in Kitchen and Papasolomou, 1997:72).

#### **4.4 The Integration of Public Relations in Marketing Strategies**

This research focused on the integration of marketing and public relations disciplines. It is evident from the interviewees that they believe integration is a viable concept for both departments, as both disciplines are now competing for the same roles in the organisation. The most suitable alternative is for both sectors to merge together and work in an integrated setting.

*“We are using public relations as one element but traditional marketing still has to be included in the mix. To say that public relations is ever going to replace print media would be a bit naive”*

**(Paula Cogan, Marketing Director, River Lee Hotel)**

Another participant acknowledged this same stance and outlined that their organisation uses public relations as an integrated strategy

*“We don't do any public relations unless it is integrated and again it is back to the effectiveness. If you do decide to do an ad-hoc piece of public relations and spend a couple of grand on it, it is not going anywhere”*

**(Evelyn Moynihan, Brand Manager, Musgraves)**

A public relations interviewee has a conflicting observation to the inclusion of public relation techniques in marketing campaigns

*“Previously marketing campaigns were getting things in isolation, there may have been an advert but the media were not being brought along”*

**(Peter Dineen, Communications Officer, HSE)**

The public relations participants argue that the majority of marketing campaigns have a public relations element to them as the organisations are aware there has been a shift in how to communicate with stakeholders.

*“It is all about engagement and dialogue with consumers and public relations is the most natural home for that as it has been doing it for years. Advertising are trying to muscle in on that but the skill set very much relies on the public relations team”*

**(Aideen McGrath, Director of Public Relations, H & A Marketing)**

Again, the marketing participants disagree with this point and argue that public relations is being integrated throughout the organisation and not being consumed by the marketing department.

*“Cross functionally we all work together to deliver it, so the public relations agency talks to the advertising agency, the promotion agency and for me it’s the only way forward”*

**(Evelyn Moynihan, Brand Manager, Musgraves)**

The public relations participants were in agreement that the two functions should work closely to achieve organisational effectiveness.

*“The day of a very nice advert completely disconnected to any other communication of a company has gone in my view. It’s all over because it has to be about consumer engagement and in that sphere it makes absolute sense for public relations and*

*marketing to work hand in hand and not to be considered exclusive or on separate sides of the table”*

**(Aideen McGrath, Director of Public Relations, H & A Marketing)**

These findings emphasise the tensions that exist in the literature. Public relation academics such as Laurzen (1991), Duncan et al.(1993)., outline that a lot of marketing public relation activities and the concept of integration are forms of “marketing imperialism in so far as it seeks to subordinate public relations under a new marketing umbrella” (cited in Heath, 2001:205). Whilst the academics argue that they are separate entities, this study has found that the literature is not reflective of the industry in Ireland.

The participants unanimously agreed that integration is a fundamental aspect of both disciplines and the integration process is already underway in the majority of organisations.

## **4.5 Further Findings**

The researcher wanted to obtain a broad spectrum of the organisation and the relationship between the marketing and public relations functions. The researcher asked probing questions on areas that may indirectly have an effect on the integration process. Generally in terms of integrating the two departments the majority of literature focused on consumer public relations, yet the participants highlighted areas that are defined under corporate public relations as also being important.

### **4.5.1 Corporate Social Responsibility**

From the research carried out during this study one commonality that was expressed was the importance of including the public relations function of corporate social responsibility programmes into marketing strategies.

When discussing corporate social responsibility strategies participants outlined that public relations play an integral role in ensuring the organisation is being accredited with its involvement in such practices.

*“Public relations would play a huge role in making sure our brand values are expressed in the right way, and we get our fair share of voice, that we are getting the right coverage, that we are leveraging it on the ground locally with local Supervalu stores as well as national public relations”*

**(Evelyn Moynihan, Brand Manager, Musgraves)**

A further marketing participant concurred that it is important to be seen to be socially responsible but;

*“It can be abused and overused so it is about getting the balance right, to use it a little but never to jeopardise it”*

**(Paula Cogan, Director of Marketing, River Lee Hotel)**

The research findings highlighted that whilst organisations are conscious about being involved in social responsibility programmes a lot of organisations are focusing on sponsoring an event that ensures media coverage will be generated. Corporate social responsibility programmes are an integral strategy but they should focus on doing things to help the environment and give back to the local community and not just to generate the most media coverage as possible.

*“CSR has become more outwardly focused especially when looking at green initiatives; it’s definitely important and should be a part of every organisations strategy”*

**(Aideen McGrath, Director of Public Relations, H&A Marketing)**

This view was also reiterated by another participant who outlined that green policies are now expected by the public and involvement in these practices can generate more business.

*“One thing we are very conscious about is that we are trying to develop our green energy and conservations policy because it is a very big topic now both locally and internationally and a lot of multinationals corporations that we deal with have included it in their request for hotel programmes”*

**(Paula Cogan, Director of Marketing, River Lee Hotel)**

This study outlined that a lot of organisations involved in socially responsible programmes are being forced to carry out these initiatives as stakeholders are becoming increasingly demanding and the success of the organisation may be reliant on these practices.

#### **4.5.2 Media Relations**

All of the respondents were in agreement that when communicating with stakeholders such as the public and the media, it is vital that the public relations function carries out this strategy. The relationship between public relations and the media is often referred to negatively but organisations seeking to get media coverage are dependant on the public relations element to do this.

*“Public relations is so critical, more so that any other discipline, it relies on relationships hugely and your networking, and who you know in the media, and who you can trust to give press releases to first, so the public relations departments who have these relationships with the media, liaise with the media one hundred percent”*

**(Evelyn Moynihan, Brand Manager, Musgraves)**

A public relations interviewee expressed the importance of having the right skills and abilities to structure a press release.

*“In print media, trying to get a good story across is very difficult, we spend a lot of our time rearranging statements in a certain way such as putting more important things at the start and adding context to what we give to the media”*

**(Peter Dineen, Communications Officer, HSE)**

This emphasises the importance of having qualified communication experts to format press releases to enhance the probability of greater media coverage.

#### **4.5.3 Consultancy Services**

The findings outlined that over half of the respondents are currently engaging in public relations consultancy services. Even organisations that have an in-house public relations specialist enlist the services of consultants to carry out their desired campaigns.

One participant outlined the negative aspects of working with consultancy services and highlighted areas that need to be adjusted in order to make the use of consultancy services more justifiable.

*“Public relations companies have not reacted with budget cuts. They are not cutting fees and a certain element of public relations consultancies expect a certain amount of work handed over to them and often use my contacts”*

**(Paula Cogan, Director of Marketing, River Lee Hotel)**

One participant, a public relations consultant disagreed with this view and highlighted that

*“When you meet with resistance and where people are inexperienced with PR it tends to be more difficult to get ideas through. The more educated and experienced the person internally is the better able they are to make decisions to push ideas and generally they come out with better campaigns”*

**(Aideen McGrath, Director of Public Relations, H&A Marketing)**



The findings outline that some people are unaware of the benefits that public relations can bring to their organisation and that it can improve organisational strategies. A participant further highlights that this is an issue in Ireland compared to other countries in Europe.

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*“Ireland is getting better, but I just came from the UK and if you walked into a company (there) you are guaranteed that there will be a person working in PR, because its not just one small element of the marketing mix for many companies, certainly in the UK and Europe public relations is first on their list and they are spending more money on it. Ireland has a long way to go but its getting there.”*

**(Aideen McGrath, Director of Public Relations, H&A Marketing)**

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Conclusions

As discussed in this study integrated marketing communications is not a new or emerging concept; it can be dated back to the 1920's. However in the past, organisations were slow to incorporate integrated strategies. Integration has been taking place since the 1990's, but it is only in recent years that many organisations are only now deciding that they need to integrate due to an increasing number of factors such as the decline in marketing effectiveness.

The research focused on how public relations and marketing departments are being integrated and the roles of each function that are being affected. This study incorporated a vast area of research in both marketing and public relations functions. The researcher found there was a lot of overlapping functions between the two departments. While IMC strategies are beginning to be implemented into organisations, the effectiveness is determined by how the management and marketing departments view the role of public relations. The majority of marketing professionals interviewed were of the opinion that public relations is a sub section of the marketing department, therefore implying that public relations is to assist in the marketing of an organisation and its products. The public relations profession does agree that it can help the marketing function but conflict exists when the marketing department try to take the public relations roles and incorporate them into marketing tactics.

The research outlined that whilst both functions are in agreement that the concept of integration is viable, neither department are willing to relinquish responsibilities and resources. This tension has resulted in organisations not becoming truly integrated. The literature outlines opposing views based on whether the author has a marketing or public relations background. The use of interchangeable terms makes it more difficult for marketing professionals to distinguish what public relations does and what it can add to

their campaigns. The researcher noted that the interviewees referred to the same public relations techniques using various terms such as corporate social responsibility and cause related marketing.

A lot of areas of public relations are being utilised by the marketing function since the reduction in advertising effectiveness. Marketing departments are becoming more reliant on both consumer and corporate public relations strategies, such as corporate social responsibility programmes, to assist their marketing initiatives to gain further coverage of their brands and products. The researcher found that public relations is no longer just one of the four P's, it is much more involved throughout the marketing function.

The driving force behind the need for integration is undoubtedly the decreasing effectiveness of traditional marketing initiatives. This outlines that public relations techniques have always been more reliant on communicating with the organisations stakeholders and these strategies have been over shadowed by marketing tactics for numerous years. The public relations techniques of engaging with the various stakeholder groups have ensured that organisations have been able to communicate their values, social responsibilities and ethics to the public, a concept that is now vital for the survival of any organisation. Whilst marketing still seems to be the dominant function in this integrated relationship, the findings from this study highlight the growing importance and dependence of public relations strategies in a marketing context. The marketing department are deploying more public relation tactics into their initiatives to ensure that the messages and information they wish to convey is reaching the desired targets.

In order for organisations to ensure that their messages are being received and understood they are increasingly acquiring public relations professionals to complete their communication strategies with stakeholders and the media. This study highlighted the importance of these strategies being implemented by a skilled professional. Marketing professionals are not equipped with these skills while it is a fundamental element of a public relations qualification.

Even though there has been a huge growth in the demand for public relations techniques, there is a growing concern over the evaluation techniques for measuring the success of public relations activities. Although one respondent defended the measurement techniques and outlined alternative methods of evaluation, all the respondents raised this issue. This is an area that public relations professionals need to consolidate.

A significant finding of this study revealed that public relations practitioners who have experience from working in the U.K. outlined that organisations in Ireland are less inclined to use public relations compared to their counterparts overseas. This is highlighted in the disparity of staff numbers in public relation roles within an organisation, compared to those working in direct marketing roles, e.g. in Musgraves there are fifteen staff members in the marketing department, compared to just three in the public relations department. While it was highlighted that Irish companies are becoming more aware of the benefits that public relations can bring to an organisation, they are slower at adapting to these practices. Once the true appreciation of public relations is acknowledged the research outlined that there will be an increase in the need for public relations not only for its cost effectiveness but for the advantages of integrating it with marketing functions to create greater organisational effectiveness and to ensure that organisations are maintaining their competitive advantage.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

It is evident from this study that the public relations profession need to create better evaluation methods to be able to justify the expenditure of the public relations functions. Organisations can benefit greatly from having a public relations involvement but currently there is a major issue with public relations practitioners not measuring their campaigns accurately or in enough detail to satisfy the management.

Marketing academics are not enhancing the reputation of public relations with marketing students. Whilst a lot of the literature may include a chapter on public relations, it usually focuses on the conflict that surrounds the relationship between marketing and public relations and does not emphasise enough the benefits of an integrated strategy.

Marketing academics should focus on educating future marketing professionals on the advantages of incorporating an integrated marketing communications and ensure that literature is updated accordingly.

Public relations consultancies should consider revising their costs to coincide with the economic downturn. This was an area highlighted during the research process. Failure to correspond with the industry's costing could have a negative effect on the profession in the long term. The increasing costs and diminishing impact of advertising provides public relations with an opportunity to acquire additional market share.

Due to the broad scope of this research it would be recommended to conduct further studies into how Irish companies are not implementing integrated marketing communication strategies as quickly as other countries. This is an area that could generate a lot of new findings as the literature focused on Irish public relations practices is limited.

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## APPENDIX A

### List of Interview Participants

Aideen McGrath	Director of Public Relations	H & A Marketing
Evelyn Moynihan	Brand Manager	Musgraves
Liz McAvoy	Programme Manager	Cork Marketing Partnership
Paula Cogan	Director of Marketing	River Lee Hotel
Peter Dineen	Communications Officer	HSE

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Evelyn Moynihan Interview**

#### **What is your job title and description?**

I am a Brand Manager in Musgraves. I look after all the future strategy brand work for the Supervalu brand, so it's planning the next 5 years – where we want the brand to be, how big we want it to grow to and how we're going to get there.

#### **Do you use a lot of PR in your marketing initiatives?**

Yes we do use PR across the board on both Centra and Supervalu. It's broken into Corporate PR and Brand PR. Corporate PR would be the Musgraves brand, as a company how many people we employ, what we do for the environment. All these types of initiatives down to our brand and how we support Irish.

#### **Is there a separate PR department in Musgraves?**

No, it's part of the marketing department. PR reports to the Marketing Director, there is a lady who is head of PR but it all sits under the marketing function which is absolutely the right place for it

#### **Have you found there has been a growth or decline in Brand PR?**

PR is as important as it was 10 years ago when I started, but I think it has changed since. Every cent we spend has to be justified, it has to be effective, and it has to deliver a positive return on investment. So, if you are investing €50,000 on a campaign, you have to see results and you need to be clear what KPI's you're assigning to a project and this is where PR comes under its biggest challenge as it is not the easiest thing to measure and for me that's the biggest challenge and I am a big challenger of it. I am a supporter of it but if you're putting money behind it, you have to be clear on what you are trying to achieve and how you're going to measure it. Any other discipline in marketing is way easier to measure that's the main challenge facing PR at the moment.

It has similar focus but it has been looked at differently, it needs to be cost effective and it needs to deliver so PR people and PR agencies have to operate much more cleverly than they have in the past.

In the past, stereotypically PR is thought of as two models in bikinis would get you coverage no matter what your message is, but that is no longer the case. The media are no longer interested in brand messages coming through like that. Some of it still works, but what does that say about your brand? It's not unique, it's generic, so I think everyone in PR has to work a lot harder than they used to.

#### **In what way are you incorporating PR activities into your marketing campaign?**

If focusing on the brand side of it where we would focus mostly is sponsorship campaigns. We have recently taken on GAA National Football Championships. Ourselves, Ulster Bank and Vodafone are the three main sponsors, so that is the biggest

sponsorship in the country, so PR would be a huge role in making sure our brand values are expressed in the right way and that we get our fair share of voice, that we are getting the right coverage, that we are leveraging it on the ground locally with local Supervalu stores as well as national PR.

Tidy Towns is another example. We have a good PR budget for that and again making sure our brand messages are coming across well in all the coverage around the sponsorship – that would be the main area.

The other area that you would have to have when you're a brand manager and owner is damage limitation. If anything went wrong with your brand such as a price survey and your brand comes out badly where they have selected products where Supervalu is priced higher than Tesco or Dunnes. PR has to do a huge amount of work to explain that to the media and to justify how we are every bit as good value for money as Tesco or Dunnes.

### **Is there ever conflict over resources such as budgets?**

The way we plan it is part of our strategy planning so we look at our budgets once a year and our strategy 3-5 years out – also once a year. Once the strategy is signed off we look at budgets and there will be certain key areas that you want to go after and deliver for your brand – such as value for money, the fact that we are local and Irish. Under each of the key areas you look at how we are going to spend the money and deliver the activity and that's when you argue if it is advertising, public relations or promotions, as well as what is the best way to deliver the message or the sales result. That is where you have the argument and for me the marketing or brand people own the budgets, but obviously the PR experts and the PR team within Musgraves influence that budget, to say that 'A' is happening and we need 'X' amount of money to go towards PR to do x, y, and z behind 'A' and this would be debated back and forth. It would be signed off by October so we all know how we are spending the money next year.

Once it is well planned out, once the budgets are assigned and debated and approved then there is no real argument – you have your PR budget for the year and you know how you are spending it.

### **When the marketing department are communicating with stakeholders such as the media, is this carried out by the PR or marketing departments?**

No, we have an in-house PR team and it (PR) is so critical – more so than any other discipline. It relies on relationships hugely and your networking, and who you know in the media and who you can trust if you like to give press releases to first, so the PR departments – who have these relationships with the media, liaise with the media 100%. As marketing manager or any of the brand managers on my team have no real contact with the media.

The biggest challenge for PR is how it's going to be measured going forward and that is the big debate going on in every industry at the moment and every business like ourselves. That is the biggest challenge going to face PR companies, PR agencies and PR people. They need to justify their spent.

**Do you use outside PR consultants?**

We have a PR team, a marketing brand team and absolutely we hire an agency to do and run our entire PR. We have our own PR budget. You have your PR agency, you pay them fees and again on your behalf they do a lot of liaising with the media. Anything big or critical, such as press releases for the price survey for example, would come directly from us but also we have a huge support network in our agency. We have a different agency per brand.

**What size is the PR department in Musgraves compared to the marketing department?**

We have three full time PR professionals and about 25 marketing personnel, but saying that some people would do a lot of the PR work in-house and have big teams. But we have 3 people but they really steer the agencies to do the work.

**IMC concept – do Musgraves carry out IMC strategies?**

100%, to be honest we don't do any PR unless it is integrated and again it is back to the effectiveness – if you decide you want to do an ad-hoc piece of PR and spend a couple of grand on it and it's going nowhere. Whereas if your focus is behind a number of big key initiatives and you spend your money in that way all the disciplines are building on the same key messages. Behind the same activities you are going to get a better bang for your buck.

As I mentioned earlier, the GAA which is the biggest sponsorship in the country, it is a huge integrated campaign, cross functionally we all work together to deliver it, so the PR agency talks to the advertising agency, the promotion agency and for me it's the only way forward.

Before in the past we would have spent ad-hoc PR budgets but they went nowhere – the messages got lost. Whereas now we really use PR to build on our big campaigns and get the most out of them and what is effective”

**How do you incorporate CSR programmes?**

CSR is a huge area in Musgraves and I imagine in every organisation now, but the kind of things we go after are things to give back to the local communities. As you can imagine all our retailers locally own their own shops, employ local people in the area and source local fruit and vegetables so there are less food miles. That whole local community sustainability piece is massive for us on both our brands and massive for Musgraves.

As the GAA is about community based initiatives which tie into our own values. The whole area of CSR – we don't see it as something separate, we see our sponsorships such as tidy towns – that is our CSR. The danger with CSR is that it is something that is talked about at director's tables and nothing is delivered. Yes everyone is saying they employ locally and source locally but it is really what difference you are making on the ground – and I think very few companies are doing it well at the moment. I used to work for

Diagio (Guinness) and I would say they do it quite well where they invest in foundations around the country, local charities – this kind of activity to give back to the local people and I think the companies that do it and do it well effectively will be the ones who will win it out.

The recession is a brilliant time for it. With the growth of unemployment there is a huge amount of people getting into volunteering and people are a lot more sceptical about banks and institutions etc. So as a corporation and as a brand you really have to get down and dirty and be open and honest and give back where it is needed. I think companies who do this well will win out over the next number of years because I don't think the market is going to change that much.

## APPENDIX C

### Paula Cogan Interview

#### **What is your Title and Job Description?**

My title is Director of Sales and Marketing for the River Lee Hotel

My job description would vary hugely, planning and structuring marketing campaigns, public relations, liaising with corporate clients.

#### **As a Marketing Professional do you think Public Relations is a sub section of marketing or a separate entity?**

It would definitely be a separate entity

#### **Public Relations is renowned for complimenting marketing functions, such as promotion, do you think there has been a growth in this area recently?**

I think it is divided; in the last five years certainly there has been a growth in the use of public relations in that companies had a lot more disposable income so they were in a position to add additional resources to public relations and towards sponsorship etc. In the last two years, it has been very different; it has been one area that has been cut back a lot in organisations. It has gone back to the traditional view of public relations again been seen as more a crisis management tool as opposed to it being a pr perspective whereby in the past it has been as seen as an opportunity to promote your brand and promote your company ethics. I think now these have been cut due to budget constraints.

#### **Do you think that these strategies are evolving or have always been in use?**

I think PR has always been there but it's only in the last 10 – 15 years that people have actually put the title on it. I was very fortunate that when I worked with Jurys, prior to it been taken over by the Doyle family again, I worked with Peter Moloney the general manager of the hotel in Cork. People still say today that he was the best PR guru you could ever meet. He did wonderful things for the hotel. He was the first to introduce the sports awards in the city and he also did the famous picture of when he hosted the Irish Cattle Breeders Federation meeting and he brought a bull into the ballroom of the hotel and the photo made every paper in the country at the time. He was very opportunist and saw the opportunities to promote the company over 20 years ago.

#### **Was he a PR professional?**

No he was the general manager but he loved Pr and the media. So definitely it has been around for a number of years but it's only recently it has become more of a professional in the last 15 – 20 years.

#### **Traditional marketing initiatives such as advertising are decreasing in effectiveness. Have you been using PR strategies to communicate messages?**

We would be using PR as one element but traditional marketing still has to be included in the mix as well, in that it very much depends on what you are trying to get across and what elements of your budget you have as well. We recently carried out a rebranding where public relations was a large part of it which represented 50 of the budget but for a

specific reason as we really felt that we had to get the new name of the hotel across in cork and have it seen in a very positive light, so we felt PR was the best way to go for that element, but again we would have used traditional radio advertising and print media to get the message out to other mediums. A mixture really. To say PR is ever going to replace print media would be a bit naive because when you want to get some PR into the media they come back to you and say they will support you but you need to put some advertising behind it or you need to spend X amount on a media campaign so it will always be a mixture.

**You have never used a PR strategy on its own? It has always been to compliment a marketing campaign?**

No never always to compliment something else

In what way do you incorporate PR activities into your marketing campaigns?

From a hotel perspective the PR activity we would be involved in would be to get the name of the hotel out in a positive light so for instance our sponsorship activity works very well as we have sponsored sports awards in the city in Cork for over 35 years and we were the first hotel to do it and it has changed slightly in its format in that we no longer have our ballroom but we still sponsor a vary of sports such as an athletic awards and involved in the pitch and putt national championships which is on this year in Cork and we are one of the key sponsors in that. We were involved in the sponsorship for the Cork City marathon. Sport is something that is very much recession proof in that there is a good feeling with being involved in sport even in the hard times and there is not a city in Ireland where one person does not have an interest in one type of sport, so that has worked incredibly well for us. With regards to other elements of public relations as such we would have a certain element of CSR also which would include involvement in particular charities such as the Irish Guide Dogs Association, the Mercy university hospital foundation by providing penny dinners and our response locally to the recent flooding in Cork city, as we were the only building in the area not affected by the flooding in November, so again we became the community centre from that perspective, so again it can be seen as good PR but sometimes it can be abused and overused so it is about getting the balance right to use it a little but never to jeopardise it. Certainly some organisations have become PR gurus and use any opportunity for a photo opportunity or publicity and the media are very savvy put up with this for a little while but not too long. I am very aware that if I do go to the media it has to be with something newsworthy and that will appeal to them also, but again it is matching the PR with the campaign or with the particular message we are trying to get across.

**Marketing Pr has been a huge growth area in recent years. Do you have an in house PR dept or do you use consultancy services?**

Like many organisations we would have had two full-time people up until last year and unfortunately with cutbacks they were made redundant so we now have a person on a part-time basis within our hotel group and we use Jury Communications consultancy for communications.

As part of our rebranding we used a local consultancy called Hopkins Communications as we felt it was very important to get the message out locally and nationally. We used a

local consultancy as they would have been aware of Cork and how to best handle the people of Cork.

**Does the Marketing department work on communication strategies with stakeholders and deal with corporate reputation?**

Yes, a lot of that would be helped and developed on a group basis on our own company and then we have the opportunity to develop it or put more emphasis on certain areas than others on a local basis, depending on what we want to do. Sponsorship would be a huge element for us in Cork and it may not be a key influencer in our other hotels in Dublin as it is more of a city element and there wouldn't be as much of a community and local feel around their particular hotels, whereas Cork, there is so much on our doorstep that requires sponsorship, minding and PR which would include UCC, the Mercy Hospital and other charitable organisations around us. One thing we are very conscious about is that we are trying to develop our green energy and conservation policy because again it is a very big topic now both locally and internationally and a lot of MNC's that we deal with have included it in their request for hotel programmes. A certain element of it has to be that you are using recyclable papers, that your linen costs are conserving the use of water. It has certainly pushed us into looking at our green policy this year. We are currently being audited and going to the green energy award and we are highlighting it within the hotel for us to be aware of and it is a good thing as well as it's a team effort. Everyone working from the kitchen to the office have to be aware of recyclables and energy usage levels, so it's seen as a bit of a project in the hotel at the moment.

**Do you feel the public are more demanding for corporate reputation and responsibility than previously?**

Definitely. An element of it was always there but it was never defined as CSR and most MNC's request statements from us as to what exactly our hotel and hotel group are doing from that perspective. I suppose they look at it as any suppliers they work with have to have the same ethic as they do.

Everybody is aware of CSR in their own way. People are aware of how well we treat our staff and follow strict labour commissions. When we closed the hotel to rebuild, all the old staff were made redundant. It was a very difficult time but in hindsight many people have commented on how well it was handled and they weren't seeing it from a PR perspective, but it benefitted the company because nearly everyone knew someone who was affected and they were aware of the very good redundancy package at the time and all the staff were given the opportunity to go on training courses at the time and learn interview view techniques.

When we closed it was probably the first largest company in the city to have had a large redundancy in a number of years and subsequent to that two or three hotels closed overnight and staff were left with no long term benefits. People came back to us after this and said we handled it very well.

Sometimes the funny thing about PR is that the crisis management element that you're in can in long term be a great benefit. At the time you don't see it that way but ultimately it can be. The one thing about PR is people only see it as short term benefit and often forget what the long term benefits can be.



**Have you increased the need for PR in your company?**

The rebrand certainly increased the need for PR and PR campaigns. The one thing I would question about us and a lot of companies is budget constraints. We would view PR in the short term as opposed to its long term. It would be superb if we had a two year PR strategy that we could put in place but the budget does not allow for this so we have to look at it on a project by project basis and again we probably won't have any PR in the next three to four months.

We always plug away at it ourselves locally. If PR opportunity comes up we take advantage of it but I suppose with PR sometimes you want to be 100 percent devoted to it and in our industry there is always something else pulling at you. We are involved in the Cork Film Festival for the last 25 years and the Cork Jazz Festival and we would be mindful of the PR opportunities that arise from these and take advantage of them.

**What do you think the relationship between the marketing and public relations is?**

That is a million dollar question. Marketing, I would view, as more of the overall strategising for the company and where you want to go with the company. Marketing has very much got a revenue making element to it, at the end of the day people have to achieve targets etc but PR is something and the good thing about it is that it questions all elements of an organisation as you will have negative and positive elements as well as internal and external PR, therefore giving a 360 degree view of the organisation compared to marketing. PR enables you to be more innovative than marketing as marketing is broken down into the 6 p's whilst PR can think more outside the box.

They complement one another. There has always been a debate that comes down to resources and whether the funds come out of marketing or PR budgets. How much element of a plan should be PR or marketing will never change, that debate will always exist.

**There is a lot of conflict regarding the roles of management and resources; do you think this is an academic or an industry debate?**

A true PR professional will not let this happen, but for a number of years PR has been viewed as the fluffy stuff, the little blonde running around planning parties and to be fair there is a certain element who have created that view and live up to that and it has affected the PR industry negatively.

Then on the other hand I have met terribly professional PR people who know their role and job inside out and who are incredibly professional and who would add hugely to any organisation, so there will always be that conflict.

Marketing perspectives are so close to accountancy because we have a product or service and we need to get it out there. PR has to fight within that constraint to say no we can assist you at getting your product out there and making it sell but it's the tangible side because it's hard to measure how much revenue was generated from PR initiatives. You are trying to justify a lot more from PR perspective compared to marketing. Trying to get the cost benefit analysis from that perspective it is much harder but the more the PR industry is viewed in a professional light the better it is for everybody.

**Do you think this lack of acknowledgement of PR's benefits is because of Public Relations professional bodies not coming out to defend the profession?**

The time when you need a PR person to be standing in front of the organisation is when there has been a huge explosion or deaths on the road and at that stage the whole element is to get the message across and appear to be professional and have a human element as well. It is a very hard time to be a spokesperson at that moment and by seeing people successfully carry out this element of PR the public become more aware and respectful of the PR industry.

The Garda Siochana are the worst people ever. There is a huge amount of good going on in and they are very much involved in communities but you never hear of that, people always say where are the guards when you need them. They do have a PR team in Dublin but they can't seem to get the good messages across. RSA and Health & Safety Authority are other organisations that are extremely good at getting their points across.

The thing about PR is that what you and me perceive as good PR could be very different based on human perceptions of things.

**You mentioned earlier that you did a PR course. Did this course equip you better for dealing with various stakeholders such as communicating with the media and the public?**

Yes. It was a great refresher course particularly for news releases because if you are not doing them all the time you can get out of the feel and omit the important elements. I enjoyed the course but it was pretty intense. I think a refresher course that you could go back and do every couple of years for maybe six weeks would be a great, particularly if you are using PR in your own job and presentation and web are huge areas. A course with PR from a web perspective would be very interesting.

**Finally, do you think the current economic climate is impacting the PR industry?**

It is very hard to justify the spend of PR and PR companies have not reacted with budget cuts. They are not cutting fees and a certain element of PR consultancies expect a certain amount of work handed over to them and often use my contacts. I understand they have to use your knowledge as they don't know every industry inside out but sometimes it would be nice if they had researched it beforehand via the web and magazines, but they don't.

## APPENDIX D

### Peter Dineen Interview

**What is your job title and job description?**

I am a staff officer for the Communications Director in the HSE south. My role includes monitoring and interacting with the media, website monitoring and updating and seeking opportunities to promote the HSE. A fundamental element of my job is also crisis management.

**Does the communication department work in unison with the marketing function?**

Communications historically in the HSE was a tool that was used rather than seeking their advice. We never took over campaigns or had a budget. There is a fierce battle at the moment trying to take the budget from the marketing department known as Health Promotion.

The communications department has come together with the Office of Irish Tobacco Controller, the Irish Cancer society and the Health Promotion, for the next twelve months to create a campaign to get 20 percent of smokers to attempt to give up smoking.

Communications department is trying to take the budget from Health Promotion as they feel promotion will only go one way whereas communication can bring in other members and create a variety of campaigns.

For the next year and a half to two years we would use new media elements such as Facebook, the intranet and the internet as well as traditional media and cinema adverts to get our messages across and to create understanding.

Up until now different organisations were doing different campaigns on different days and now they need to be brought together for effectiveness.

**Do you think it is important to have PR skills when communicating with the media?**

Absolutely. You have to make them aware of the real story and a lot of the time media come in with a negative attitude towards the HSE and we have to convince them and show them it is not all one sided. The vast majority of journalists listen to your story and then make up their own minds.

If we get a media query the hospital staff would immediately give us an answer and you could not give this to the media as they would have a field day, so we spend a lot of our time rearranging statements in a certain way such as putting more important things at the start and adding context to what we give the media.

**Does everyone working in the communications department have PR qualifications?**

There are six of us in the office and five of us have either a diploma or degree in PR. I completed the PR diploma in CIT over two years and two of my colleagues also completed it there while one completed a course in London and the other in South Africa. There were a limited number of courses available in Cork one in CIT and another one carried out by Ellen Gunning in UCC.

**Would you agree that PR is a sub section of marketing?**

No PR is an entity by itself. While PR use a lot of marketing tools and marketing use a lot of PR tools, I think PR is a stand alone as you can do both without the other and people get them mixed up an awful lot.

Marketing is more selling whilst PR is about explaining. PR is about keeping the media on board all the time. You don't just come in and out of PR it is a constant relationship with stakeholders.

**In your opinion why do you think so much conflict exists?**

PR see marketing as glorified salesmen and marketers see PR people as spinners. PR is very hard to measure compared to marketing. PR is hard to evaluate and this is where PR people fall down.

**It is argued that traditional marketing initiatives are decreasing in effectiveness; do you find you are using more PR strategies to relate to the public?**

We use PR as much as we possibly can and our messages get lost in a lot of ways. In print media trying to get a good story across is very difficult. If you look at the new media tools such as Twitter it is amazing how quickly it can catch on. By law we have to tell the Oireachtas what is happening and we email them stories and campaigns before they go into the public domain. The new no smoking campus at CUH was to start on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May and we kept it under lock and key until we had signs ready to go up etc. When we sent a release to the Oireachtas members on the Thursday prior to the introduction, to make them aware of it, a Senator had it on Twitter within minutes of receiving the notification and almost instantaneously the media got hold of it as they were following the person on Twitter. This shows that sometimes new media elements works for you but other times it doesn't.

We have a good relationship with some journalists and we use our web and staff members to promote certain aspects of campaigns. When a crisis occurs you have to use every single tool. For example when the baby went missing from St. Finbarr's hospital we put ads in the papers, went on the web and TV and used all resources to get the baby back, which thankfully we did.

**In the current economic climate do you think there is a greater need for PR?**

Most departments have stopped advertising in the last two years. We used to do a lot of adverts previously. The communications department would be involved in creating the adverts and now the communications department are getting a lot more departments coming to us with stories looking for news releases as they don't have the resources to advertise. The CUMH had no money to advertise so we created a photo opportunity inviting journalists to photograph the new unit hoping to lead to news coverage but it never featured and therefore never really launched properly.

**Are the media demanding other elements from the HSE if they run a story?**

Yes. It depends on the media. Some media expect a heads up on news stories in return for featuring a previous article but this can backfire on you as other media are annoyed at not being informed at the same time.

**Do you ever use consultancy services?**

Only once, it was for a campaign involving the conjoint twins. We were aware beforehand and there was increasing pressure on our department from media both here in Ireland and in the UK to get exclusive rights on photographs and articles. It was then decided that it was best to bring in a PR consultancy which the HSE worked in partnership with as the HSE didn't have the time or resources to take on such a huge and demanding campaign.

**Do you feel that the public are more demanding about the reputation of the HSE?**

The HSE reputation is negative in the public's perception. If something goes wrong anywhere in Ireland all the HSE gets the blame. This was not the case when it was operating under the health board as each area had a specific health board such as the Southern Health Board. It was a bad PR move to rebrand all the health boards under one national stream.

**Do you find that the public are demanding more detailed information quicker than previous?**

One area we have lacked in is the new media element. The website is hard to navigate as it's vast and more people are coming under the HSE thus broadening the scope further. The website needs constant updating and with resources being cut there are not enough people to update and add information.

**Has the HSE ever implemented IMC strategies?**

Nationally yes. HSE community games attract young people and this was marketed using photographs of community games in the media. The HSE have gone into local communities where there is a lot of interest and used HSE personnel to promote the games in inner city Dublin, where there is a huge demand and interest.

**Why was this sponsorship route chosen?**

To enhance the reputation of the HSE and to show that the HSE is not just for the sick or the elderly. It wants to be associated with young people and physical activity. There are a lot of things done outside the hospital, such as Health Promotion going to schools to promote healthy eating. The HSE wants to be associated with prevention.

**Is the majority of your time spent working on Corporate PR functions?**

The majority of my work is focused more on the PR element rather than the marketing side. 60 percent of my time is spent on crisis management which leaves very little time to work on other good stories of which so much happens. There is a lot of innovative things occurring such as the Nintendo Wii being used in the Occupational department to help

people get back on their feet after accidents, but these stories are not out in the public as we are usually dealing with a crisis or an emerging potential crisis.

**Do you think the traditional view of PR has changed?**

Yes, people are beginning to realise that PR adds value. Nine years ago when I started in the HSE people used us for putting ads in the papers and the phone call regarding a crisis came after the crisis occurred. Now, they ring us when they think it may happen and want our input on how to deal with the problem and how best to explain it to the public. When the files were found in Glounthane, a woman rang the hospital to say she had found them and a small bit of panic broke out. The hospital immediately rang us and sought our advice, this would not have happened before. When we went to view the files we found that it was not as bad as we had anticipated as there was not any confidential information in these files. We invited the media down to the location and showed them the articles that had been found and allowed them to photograph them. The media realised that it wasn't a big crisis and it was reported on but it was only marginally a crisis compared to what it could have been if handled differently.

**Do you think the PR aspect is different in non-profit organisations such as the HSE compared to multinational and for profit organisations?**

No. It is all concerned with audiences, staff and stakeholders. The staff of the HSE is huge and we use an internal staff magazine, talking one to one and unions to get our messages across. Private and public bodies have the same problem.

**Do you think PR is an essential requirement for all marketing campaigns?**

During the boom time there was a lot of young males working in construction sites. The Health Promotion department decided to use this as a sexual health promotional campaign. They put a condom and a leaflet about sexual diseases on a packet and handed it out to the workers at the construction site. Religious groups were furious as they believed the HSE were promoting sexual activity. The marketing department never informed us that they were carrying out this campaign and there was an element of PR that could have been used to make the campaign more effective, but we didn't know about it until it was too late. If we were involved we could have announced that this campaign was taking place and it would have alleviated the problems that existed as the marketing tools and PR tools could have been used to explain and promote the initiative.

**How has the relationship with the marketing department changed?**

Now PR is often being used in the planning stages of marketing campaigns. That is why the communications director in Dublin is trying to take over the budget of Health Promotion because then they know that no campaign can be done without communications knowing first, as they will have to send all campaigns through communications to get the required budget. PR can add value to marketing campaigns and we have seen this. Suicide prevention is a huge thing in Cork. Before the marketing department used to hand out bios with the phone numbers on the side but in the last five years PR was brought into the marketing mix and the role of PR is to make the public more aware of suicide and depression are out there.

Very successful campaigns have been ran about farm and rural stress as a large proportion of suicide was occurring in rural areas. The PR department pushed the message that it was a huge factor in Cork and the marketing department were responsible for marketing the pens and leaflets. Overall it was a very successful campaign.

**Can you elaborate as to why you think this campaign was more successful than previous campaigns?**

Previous campaigns were getting things in isolation, there may have been an advert but the media were not being brought along. Now the media are doing great stories on highlighting depression and I feel PR has done a lot to bring that along by providing adequate information to people who may be in need.

We made people more aware of the problem of suicide and that it doesn't just affect young people. To back it up with marketing techniques such as the bios with numbers helped to jog people's memories and it was more effective than just PR or marketing on its own.

