UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

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UNDERSTANDING BRAND JOURNALISM AND ITS ROLE IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS: A STUDY OF SELECTED FIRMS IN GHANA

BY

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THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPHIL MARKETING DEGREE

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DECLARATION

I, hereby, declare that this work is the result of my own research and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other university. All references used in the work have been fully acknowledged.

I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings.

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis was supervised in accordance with procedures laid down by the University of Ghana.

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ABSTRACT

Marketing communications is losing its effectiveness because audiences have become disillusioned with marketing communications messages. Brand journalism has been identified as possessing qualities capable of countering marketing communications' slumping effectiveness. However, more is yet to be known about brand journalism, due to its status as a nascent field of academic inquiry. This study, therefore, seeks to enhance understanding of brand journalism by exploring its dimensions, key characteristics, and role in marketing communications. Data is collected from a purposeful sample comprising industry practitioners and their potential and pre-existing customers through one-on-one interviews and thematically analysed. Findings indicate brand journalism has five dimensions; form, execution strategy, actors, content, and ethics. Its key characteristics include the ability to target large and particular audiences, deliver personal messages, credibility, and has a cost-intensive element. Brand journalism is also found to play a dual role, that is, to both the firm and its customers. However, firms are yet to feel its full impact as brand journalism is not being practiced extensively or in depth. The study recommends that firms plan their brand journalism activities along the dimensions, characteristics, and roles to harness the benefits brand journalism has to offer.

DEDICATION

To God. My all.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADMA	-	Association of Data-driven Marketing and Advertising
CMI	-	Content Marketing Institute
CMO	-	Chief Marketing Officer
DF	-	Dalex Finance
DFC	-	Dalex Finance Customer
DGC	-	Databank Group Customer
DG	-	Databank Group
EFACE	-	Execution strategy, Forms, Actors, Content, Ethics
GC100	-	Ghana Club 100
HM	-	Head of Marketing
LFC	-	Latex Foam Customer
LF	-	Latex Foam
LTV	-	Lifetime Value
ROE	-	Return on Equity
ROI	-	Return on Investment
WOM	-	Word of Mouth

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2003 McDonalds, a staple of western culture and a cornerstone of the global fast food industry, was at a crossroads. McDonalds had grown out of touch with its consumers, primarily because of ineffective marketing strategies which were rapidly affecting profit and reputation (First, 2009). One of these ineffective marketing strategies was that McDonalds had been advertising to an undefined mass market (Bull, 2013). Scholars (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009; Fuxman, Elifoglu, Chao, & Li, 2014; Teixer, 2014) write that this traditional approach to advertising has become less than effective. Others, such as Cole and Greer (2013), and Keller (2009) also assert that traditional advertising is losing popularity with customers. Wilcox (2015) corroborates their assertion by presenting statistics which reveal almost 80 percent of consumers prefer getting to know a company through means other than (traditional) advertising.

McDonalds, therefore, had to make a decision. Faced with either floundering along till an imminent demise or assessing its marketing strategy and surviving, McDonalds chose the latter by blending principles of journalism with those of marketing (Bull, 2013; Swenson, 2012). Thus, brand journalism, as McDonalds then Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), Larry Light, termed the strategy of blending aspects of traditional journalism and marketing communications (Bull, 2013), was supposedly 'invented'. It's goal, inter alia, 'is to inform, entertain and persuade by collecting and communicating news, events and happenings' to give consumers, who are themselves diverse, a multifaceted view of the firm (Swenson, 2012). Its features include subtle or no selling pitch, feature/editorial style, and compelling information indirectly related to the brand's products/services (Bull, 2013).

Research indicates brand journalism is gaining traction amongst practitioners (Association for Data-Driven Marketing and Advertising, 2013). According to the Content Marketing Institute (CMI) (2015), 80 percent of marketing practitioners plan on increasing the amount they spend on content marketing, which scholars claim is another term for brand journalism (Wilcox, 2015). Furthermore, the Association for Data-Driven Marketing and Advertising (ADMA) (2013) projected a 12 percent significant increase in planned spending on content marketing based on research it carried out. Additionally, the CMI (2015) indicates 94 percent of marketers in the United Kingdom employ the use of content marketing, while 64 percent of them are increasing their content marketing budgets (CMI, 2015).

These statistics shed some insight into where gradually shrinking traditional advertising budgets are being diverted (Fuxman et. al, 2014). The shrinking popularity of traditional advertising in favour of newer forms of reaching audiences is highlited by eMarketer (2016). eMarketer (2016) projects that television as a medium of traditional advertising will cease to be the biggest advertising medium in the United States of America (USA) by the year 2020. Already, total media advertising spending share for print and radio media stood at 15.4 and 7.8 percent respectively in 2015 and are projected to drop to 11.1 and 6.1 respectively by the year 2020 in the USA (eMarketer, 2016).

Extant research holds as undeniable, the positive impact of brand journalism on firms that practice it; Holliman and Rowley (2014) perceived it as the ‘present and future’ of marketing. It has been found to revitalize brands (Bull, 2013), guarantee customer conversion, and lead to the nurturing and retention of customers, thus lending immensely to a firm’s long-term prospects (CMI, 2015). Furthermore, it assures quadruple direct ROI on content with a guaranteed 3-month investment payback period (Snow, 2015), and assures a base of loyal passionate subscribers (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Moreover, according to Snow (2015), over 50 percent of marketers in the United States of America consider Return on Investment (ROI) and Lifetime Customer Value (LTV) as the most valuable goals for their companies, while 74 percent of them look to content marketing to help them achieve these goals. Wilcox (2015) further states that 'brand journalism is a more authentic and credible form of communication' than other marketing communication tools.

Even though popularised by Larry Light in 2003, extant literature reveals brand journalism has existed in firms for longer and in various forms. Scholars maintain brand journalism has long been practiced as corporate journalism (Swenson, 2012); as content marketing (Wilcox, 2015); as native content, brand publishing, and owned media (Teicher, 2014); and as custom content/publishing (Cole & Greer, 2013) *inter alia*. Despite these forms, brand journalism seeks the overarching objective of allowing 'businesses to target customers with useful, tailored editorial content while promoting their brand, values, and products' (Cole & Greer, 2013).

In exploring this relatively nascent phenomenon, researchers have differentiated between what is perceived as brand journalism-content tied to a product- and branded journalism-journalism presented by a brand (Swenson, 2012; Lehto & Moisala, 2015). Others have also referred to it as journalists creating an identity and 'promoting that identity by building relationships' (Holton & Molyneux, 2015). Brand journalism is also purported to have an ethics issue. Underpinning the argument of critics with regard to the issue of ethics is the belief that when done on behalf of brands, it ceases to become journalism, having lost some of its 'purity' (Cole & Greer, 2013). Others also hold that brand journalism poses a threat to the practice of journalism by undermining its tenets of trust and objectivity. They hold these tenets become compromised once integrated into the corporate agenda (Bull, 2013). ADMA (2013) meanwhile, adds it is 'conventionally understood' that content marketing, a non-marketing skill, 'has more in common with journalism and communications than with marketing'.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Marketing communications is losing its effectiveness (Keller, 2009). Scholars such as Logan (2013) argue that this may be attributed to consumers actively avoiding marketing communications messages, perceiving them as intrusive. Consequently, consumers are unable to act upon the desire to purchase a product or service stemming from disinterest in the message. Though scholars (Bull, 2013; Light, 2014) argue brand journalism counters the ineffectiveness of marketing communications, it is 'a new and still-evolving discipline, and there is much disagreement about its validity, the form it should take, and the value it represents'. Because of its emerging nature, few firms practice it, and few studies exist to provide insight into best practice. Its emerging nature also requires frameworks to be built to guide the proper implementation and effective replication of brand journalism. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate brand journalism to enhance its understanding, insights from which would be used to offer suggestions into how best to practice journalism extensively and in-depth.

1.2 RESEARCH GAPS

1.2.1 ISSUE GAPS

Brand journalism is a growing phenomenon despite having been in existence, but only in practice, since the 19th Century (Swenson, 2012; CMI, 2015). ADMA (2013) refers to it as ‘a complex and evolving discipline’ to illustrate its theoretical and practical immaturity. The exiguous literature that does exist, however, have focused on seeking to establish that brand journalism as a concept is not new, and ‘has long served as a model for corporate communications, especially for editors of the company press’ (Swenson, 2012). Others have focused on studying reactions to brand journalism with regard to product involvement, source, and frame (Cole & Greer, 2013). More have focused on the ideal form brand journalism content should take (Holliman & Rowley, 2014), exploring how journalists, digital marketing professionals, scholars, and others define brand journalism (Lehto & Moisala, 2015), and exploring the implications of the rise of brand journalism on journalists’ personal identities (Holton & Molyneux, 2015).

None have, however, explicitly studied brand journalism’s role in marketing communications, nor the factors that might impede its practice. Also, yet to be studied extensively are the forms of brand journalism as practiced in firms and the factors that underpin their adoption. Furthermore, these studies have been conceptual, with no emphasis/focus on firms in a single industry. Holliman and Rowley (2014), and Lehto and Moisala (2015) also note that brand journalism is lacking acutely in academic attention and called for further studies on the subject, especially with regard to its character, form, and range. There also exists little academic attention on the resources required to shore up brand journalism practice, the type of content that would reap the most dividends, and how to package brand journalism. Furthermore, few studied the phenomenon under a marketing theoretical framework (Swenson, 2012; Holton & Molyneux, 2015; Cole & Greer, 2013).

1.2.2 CONTEXT GAP

Extant studies on brand journalism have mostly been carried out within a western setting. In these studies, it has been revealed that almost 80 percent of consumers prefer getting to know a company through content marketing (Wilcox, 2015). Most marketing practitioners have, therefore, begun to incorporate content marketing in their marketing strategies (ADMA, 2013; CMI, 2015). Ghanaian marketing practitioners are no exception. Insight indicates brand journalism practice exists in some Ghanaian firms in one form or other. For instance, Kuada and Hinson (2014) mention that Databank Group, a leading non-financial banking institution in Ghana, practices 'financial journalism' by publishing content that shapes 'the financial policy and strategy agenda' in Ghana. The practice, however, does not only lack an adequate label by these firms, but seems unformed. Moreover, no study exists on brand journalism in Ghana as yet. To address these gaps, the study focuses on a developing country and marketing perspective with a focus on the non-banking financial and home décor industries in Ghana.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study is guided by the following objectives:

1. Determine the dimensions of brand journalism practice.
2. Identify the key characteristics of brand journalism.
3. Identify the roles of brand journalism in marketing communications.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In pursuit of the research purpose, the following questions will be asked.

1. What are the dimensions of brand journalism?
2. What are the key characteristics of brand journalism?
3. What are the roles of brand journalism in marketing communications?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

A number of researchers have touted brand journalism as the last frontier in marketing studies (Wilcox, 2015; Holliman & Rowley, 2014; ADMA, 2013). This study, therefore, has implications for research. Specifically, this study will contribute to closing the knowledge gap in brand journalism, and add to the exiguous research done on the subject. It will also especially provide a unique view-that of a developing country as Ghana, since most research has primarily focused on the west. This study will also contribute to extant research that explores the relationship between marketing and journalism (Siegart, Gerth & Rademacher, 2011; McDowell, 2011).

The study lends significantly to practice as well, both in marketing and journalism. Regarding marketing practice, ADMA (2013) and CMI (2015) indicate ‘only 39 percent of brands have an explicit content marketing plan’. Additionally, ‘60 percent of the content fell below brand journalism objectives of being relevant and compelling’. According to Snow (2015), ‘over 90 percent of marketers surveyed in the United States of America were not confident that their key content metrics were effective in measuring business results. This, they maintain, gives rise to a number of queries such as the resources needed to shore it up, and the type of content that would reap the most dividends (Snow, 2015).

Although this study will not be explicitly studying the type of content that reaps the most dividends, it does aim to investigate the various forms/dimensions of brand journalism as practiced in Ghana, its key characteristics, and its role in marketing communications. The findings from this will inform the construction of a conceptual framework to guide brand journalism practice. With regard to journalism, several researchers are of the view that the profession is endangered. For instance, Ndlovu (2015), on the state of journalism in South Africa, revealed that local journalists' job security was being threatened by such factors as changing demography, increased consumption of digital journalistic content and a demand for more interpretive writing. Manda (2013), writing on journalists' condition of service in Malawi, also asserts that majority of the country's journalists are under an acute financial strain. However, due to dejection, individualism and fatalism, these journalists are resigned to their fate and are more likely to succumb to various acts of corruption.

In the west, Wilcox (2015), reports that newspaper circulations and television audiences in developed nations are in decline, thus leading to 'fewer jobs in journalism', while McDowell (2011) stresses that journalism must begin to perceive the profession not only as an institution but as a business, as well as a means of survival against the background of increasing audience options for news. This study, therefore, seeks to enlighten and present journalists with an alternative field of practice for those of them seeking more financially rewarding and challenging avenues for growth in their profession. This diversification, it is hoped, will keep this centuries-old profession alive.

1.6 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The research paper is disposed into 6 chapters. The first chapter comprises a detailed exposition of the introduction to the research, research gaps, research problem, research objectives, and research questions, and significance of the study. An exhaustive review of relevant literature on brands, journalism, and brand journalism are presented in Chapter 2. The chapter also discusses marketing communications and presents a theory to anchor the study.

Chapter 3 places the study in context; specifically, the various marketing communications elements and their practice in Ghana. It also presents an exposition of the private sector and large-scale enterprises. Chapter 4 captures the methodological approaches adopted for the study. The Chapter underscores such key elements as the philosophical assumptions in which the study is anchored, the research paradigm and the research design strategy. Also discussed in the Chapter are the sampling technique-specifically purposeful sampling- and sample size, the data collection instrument (personal interviews), mode of analysis, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 presents data analysis, findings and discussion, while Chapter 6, finally, comprises a summary of the study's findings, conclusions and recommendations. Closing out the study are the study's references and appendices which include a tabular representation of findings and case histories.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a review of literature relevant to the topic under study. Reviewed literature covers the brand and its role, journalism and its principles and roles, brand journalism and its forms, marketing communications, and the AIDA theory, which was selected to anchor the study.

2.1 DEFINING THE BRAND

There is a consensus among scholars that the 'brand' is challenging to aptly define despite troves of publication on the brand construct (de Chenatony & Riley, 1998; Wood, 2000; Rigopoulou, 2002). To this end, scholars such as de Chernatony and Riley (1998), Wood (2000), Kim, Kim, and An (2003), Ying (2005), Jevons (2005), Moore and Reid (2008), de Chernatony (2009), and Maurya and Mishra (2012) note there is no universally accepted definition of the brand construct. Wood (2000) asserts that the unavailability of a definitive brand construct can be attributed to opposing philosophies and different stakeholder perspectives. Wood (2000) further states that the different definitions of the band construct stem from the purpose and characteristics of brands. Rigopoulou (2002), who concurs with Wood (2000) on the causes of the diversity of positions, adds that these differing opinions should not be construed as 'an exclusion between their positions' but rather as providing 'wider limits and capabilities for the Brand'.

A widely-cited definition of the brand remains the American Marketing Association's definition, which identifies a brand as 'a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers' (American

Marketing Association, 2017). Wood (2000) asserts the AMA's definition has been critiqued as being overly product oriented with a focus on visual features as differentiating mechanisms. Hanby (1999) also criticizes this definition as being brand-owner dominant (a supply-side orientation) reflective of the dominant marketing concept of the time the definition was incorporated, that is 1960.

Goodyear (1996), quoted in Ranjan (2011), in her brand Evolution Model, posits that the concept of brand is still evolving. Goodyear identifies Unbranded; Reference; Personality; Icon; Company; and Policy as the various stages of the evolution of brand concept definition. The first stage of this evolution process, Goodyear identifies, is the Unbranded stage. The products and services peddled at this stage were more characteristic of proto-brands (earliest manifestation of brands), thus unmarked and pedestrian. The second stage of Goodyear's brand Evolution Model is brand as a Reference. At this stage, brands were defined based on the name of the product maker or service provider, which was used to markedly distinguish the product/service from those of competitors' (Ranjan, 2011).

The next stage in the evolution of brands, and ergo, their definition, according to the Model, is the brand as Personality. Aaker (1997) defines brand personality as 'the set of human characteristics associated with a brand'. Aaker (1997) identifies sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness as the five dimensions of human personality brands may assume to enable customers express themselves. Brands may also use these personality dimensions as underpinning elements to market brands 'across cultures', as well as 'differentiate a brand in a product category' (Aaker, 1997). With regard to the brand as Icon, the consumer-centric nature of the model becomes increasingly apparent when the brand is perceived as an icon by consumers who have formed personal relationships with the brand through advertising, and so the brand becomes, so to say, larger than life (Ranjan, 2011). Woodside, Sood, and Miller (2009) argue that brands that have become icons enable their consumers, through good storytelling, 'to experience powerful myths consciously or unconsciously. As a company, the brand is defined as having complex identities that a consumer attempts to make sense of. To facilitate comprehension, therefore, the company employs a strategy of integrated marketing communications (Ranjan, 2011).

The final stage of Goodyear's brand evolution model, which Goodyear posits as the stage currently characterising the definition of brands, perceives the brand as Policy, aligning to issues of a political and social hue (Ranjan, 2011). Although de Chernatony and Riley (1998) note Goodyear's Model as a useful framework for the analyses of different definitions of brands, they argue that the Model suffers from a 'lack of criteria marking transitions between stages'. This particular deficiency of the Model is echoed by Ranjan (2011) who asserts that 'different types of branding may occur within a product category simultaneously. Furthermore, Ranjan (2011) asserts it is not a certainty that all products will attain the final stage of the brand as Policy.

de Chernatony and Riley (1998), in furtherance of attempting to define a brand, reviewed an extensive number of brand definitions and identified twelve themes that define the brand. These are the brand as legal instrument; logo; company; short hand; risk reducer; identity system; image in the consumer's mind; value system; personality; relationship; adding value; and evolving entity. According to de Chernatony and Riley (1998), the brand as a legal instrument is used to identify legal ownership, and is the most reductionist view of brands. With the brand as a logo, de Chernatony and Riley (1998) maintain that it acts as a differentiation device, a point of view popularised by the AMA (Wood, 2000).

With the brand as a company, de Chernatony and Riley (1998) and Kay (2006) assert that the company leverages the equity ‘accrued by the corporate name’ to achieve ‘a coherent focus across the brand portfolio’. They note, however, that the image of the company’s products might be tainted should the organisation take a hit to its reputation. The brand as short hand, de Chernatony and Riley (1998) argue, enables consumers to rapidly recall information concerning the brand. However, de Chernatony and Riley (1998) posit that the brand as a short hand is ineffective in guiding the marketer as to the particular attributes which can be developed to create strong associations. The fifth theme, which identifies the brand as a risk taker, suggests the level of perceived risk experienced when purchasing a service or product could be reduced when the brand is perceived ‘as a guarantee of consistent quality’ (de Chernatony & Riley, 1998).

With regard to the brand as an identity system, de Chernatony and Riley (1998) argue the brand extends beyond the sum of its parts to embody its essence (that of the product), meaning, and direction, all of which define its identity. de Chernatony and Riley (1998) do, however, note that despite an identity system’s capability to reinforce brand meaning, it can over rely on the input activities of the firm, ‘since identity relates to the desired positioning and how it is perceived. The brand as image in the minds of consumers gives cause for philosophical inquiry, as ‘reality’ is widely considered as a social contract (de Chernatony & Riley, 1998). de Chernatony and Riley (1998) further argue that perceiving a brand as an image enables marketers to manipulate perceptual filters to change the opinion of consumers. They note, however, that the brand can become over reliant on consumer opinion to determine brand success (market-driven).

de Chernatony and Riley (1998) argue that a brand defined as a value system suggests consumer decisions are influenced by cultural and personal values. This, they maintain, compel marketers to consider the import of the brand's meanings and symbolic value as well as its functional capability. With regard to brand as a personality, de Chernatony and Riley (1998) make a distinction between the brand personality (a result of the firm's communication) and the brand image (how consumers perceive the brand's personality) which is often misconstrued. They further expound a way to maintain competitive advantage is to ensure that the brand's personality reflects the manufactured result of the organisation's communication consumers would prefer to project or associate with. de Chernatony and Riley (1998) maintain that values and personality as topics, are interrelated 'with personality a sub-set of value constellations'.

On brand as a relationship, de Chernatony and Riley (1998) opine that personality underpins a respected brand. This respect, which has to be reciprocated by either side (consumers and brands) is what propels and sustains the relationship. Added value has been defined as non-utilitarian benefits acquired beyond the functional attributes of a product (de Chernatony and Riley, 1998). This added value is what justifies manufacturers to charge premium prices. It also affords a means to differentiate brands and offer a competitive advantage. de Chernatony and Riley (1998) maintain added value is 'the most important part of the definition of a brand'. With regard to the final theme of the brand as an evolving entity, de Chernatony and Riley (1998) assert that various scholars have approached the definition of brands from an evolution perspective. They credit Goodyear as having bridged these various evolution-centered definitions and synthesising them into six stages. They, however, note that the brand construct as depicted in Goodyear's stages become more consumer-centred and less from a firm perspective as it evolves.

Drawing on the synthesis of the twelve themes, and a redundancy analysis to identify the boundaries of the brand concept, as well as the antecedents and consequences of the varied themes, de Chernatony and Riley (1998) propose a definition for brands:

> The brand is a complex multidimensional construct whereby managers augment products and services with values, and this facilitates the process by which consumers confidently recognise and appreciate these values (p. 436).

de Chernatony and Riley's (1998) definition of the brand concept balances two dominant approaches to defining brands; the consumer and management approaches, which Ranjan (2011) asserts must sync if the corporation is to achieve brand goals. It also acknowledges the multi-dimensional complexity of the brand construct (Bastos & Levy, 2012), emphasises added value, and positions the firm as initiators of the brand construct.

2.2 ROLE OF BRANDS

Literature on the role of brands is multitudinous and multi-dimensional. They have spanned such dimensions as the role of brands for industrial distributors and industrial end customers' purchasing behaviour (Hinterhuber & Hinterhuber, 2012); the role of brands from a customer perspective in retail financial services (O'Loughlin & Szmigin, 2005); the role of branding in international marketing (Wong & Merrilees, 2007); and the role of brands in business to business services (Roberts & Merrilees, 2007) *inter alia*. A review of these literature indicates four broad perspectives under which the roles of brand may be permutated. These are the traditional versus the modern roles of brands, and the role of brands to firms, versus the role of brands to consumers. These roles are elaborated in the sections that follow.

2.2.1 THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF BRANDS

Traditional roles of brands are inherent in proto-brands (Moore & Reid, 2008). According to Moore and Reid (2008), the role of proto-brands (brands that predate modernity) was to act as an identifier of chattels, specifically of animals, servants, and slaves. The role of brands later expanded to informant, regarding origin and religious imagery that spoke to product value/quality. A third traditional role of brands, as Moore and Reid (2008) assert, is as a strategic tool to gain competitive advantage through its imbued properties of personality and image. These roles are encapsulated in the AMA's definition of brands, which is, to give a differentiated substantial advantage to a product (Roberts & Merrilees, 2007).

2.2.2 THE MODERN ROLE OF BRANDS

The incorporation of mass media in marketing strategy precipitated the modern role of brands. (Moore & Reid, 2008). Whereas the traditional role of brands was restricted to tangible products, the role of modern brands embraced the intangible as well. In other words, modern brands play the role of identifiers, informant, and give a differentiated substantial advantage not only to products, but to intangibles/abstracts as well (Moore & Reed, 2008). This suggests modern brands are more complex and nuanced, hence the varied dimensions of its roles to the firm and to the consumer.

2.2.3 THE ROLE OF BRANDS TO THE FIRM

According to Hinterhuber and Hinterhuber (2012), brands play significant roles in the firm. They assert that brands act as enablers of perceived price premiums (Blackett, 1991; O'Loughlin & Szmigin, 2005), image, competitive differentiation (O'Loughlin & Szmigin, 2005), and quality. To illustrate, a strong-brand firm records higher returns in stock compared to weaker brand firms. Furthermore, ingredient brands help cut production costs and improve the firm's image of quality as it leverages the ingredient brand's already established positive image (Hinterhuber & Hinterhuber, 2012). Hinterhuber and Hinterhuber (2012) also argue that the role of brands, especially for industrial brands, includes creating value for numerous stakeholders such as employees, consumers, suppliers, managers, competitors, partners, NGO's, media and governments.

Brands also serve 'as predictive indicators of the expected future profitability of products for industrial distributors (Blackett, 1991; Hinterhuber & Hinterhuber, 2012). O'Loughlin & Szmigin (2005) assert that strong brands help build long-term loyalty, especially in retail financial services.

Wong and Merrilees (2007) also argue that brands, and their performance, correlate significantly with a firm's financial performance. Brand orientation (a firm's strategy which determines 'competitive edge with favourable consequences' for future survival), and brand repositioning aid in molding 'effective international marketing strategies for firms looking to going international. Wong and Merrilees (2007) define brand repositioning as the 'modification of the domestic brand to suit a foreign market. According to Wong and Merrilees (2007), brand repositioning extends beyond adapting the marketing mix to the total and holistic representation of the brand.

Roberts and Merrilees (2007) make a distinction between the role of brands in a business to consumer (B2C) context, which they assert, facilitates the relationship between the final consumer and the firm; and the role of brands in the business to business context (B2B) which, they assert ‘moderate the relationship between firms’. Brands in B2B service firms perform a number of roles (Roberts & Merrilees, 2007). These include playing significant roles in major repurchase/renewal decisions; and as a facilitator of trust (trust building) between the firm and the customer. However, according to Horvath and van Birgelen (2015), the brand’s ability to build trust with customers is conditional and only works to an extent. In other words, the role of brands as a builder of trust is only applicable to noncompulsive buyers.

This role is, therefore, ineffective with regard to compulsive buyers. This is because compulsive buyers focus more on symbolic and emotional benefits and engage in frequent switching of brands. They are thus less likely to develop brand trust, in apposition to noncompulsive buyers who focus on functional benefits and develop trust for branded products that have a proven track record of exhibiting such attributes as quality, durability, and workmanship (Horvath & van Birgelen, 2015).

While Blackett (1991) maintains that brands aid producers in communicating messages to their customers, as well as give it a means with which to compete, and present a foundation for extension, Moore and Reid (2008) argue the role of brands from an inclusive perspective. They assert that the ultimate role of brands is ‘to carry and communicate cultural meanings that is transactional (information-related role of brands), as well as transformation (image-related) in character.

2.2.4 THE MODERN ROLE OF BRANDS TO THE CUSTOMER

Hinterhuber and Hinterhuber (2012) argue that ingredient branding, as a result of helping firms cut production costs, contributes to creating lower prices for customers. Brands also aid consumer recall of essential information, as well as 'signal future product performance' to customers (Blackett, 1991; Hinterhuber and Hinterhuber, 2012). Ying (2005) and O'Loughlin and Szmigin (2005) also maintain that brands fulfil emotional (expressive value) and functional needs of customers, as well as act as a substitute for experience. Burns and Fawcett (2012) add that the modern brand serves as a substitute for a relationship with God, by creating a consumer culture where consumers feel they have become part of something bigger than themselves.

Kylander and Stone (2012) also argue modern brands, especially non-profit brands, influence freedom and democracy. Brands are constantly evolving, and come to represent the people in a certain place at a certain point in time. This causes brands to have a direct bearing on their environment, and bond with consumers by standing for something the society considers unique, relevant, and of value to them such as freedom of speech, basic human rights, and right to free assembly (Ying, 2005). Kylander and Stone (2012) argue these brands have transcended focus on revenue, to explore broad and strategic roles such as 'driving broad, long-term social goals, while strengthening internal identity, cohesion, and capacity in a country. The modern role of brands to the consumer has been spurred by technology, which has changed consumption patterns. As a result, brands have now had to emphasise data, consider multiple-perspective and nuanced brand narratives over linear, one-dimensioned ones, and have been compelled to take social action to acquire consumers who demand instant gratification via real-time feedback (Dawson, 2015).

Brands and journalism might seem like strange bed fellows at a superficial glance. For instance, journalism functions as a service to democracy and public protector against elites and for-profit corporations, while brands function to sustain for-profit corporations in a capitalist system, and seem to thrive under such a system (Deuze, 2005). However, they parallel each other in some respect. For instance, studies indicate the interests of actors working on behalf of for-profit corporations was what birthed journalism. According to Carey (2007) and Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsh (2009), bankers and merchants whose fortunes were staked on volatile market conditions sought out news that was the latest and most reliable as quickly as was possible. Their pursuit of relevant, recent, and reliable news was what spurred the growth of journalism. Other parallels exist between brands and journalism and these would be drawn in the following sections.

2.3 JOURNALISM-ORIGINS

Hallin (2001) defines journalism as ‘the activity of gathering and presenting information and commentary about current events for public distribution’. Journalism has also been defined as the ‘keeping of a serial biography of a community in a more or less fixed and regular way (monthly, weekly, daily, now hourly or moment by moment’ (Carey, 2007). Mano (2007), arguing no clear definition of journalism exists, notes it has generally been described as a ‘practice that involves collecting, writing, editing and presenting news in the mass media’.

According to Carey (2007), journalism is often used as a synonym for reporting, and news. And similar to brands which have existed for as long as humans have (Jevons, 2005; Moore & Reid, 2008; Avis, 2009; Eckhardt & Bengtsson, 2010), news and reporting have also existed for just as long (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsh, 2009). Carey (2007), however, argues journalism as a profession dates as far back as the 18th Century. Stephens (2000), contrarily, cites mid-16th Century Venice as the beginning of newspaper journalism while Raymond (2013), who cites the 17th Century as the beginning of journalism, argues it was only limited to printing and not journalism per se. Like Raymond (2013), Hallin (2001) and Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsh (2009) assert journalism emerged in the 17th Century and was marked by the development of the newspaper and other forms of print culture. The year of origin notwithstanding, these scholars cite Europe as the birthplace of journalism.

The etymology of journalism is grounded in ‘jour’, the French noun for ‘day’ and referred to the keeping of dairies (Carey, 2007). Hampton and Conboy (2014) argue that journalism targeted at a mass audience was facilitated by Guttenberg’s invention of the printing press, referred to as Guttenberg’s Marathon. Noted for its movable characters, the invention made printing on a large scale possible. However, also gaining traction with the invention of the printing press was fictional writing. Therefore, distinguishing fiction (‘imagined happenings in the lives of imagined individuals living in identifiable societies of the near present’) from journalism proved challenging as they both claimed to be true (Carey, 2007). Also distinguishing journalism from other writings was the style or structure in which journalism narratives are presented. Journalists either use an inverted pyramid style which is more prosaic and begins narratives with the lead/climax of the story; or a feature style, which is a direct opposite in burying the lead and working up to the climax, is emotive, more poetic, and essentially avoids following stringent inverted pyramid style narratives (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsh, 2009; Lovén, 2012).

Underpinning the birth of journalism, as stated previously, were actors in the marketing space, such as bankers, tradesmen, and merchants who sought out news that was the latest and most reliable as quickly as was possible (Hallin, 2001; Carey, 2007; Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsh, 2009). This was because their fortunes were staked on volatile market conditions (Carey, 2007). Politics also helped fuel the birth of journalism, specifically because the actions of monarchies, together with those of their royal agents, impacted markets (Carey, 2007). Carey (2007) maintains the spread of journalism was anchored in certain prerequisites. These were widespread literacy (reading and writing), easily accessible writing instruments (ink and cheap paper), and the belief that an individual or event was worth reporting. The latter prerequisite is now one of the modern elements of news.

According to Carey (2007), other elements anchored and legitimized journalism practice. These were archiving/storage facilities, and established means of distribution, which is similar to the origins of the promotion element of the marketing mix. For instance, Smith *et al.* (1997) argue that the Industrial Revolution in the 19^{th} Century increased demand for goods, which created pressure for transport infrastructure. This resulted in the expansion of the concept of market for consumer goods and thus highlighted the need for print-based channels of communication to expand their reach. Smith *et al.* (1997) further argue that developments in the media have shaped the form and extent of marketing communications, with its intensity increasing due to the invention of the radio and television with the first radio commercial airing in 1922.

Another factor that guaranteed the legitimacy of journalism was social groups, otherwise referred to as ‘the public’ to lend it credibility and a raison d’etre (Carey, 2007). To distinguish 'the public' from ordinary gatherings, Carey (2007) argues it had certain features; its make-up were of misfits (those that lived on the fringes of the upper crust) of society. 'The public' also had to be urban dwellers, gather primarily to read, discuss, and create the news, while the space they occupied to carry out these activities was termed 'the public sphere'. Carey (2007) also maintains that the nature of news discussed in the public sphere have evolved over the years, first from matters of literary concern, to politics. Yet again, parallels can be drawn between the 'public' that legitimizes journalism, and the consumer who the brand exists to serve. Particularly, with regard to marketing communications and how people played a critical role in its origins, Smith *et al.* (1997) write that the earliest forms of marketing communications (advertising, publicity, sales promotion, and direct marketing) were driven by division of labour.

Division of labour enhanced specialisation and efficiency in the production process. It also led to surplus which necessitated trade and gave cause for means of publicising goods. Another factor driving the earliest form of marketing communications was expanding communities. This underscored the need for sophisticated modes of communicating in a non-personal way (Smith *et al.*, 1997).

On journalism, Carey (2007) asserts that, like 'the public' which had certain distinct features, the public sphere was also marked by peculiar features. Carey (2007) argues that the public sphere was in an urban environment; and was composed of a diverse group of strangers-membership, however, was limited by class and gender- the presence of newspapers; and a public space. Carey (2007) argues that as the power of the public grew and the public sphere expanded, political power was gradually plucked away from the monarchy/state and its agents and bestowed on the public. Their discussions of monarchies, despite their (monarchy and state agents) numerous attempts to clamp down on free speech and burgeoning journalism delegitimized and demystified monarchies and their opaque dealings, eventually leading to their topple (Hallin, 2001; Carey, 2007; Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsh, 2009).

Power came to rest in the space between the state and private sector (Carey, 2007). In this early beginning of journalism, its roles were to: provide material for discussion, clarify and interpret, keep a public record, and reflect dominant discussions that permeate society at that current point (Carey, 2007). According to Carey (2007), the public legitimized journalism, and its practitioners justify their actions and defend the practice in the name of the public, and represent the public (Carey, 2007; Skovsgaard, 2014).

Borden and Tew (2007) argue a journalist is someone guided by ‘a self-conscious pursuit of excellence’ in carrying out duties. On the other hand, Hallin (2001) asserts a journalist’s work involves collecting, reporting, and commenting on current affairs and news for newspaper publication, radio and television broadcasting, or periodicals. This view of what a journalist does is, of course, antiquated as the emergence of new media would give cause for expansion of the definition of who a journalist is. Hallin (2001), however, maintains a journalist is essentially involved in the ‘symbolic manipulation of content, that is, sense making.

2.3.1 PRINCIPLES OF JOURNALISM

The practice of journalism worldwide is guided by certain principles that differentiate it from other forms of writing (Ahva, 2011). Deuze (2005) identifies 5 such principles as its perception as a service to the public, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics. These principles support the contemporary understanding of the brand, which will be explored in this section.

2.3.2 SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC

Deuze (2005), corroborated by Carey (2007), and Hanitzsh *et al.* (2011) expatiates that in serving the public, journalists assume the role of the Fourth Estate; that is, watchdogs of the state and private practice apparatus, and actively gather and disseminate information. While Ward (2005) argues journalism's claims as serving the public has limits with regard to space and audience, Ahva (2011) maintains journalism creates, shapes, and maintains the public in its service. The contemporary understanding of brands serves a similar purpose, as in protecting consumer interest (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006), serving as a mark of quality (Goodyear in Ranjan, 2011), and communicating the wholesomeness of what the consumer seeks to purchase (Keller, 2009).

2.3.3 OBJECTIVITY

Objectivity is key to journalism's credibility (Deuze, 2005; Hanitzsh *et al.*, 2011). Ryan (2001) defines objectivity in journalism as 'the collection and dissemination of information that describes reality as accurately as possible', considering reality is a social construct. Deuze (2005) explains that the principle of objectivity enjoins journalists to be neutral, fair, objective and impartial in their reportage so as to lay claim to credibility. Deuze (2005), Ward (2005), Eide (2007), and Hampton (2008) argue that achieving objectivity, which impacts credibility, is impossible. Knight, Sierra, Gerlis and George (2009) identify a list of factors that make achieving objectivity impossible. These are a faith in government sources (Borden & Tew, 2007), the journalist's own mainstream agenda over interests of the community, corporate and careerist self-interest, susceptibility to propaganda, journalism's self-referencing culture which makes it an exclusive club un-inclusive of the wider public and academia, and unfairness, excluding language and inaccuracies.

Hanitzsh *et al.* (2011) concur, adding that there are subjective journalists who subscribe to the position that objectivity is unattainable as news is a representation of the world that was selected and interpreted under certain frames. Deuze (2005) does, however, assert that achieving objectivity could be something journalists could aspire to. Deuze (2005) further states that some consider the journalistic claim to objectivity anti-democratic as it implies journalists are immune to critique, while feminist media scholars have called for the embrace of both subjectivity and objectivity in journalism.

Brands are also expected to project fairness and objectivity to increase consumer trust and reduce perceived risk (Lindwall & Larsson, 2010). Aggarwal and Larrick (2012) argue that in marketing, perceived fairness is integral to fomenting and sustaining relationships. Acts perceived to be unfair 'put tremendous pressure on relationships (Aggarwal & Larrick, 2012). To neutralise perceived risk and increase trustworthiness, brands employ a number of measures that include reducing uncertainty by disclosing conditions for use, values and standards, and using statistical facts and verified information to support claims (Lindwall & Larsson, 2010). The principle of fairness also transcends B2C relationships, to B2B as well, as perceived fairness between partner brands also reduces the possibility of distrust, borne of skepticism (Sénéchal, Georges, & Pernin, 2013).

2.3.4 AUTONOMY

Autonomy, the third principle, according to Deuze (2005), enjoins journalists to act, pursue, tell stories of their own volition, free of coercion, and be independent. Carey (2007), however, asserts the age of journalists acting independently of external coercive forces ended over a century ago. Skovsgaard (2014) explains autonomy as 'exercising professional control over own work and exercising discretion that is independent of others'. Even though journalists exercise a fair amount of autonomy, most are, to a large extent, restricted by oppressive governments and stifling laws, and their organisations with regard to editorial policy and editors as gatekeepers (Skovsgaard, 2014). However, the onset of the digital revolution, which has introduced citizen journalism, cyber journalism, and micro/bloggers, despite their implications to journalism, have eliminated compromised professional autonomy due to reliance on organisations to reach the public (Knight *et al.*, 2008). Specifically, though, Skovsgaard (2014) identifies the political goals of the news organisation, the profit goals of the news organisation, and the routines and structures of the news organisation as the 3 ways in which the journalist's professional autonomy may be compromised.

Democracy is a prerequisite of journalism and vice versa (Carey, 2007; Eide, 2007; Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsh, 2009). According to Carey (2007), the state of a country's media is an indicator of the strength of its democracy. This suggests journalism can only thrive in societies where democracy is the reigning system of government and laws exist to guard against media censorship. Deuze (2005) expatiates that autonomy must not only be at the national level, but must also trickle down to include autonomy from coercion from advertising influence, from editors, and have access to training and professional development. Skovsgaard (2014) corroborates these assertions and argues that the level of perception of autonomy foments trust in journalism, while professional autonomy facilitates journalists' job satisfaction. As to why journalism is dependent on autonomy, Skovsgaard (2014) argues that unlike other professions whose agents deal directly with the public, journalism is dependent on news organisations for access to the public, with this over-reliance raising questions of their autonomy.

The principle of autonomy supports the contemporary understanding of brands as well. 'Brands have stories to tell and are, in fact, stories themselves', independent of ownership (Jon Potter, quoted in Simmons, 2006). Research indicates firms that engage in strategic storytelling often hire storytellers who, very much like journalists, pursue poignant and profound stories that best encapsulate their brand (Simmons, 2006). However, whereas journalists are likely to have their autonomy inhibited by oppressive governments, gatekeepers, self-censorship and their organisation's profit goals, it is unlikely that the brand storyteller will face as many threats to their autonomy. In fact, it is possible there are fewer obstructions. Simmons (2006), a former Director of Brand Language at Guinness, indicates that the company's former Global Brand Director acted as a gatekeeper for the strategic storytelling narratives that Simmons (2006) spun. This also indicates the gatekeeper must be on the same page as the brand storyteller else autonomy might be compromised.

2.3.5 IMMEDIACY

The fourth principle of immediacy enjoins journalists to possess a sense of speed, immediacy and actuality as is ingrained in the idea of 'news' (Carey, 2007). The defining characteristic of news is its novelty. Carey (2007) recounts that a propelling factor of the rise of journalism was that actors in the business sphere wanted news fast. As a result, journalists work under the pressure of meeting deadlines in a 24-hour, 7-day loop (Beckett, 2010; Turnbull, 2012). This is necessary as breaking news does not announce itself prior to breaking (Deuze, 2005). Furthermore, being first with the news enables media houses to stand out from their competitors, and command audience attention, which culminate in increased subscriptions and advertising placement. It also creates perceptions of efficiency and professionalism, and entrenches the media house's position as a social vanguard (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2008; Alejandro, 2010).

The immediacy principle supports brand concepts such as differentiation and relevance. Aaker (2012) describes brand relevance as the ability to render competitors irrelevant by making them deficient in a 'must have feature or benefit'. This involves innovation in either being faster, cheaper, or better. According to Aaker (2012), that must-have feature must be inimitable and can include social programmes, personality, community benefits, organisational values, or community benefits. Differentiation, on the other hand, is when 'a firm outperforms rival brands in provision of features such that it faces reduced sensitivity for other features (Dirisu, Iyiola & Ibidunni, 2013). Differentiation may either be product-driven (Dirisu *et al.*, 2013), by leveraging the brand, service innovation, or by package design (Six Degrees LLC, 2008).

2.3.6 ETHICS

Ward (2005) defines journalistic ethics as the 'dominant attitudes and norms' guiding journalism practice. Ethics enjoins journalists to operate within a set of moral standards with respect to right reporting conducts (Deuze, 2005). Deuze (2005) argues ethics in journalism legitimizes its practitioners' claim as societal watchdogs and makes them accountable to the public they serve. Ethics obligates journalists to the pursuit of truth

(Deuze, 2005). According to Deuze (2005), the Code of Bordeaux in 1956 enjoined journalists, through the International Federation of Journalists, to subscribe to a professional code of ethics. Herrscher (2002) questions the existence of such global codes of ethics as the Code of Bordeaux as Herrscher (2002), together with Hanitzsh *et al.* (2011), argues the national context within which journalists operate determines, to a large extent, their professional ethics. Herrscher (2002) further argues the subjects of these numerous global codes of ethics are different, their goals are not explicitly stated; who protects the citizen-tuned-victim of news reportage is unclear; what news is remains vague; and the codes have no identifiable enforcer.

Forsyth (1980) argues there are two main ethical ideologies in journalism; relativism and idealism. Under relativism, journalists may either choose to be guided by moral philosophies they have personally formed, which are anchored to situational contexts; or may decide to subscribe to universal moral absolutes regardless of context. Under idealism, journalists who are highly idealistic pursue desirable goals with the right action, while those less idealistic believe the end justifies the means by which they achieve their goals. The issue of ethics has proved contentious in journalism (Coward, 2010). Coward (2010), writing on confessional/autobiographical journalism, asserts this new type of journalism has been critiqued as being invasive. Coward (2010) argues the consent of subjects of news stories are often not requested as they are either closely related to or in direct conflict with the journalist and their version of events, or even if they do grant permission, they do not fully comprehend the extent and nuances of their consent (Coward, 2010). Although this type of journalism offers an authenticity the public craves, it affects readers' preference of writers, cannibalizes and degrades the writers, and raises serious ethical consequences (Coward, 2010).

The issue of ethics is just as tetchy in marketing. Ethical branding is a complex concept to adequately explain as 'marketing ethics is but a subset of business ethics which itself is a subset of ethics (Ying, 2005). However, a simple solution to ethical branding is offered by ethical brands, who urge consumers to buy 'into the brands that represent the value systems they believe in', and eschew those brands with value systems contrarian to theirs (Egan-Wyer, Mur, Pfeiffer & Svensson, 2014). Egan-Wyer *et al.* (2014), however, note that ethics and capitalism make for strange bedfellows, and that companies are likely to abandon ethics in favour of other productive, profitable, and efficient strategies should the opportunity present itself. This notwithstanding, ethics remains a tool to build competitive advantage (Egan-Wyer *et al.*, 2014), and several approaches exist to guide ethical practice. These include the 'fair trade' label. Products that subscribe to the label are perceived to have met rigorous requirements regarding business practices that are sustainable and ethical (Bogaards, Mpinganjira, Svensson & Myson 2012).

2.4 ROLE OF JOURNALISM

The roles of the journalist are steeped in moral commitments (Borden & Tew, 2007). Hanitzsh *et al.* (2011), assert journalism scholars have permutated journalism's role under the passive-active dimension, and the neutral-advocate dimension. The former 'refers to the extent to which a journalist acts independently of those who have interests in the story', while the latter 'reflects the extent to which the journalist takes a stand on a certain issue'. Hanitzsh *et al.* (2011) propose their own dimensions of the role of journalism: as playing an interventionist role; a power-distance role; and a market orientation role. According to Hanitzsh *et al.* (2011), the interventionist role reflects two types of journalists; the one who actively and subjectively pursues and promotes certain missions and values, and the other who does these but objectively with an air of detachment, impartiality and neutrality.

The power-distance role, Hanitzsh *et al.* (2011) argue, emphasises journalism's adversarial role and brings its status as the Fourth Estate full circle. For instance, Warden (2001) asserts journalism plays a crucial role in correcting the criminal justice system's mistakes, at least in American society, since the 19^{th} Century. According to Warden (2001), this role is more celebrated today because of the media's ubiquity, as well as the introduction of technologically-advanced methods of reportage. Warden (2001) further adds this role has evolved, as journalists before were pro-establishment, working with law enforcement agents to influence a conviction despite lack of convincing evidence. Thus, from the perspective of pro-establishment advocates, journalism is an agent of instability, instead of an agent of control (Eide, 2007). The job of the journalist is to challenge those in power and serve the people (Eide, 2007). Journalists are crucial interpreters (Hanitzsh *et al.*, 2011) and intermediaries between the people and the mighty (Eide, 2007).

Journalism's power-distance role supports the brand's modern role as an influencer of democracy and free speech, especially in the developing world (Kylander & Stone, 2012). Brands, because of changing demographics, have had to take on active-advocate roles in favour of passive-neutral roles to connect with consumers who expect their brands to be less detached manufacturers and more personalities they can have fulfilling relationships with (Burns & Fawcett, 2012). However, not all brands are able to take on the active-advocate role, especially in chaotic or violent situations. In cases like that, it is probably prudent for the brand to adopt a passive-neutral stance, since taking a stance is likely to polarize a section of the market and affect the brand's bottom line (Kylander & Stone, 2012). Moreover, most firms are also likely to abandon advocating for socially-conscious causes once more productive, efficient, and profitable alternatives present themselves (Egan-Wyer *et al.*, 2014).

The third dimension of the role of journalism-market orientation-as Hanitzsh *et al.* (2011) argue, refers to how journalism perceives the public either as consumers or citizens. Journalists who perceive the public as citizens emphasise mobilisation and political information to create a citizenry that is informed, while those who perceive the public as consumers 'subordinate their goals to the logic of the market' (Hanitzsh *et al.*, 2011). The market-orientation role of journalism has, arguably, the most prominent link with brands since brands revolve around the demands of the market as an economic construct (Ying, 2005). However, it can still be argued that brands that have come to perceive consumers as citizens are likely to emphasis social and political advocacy. These brands would be considered 'evolved' or at the Policy stage of Goodyear's 1996 Brand Evolution Model as their acts become geared towards influencing policy and impacting society. On the other hand, brands that consider their customers as merely consumers are likely to be considered as 'evolving', perhaps at any stage preceding the Policy stage of Goodyear's Brand Evolution Model.

2.5 BRAND JOURNALISM

Creamer (2009) a columnist for Advertising Age, a leading global source of news, intelligence and conversation for marketing and media communities, has identified brand journalism as one of the top-ten important ideas of the previous decade, and argues it is one of the most realistic descriptions of marketing today, as well as being the answer to engaging customers with instant feedback. Light (2014) also calls it the answer to 'inclusive individuality', which he defines as a behaviour exhibited by today's consumer who savours individuality and a desire for inclusivity simultaneously. The term 'Brand journalism' was popularised by Larry Light in 2003 and has come to be associated with a new approach to marketing communications (Swenson, 2012; Light, 2014). However, Swenson (2012), argues that despite its perceived 'newness', brand journalism has existed for over a century now in several forms either as content marketing (Liebtag, 2013; Wilcox, 2015), as custom content (Cole & Greer, 2013), and as corporate journalism (Swenson, 2012).

Light (2014) also notes that brand journalism is 'evolving from the adaptation of flexible marketing communications to an even more journalistic approach'. Due to its evolving nature, mostly owing to the attention it is garnering from practitioners and academia alike as a formidable marketing communications element, multiple definitions, as well as attempts at a definition, have surfaced for brand journalism. However, Lehto and Moisala (2015) argue definitions of brand journalism of a scientific grounding are rare with varying views from industrial discussions.

Quoting Larry Light, McDonalds' former CMO credited with revitalising the McDonald brand using brand journalism, Bull (2013) writes, 'Brand Journalism is a chronicle of the varied things that happen in a brand's world, throughout the day, throughout the years'. 'Brand Journalism allows us to express the multidimensional essence of a brand in a way that is appealing and compelling to specific audiences with their specific needs'. Proffering a stance on brand journalism, Cole and Greer (2013), who do not directly define the concept, argue brand journalism allows businesses to target customers with useful, tailored editorial content while promoting their brand, values, and products albeit covertly. DVorkin (2012) pitches brand journalism as 'Marketers using the tools of digital publishing and social media to speak directly to consumers'. Swenson (2012) states brand journalism 'offers content that blends journalistic principles with organisational communication strategies.

David Kelley, quoted in Swenson (2012) defines brand journalism as an information-driven approach to communications that combines brand content, public relations, and advertising to construct good stories in the marketplace. Light (2014) argues brand journalism takes cognizance of different things a brand may mean to different people in different regions in different situations. Based on this, Light (2014) defines brand journalism as a ‘multi-dimensional, multi-faceted way of creating brand story’. Despite these multiple definitions, scholars, especially those such as Wilcox (2015) and Bull (2013) who, unlike Light (2014) refrain from presenting the concept within clear and precise limits or form, argue such journalism tenets as trust and objectivity, together with the aims of traditional journalism-inform, educate, and entertain- and news elements as timeliness and relevance, are the underlying principles of brand journalism. Also underlying brand journalism, according to Light (2014) is ‘the idea that a brand is a complex multi-dimensional idea that includes differentiating features, functional and emotional benefits as well as a distinctive brand character’.

A review of the definitions and contributions towards a definition of brand journalism indicates the phenomenon, essentially, is journalism practiced by the brand. The firm chronicles what transpires in and around it to produce relevant and compelling content to promote the brand. The promotion, which is often direct, overt, and aggressive with regard to other elements of the communications mix, in this case, is subtle. And instead, the social, educative, informative, entertaining aspect of content is emphasised to draw in audiences. Thus, brand journalism offers an alternative route to getting target audiences to consume marketing communications messages. In not so many words, brand journalism may be said to be a combination of elements and principles of journalism, and marketing communications messages to produce compelling content that is persuasive and informative to draw in multi-faceted customers who are otherwise disillusioned with contrived marketing communications messages and are wont to ignore them.

2.5.1 AIMS/GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Extant literature on brand journalism espouses a multiplicity of its aims. According to Swenson (2012), the objective of brand journalism is to tell corporate stories and in so doing, unite communities of consumers. Swenson (2012) also confers brand journalism with the aim of informing, entertaining, and persuading through the collection and communication of events, news, and happenings. Cole and Greer (2013) assert an objective of journalism is to build trust and strengthen the relationship between firms and their customers. Light (2014) asserts brand journalism allows for a multi-dimensional, multi-device, multi-dimensional approach to telling the brand’s stories; and captures the interests of inclusive individualists who are interconnected and crave content that is customized and interactive.

Light (2015) further adds that an objective of brand journalism is to offer ‘the right message to the right customer in the right situation at the right time with the right content in the right format for the right device’. Brand journalism aims to increase the intimacy of customer relationships, create feelings of goodwill and indebtedness, and fosters group membership among various stakeholders as the company and consumers (Swenson, 2012).

2.5.2 BENEFITS OF BRAND JOURNALISM

Light (2014) asserts that brand journalism helps engender the sense of ‘insider-belonging’ inclusive individualists crave; that it brings focus to the convergence of branded communications; that it creates a multi-layered, multi-channel communications that tell a brand's entire story in consumers' global-regional-personal context over time. Brand journalism also educates, brings continued interest, trust, and encourages loyalty; encourages sharing and generates engagement, and allows for the creation and curating of information; and adds depth and relevance to the brand experience (Light, 2014)

2.5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF BRAND JOURNALISM FOR MARKETING

Light (2014) maintains brand managers are brand journalists, and advocates for brand journalism to play a role in global brand marketing. Light (2014) expatiates marketing is at a crossroads of finding a congruence to globalisation, localisation and personalisation. According to Light (2014), marketers have to find a way to build consistent powerful brands in an environment that demands global consistency, local differentiations, and personal relevance simultaneously. Light (2014) argues brand journalism offers this much-needed congruence, by consistently communicating a brand's local differentiation, global character and personal relevance on a segment, micro segment and individual basis. Against this background, Light (2014) identifies a number of implications for brand journalism in marketing. For one, Light (2014) argues brand journalism allows local and/or regional teams the power to prioritise their activities and tell relevant brand stories that create genuine consumer engagement. This strengthens the global brand through coherent brand messages building global credibility.

Furthermore, brand journalism compels marketers to be conversationalists. Light (2014) expatiates that marketers would be able to engage instead of preach to consumers across a multiplicity of channels, and thus advocates for every company to be a media company. Brand journalism also enhances the overall brand experience and generates fuller consumer engagement. Today's customer wants to be recognized, respected, known, and valued as individuals; this notion is what spurs brand journalism. It, therefore, provides the customer with timely, relevant, focused, personalized content that helps in making better brand decisions in real time (Light, 2014).

2.5.4 EXECUTION STRATEGIES

Swenson (2012) argues brand journalists mold comprehension of citizenship, community, and consumption by providing directly to the public, rituals, symbols and narratives. Swenson (2012) also argues brand journalists meet the public's informational needs by gathering articulate relevant, timely, and valuable stories from communities. As to who assumes responsibility for carrying out brand journalism, Simmons (2006) and Cole and Greer (2013) assert a firm may hire their own brand journalists or outsource the task to a consultant, or retrieve brand content from a third party through product reviews. Thus, brand journalism may originate either from a neutral publisher/ vendor or from the company.

Light (2014) emphasises a distinctive feature of brand journalism is its ability to aid communication on a multi-faceted, complex and multi-dimensional set of brand messages in an integrated manner. Light (2014) also asserts brands have hired great writers who produce content that connect with diverse audiences across multiple channels. Scholars note brand journalists employ a number of strategies to achieve their objectives. They cite print (Swenson, 2012; Cole & Greer; 2013); broadcast-including product placement, corporate blogs, content-driven websites, newsletters-linked to custom content, and social media channels-also linked to custom content (Cole & Greer, 2013). These strategies sustain particular communities in time and space (Deuze, 2005; Swenson, 2012)

2.5.5 ISSUES

Cole and Greer (2013) argue brand journalism is pure, albeit relatively, in comparison with traditional advertising. However, scholars assert brand journalism is plagued with issues of an ethical slant. Underpinning the argument of journalism critics with regard to the issue of ethics is the belief that when done on behalf of brands, it ceases to become journalism, having lost some of its ‘purity’. Others, as Bull (2013) asserts, hold that brand journalism poses a threat to the practice of journalism by undermining its tenets of trust and objectivity. They hold these tenets become compromised once integrated into the corporate agenda. Yet, objectivity is a contentious issue in journalism itself (Deuze, 2007; Hampton, 2008; Knight *et al.*, 2008; Coward, 2010). Swenson (2012) argues objectivity in journalism is a recent invention, non-existent in journalism cannon till post World War II. The aim of journalism, prior to this time, was to be colourful, tell a good story, write literature, and work towards the good of the public as reflected in the era of muckrake journalism (Swenson, 2012).

Purists of journalism have also referred to brand journalism as company propaganda, thus essentially not journalism (Swenson, 2012). According to Swenson (2012), detractors of brand journalism point to the seemingly inherent conflict between journalism; perceived as a service to democracy (Hallin, 2001; Hasty, 2006), and brands which can be opportunistic (Ying, 2005). Swenson (2012), however, argues the conflict is only superficial as both corporate communicators and journalists construct ‘social narratives needed to affirm values, promote social order, and shape what it means to be a member of a community’. They further argue that though brand journalism may not produce objective content, it does transcend traditional advertising, and aids customer self-indulgence, as well as fostering private consumption of commodities.

Cole and Greer (2012) also argue the perceived neutrality of editorials are compromised when marketing messages are incorporated. Cole and Greer (2012) assert editorials are generally considered more trustworthy and believable, which lend to their credibility. However, through framing, brand journalists manipulate content by drawing on the perceived purity and apparent lack of bias of editorials and present them as such (Cole & Greer, 2012). Framing is a tool journalists employ to describe events and influence how audiences interpret issues/events (Cole & Greer, 2013). To marketing, opposition to brand journalism has generally been from purists of traditional positioning who have expressed indignation 'that marketing might be evolving and taking a new tack in connecting with consumers' (Light, 2014). Light (2014) argues brand journalism challenges marketers who subscribe to the notion that a brand represents a single thing in consumers' minds.

Light (2014) maintains brands practicing brand journalism must have an editorial policy, as well as 'a framework of brand-defining non-negotiables within which marketing teams have the responsibility to be locally relevant and the flexibility to address individual differences'. However, it is possible most firms practicing brand journalism either do not have these frameworks or policies in place or are not aware that what they are practicing is brand journalism enough to put these structures in place.

2.5.6 FORMS

Brand journalism, which has often been referred to as brand storytelling and brand narratives, is a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted approach to telling a brand's story (Light, 2014). Speaking to its multi-dimensionality, Swenson (2012) asserts it exists as corporate journalism; as content marketing (Wilcox, 2015; ADMA, 2013); as custom content and custom publishing (Cole & Greer, 2013); and brand/branded journalism (Lehto & Moisala, 2015). Due to limited academic studies on most of these dimensions, content marketing, corporate journalism, and brand storytelling/ brand narratives, which have received some attention in academia and practice papers, will be explored.

2.5.6.1 CONTENT MARKETING

Holliman and Rowley (2014) perceive content as anything created and shared online. A number of definitions exist for content marketing in extant literature. Pulizzi and Barrett (2008) define content marketing as the 'creation and distribution of educational and/or compelling content in multiple formats to attract/or retain customers'. Petulla (2014) defines content marketing as the 'overarching practice of using information and entertainment to promote a brand/product', while the CMI (2015) defines content marketing as 'a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly-defined audience- and ultimately, to drive profitable customer action'.

A review of these definitions puts into stark perspective, just how much content marketing echoes journalism. For instance, Pulizzi and Barrett's (2008) description of content marketing as educational, and Petulla's (2014) description of it as informative and entertaining, form the traditional roles of journalism ((Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsh, 2009), while the CMI's (2015) description of content marketing as valuable, relevant and consistent echoes some of the elements of journalism (Hallin, 2001; Carey, 2007; Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsh, 2009). Liebtag (2013) argues content marketing is not a new concept; it has existed in practice as corporate journalism (Swenson, 2012), custom publishing (Cole & Greer, 2013), brand publishing, branded/custom content, native advertising, sponsored content (Petulla, 2014), brand media, brand journalism (Light, 2014), inbound marketing, and brand content.

According to Liebtag (2013), content marketing, an online publishing strategy, is driven by conversation. Similarly, Rowley (2008) and Holliman and Rowley (2014) assert content marketing's primary purpose is to tell the brand's story. Content marketing is a marketing technique that helps create and distribute content that is valuable and relevant-where relevant in journalism refers to 'news that offers readers, viewers or listeners knowledge, insight and perspective on matters' (Lovén, 2012)-, and attract, acquire, and engage a target audience with a motive to increase profit (Leibtag, 2013). The content produced is purposeful, helpful, and compelling. It is also timely, connects with and responds to customer needs. Its approach to business is personal, engenders trust (Cole & Greer, 2013) and ultimately facilitates deep and long-lasting relationships between the brand and its customer (Liebtag, 2013). Content marketing employs journalism's 5Ws and H (Who, What, Where, When, Why and How) to ask pertinent questions that guide content marketing strategy such as: Who is your audience?; What do your customers want?; How and When do audiences access content? (Liebtag, 2013).

Kilgour, Sasser, and Larke (2015) concur with Liebtag (2013), maintaining that it is crucial for content marketing strategists to understand their audience when creating content to ascertain their preferences and needs. Holliman and Rowley (2014) assert that a defining trait of content marketing is its subtle or no selling language and, like brand journalism, firms outsource content creation (Huotari, Ulkuniemi, Saraniemi, & Malaska, 2015).

- **GOALS**

Liebtag (2013) argues content marketing, through created and sustained conversation, aims to attract; acquire (a customer's contact information for further communication); engage/connect (continued engagement about service, knowledge, product); drive profitable action by aligning efforts with business goals; build trust (by solving customer problems); listen (to reactions to content and aptly respond). Rose and Pulizzi (2011), on the other hand, write that the objectives of content marketing are to enhance brand awareness and reinforce brand messages; aid customer service and nurture a passionate base of subscribers, foment customer upsell and conversion as well as generate lead conversion. Holliman and Rowley (2014) assert certain elements of content marketing, such as its abilities to share values with consumers, create interdependence between the firm and the customer, produce quality information, and its non-opportunistic behaviour facilitate the achievement of trust, a crucial function of content marketing.

- **EXECUTION STRATEGIES**

Liebtag (2013) identifies email newsletters; websites; blogs; webinars; ebooks; whitepapers; infographics; podcasts; slide presentations as tools content market strategists employ to engage with customers.

- **BENEFITS**

According to Liebtag (2013), content marketing affords an avenue for the creation of brand awareness and reinforces brand values where traditional advertising has failed; helps capture audience attention in an age where it is becoming increasingly challenging to do so; facilitates brand loyalty (CMI, 2015); facilitates an avenue to keep audiences informed within a trusted community; affords flexibility in changing course according to consumer interests in real time without the cost incurred to print or create ads for traditional media (CMI, 2015), and avoids the consequence in delays; provides word-of-mouth customer testimonial; allows the strategist/firm to control their message, and leads to increased sales (CMI, 2015).

- **ISSUES**

ADMA (2013) mention it is ‘conventionally understood’ that content marketing, a non-marketing skill, ‘has more in common with journalism and communications than with marketing’. Concurring with Light (2014), Holliman and Rowley (2014) argue the rise of content marketing implies businesses must grapple with the realisation that aside their core business, they are a publishing business as well. Liebtag (2013) also argues since content marketing deals with such qualitative issues as loyalty and trust and no explicit selling message, it is challenging to measure it and justify Return on Investment. Holliman and Rowley (2014) add that as a result, executive management are reluctant to buy into the concept. Holliman and Rowley (2014) also identify a number of obstacles militating against content marketing success.

Holliman and Rowley (2014) argue that executive management struggle to accept that content marketing, aside being challenging to measure, requires long-term commitment, as well as skills that firm communicators and marketers do not possess. Holliman and Rowley (2014) also argue that content marketing’s requirement of significant budget allocations and resource, the unwillingness of brand managers to submit to proper planning processes, as well as executive management’s stance that quality content meant parting with thought leadership/expertise for free (Liebtag, 2013) provide obstacles that militate against its success.

Content marketing borrows journalism principles such as Kipling's six little questions used by journalists to gather information (Bull, 2013); and journalism elements/characteristics which determine what is news such as relevance (Lovén, 2012). Its use of digital media to disseminate valuable and relevant content to start and sustain conversations with the brand's community also forms one major aspect of the tools brand journalism employs to do same-brand journalism employs both digital media and print and broadcast media (Swenson, 2012; Cole and Greer, 2013). It can thus be argued that brand journalism cannot be equated to content marketing (Wilcox, 2015) but does encompass content marketing.

2.5.6.2 CORPORATE JOURNALISM

Little theoretical examination of corporate journalism exists (Lovén, 2012). Lovén (2012) defines corporate journalism as 'the act of aligning journalistic strategies applied in corporate communications to the organisational identity of the company with the purpose of achieving corporate legitimacy'. Kounalakis, quoted in Swenson (2012) defines corporate journalism as 'the application of traditional journalistic principles to organisational communication, in order to achieve alignment and action behind the organisation's purpose, vision, values, strategies, operating principles, and priorities'. Swenson (2012) argues corporate journalism enjoins communicators to avoid hype, sensationalism, and propaganda in lieu of accurate, attributed, timely, and relevant information. Swenson (2012) further argues corporate journalism aids firms to create relevant, dynamic messages that are cohesive yet flexible enough to respond to the nuances of different clusters of consumers (Liebtag, 2013).

A review of the definitions of corporate journalism, juxtaposed with brand journalism, indicates that while corporate journalism combines journalism with organisational communications to achieve internal cohesion, brand journalism combines journalism and marketing communications to foment equity. Corporate journalists, along with brand journalists, Swenson (2012) argues, produce narratives that are rich, fluid, and adaptable and tell a brand's story to multi-ethnic audiences who perceive the brand from unique social and cultural perspectives. Shedding insight into the source of corporate journalism stories, Swenson (2012) asserts journalists capture conversations within communities of consumers and contribute to these conversations in ways that benefit the organisation. Furthermore, corporate journalists, according to Swenson (2012), pursue stories that are relevant, credible, and accurate, and which increase free flow of information among the firm's employees and consumers. Corporate journalism, however, is limited to print-based media channels such as magazines and newsletters. The major differences between corporate journalism and brand journalism, therefore, are what is fused with journalism; the aim of the fusions, and the execution platforms.

2.5.6.3 BRAND STORYTELLING/ BRAND NARRATIVES

Hjelmgren (2016) defines storytelling as the 'sharing of knowledge and experiences through narrative and anecdotes in order to communicate lessons, complex ideas, concepts, and causal connections'. Hjelmgren (2016) further argues storytelling is a means by which corporations distinguish their brands by bonding with and indoctrinating customers-current and potential-to its raison d'etre. Denning (2006) argues storytelling is also referred to as narratives. Mossberg (2008) asserts corporations create stories, which they use to manufacture a holistic concept of the brand. A powerful means by which to communicate messages that are abstract and sometimes challenging to understand, storytelling also provides the link that connects a brand's past, present, and future; and illuminates and brings marketing strategies to life. Kaufman (2003) adds that people's inherent need to belong can be exploited and aligned with a corporation's mission and values through storytelling.

Multiple scholars concur storytelling aids brand awareness and sense making (Mossberg, 2008; Woodside *et al*., 2008; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010; Lin & Chen, 2015; Hjelmgren, 2016). While Kaufman (2003) argues stories told effectively can strengthen a corporation's bond with consumers, Denning (2006) argues there is no homogeneous formulae for telling the right story. Denning (2006) identifies eight different narrative patterns: narratives for sparking action; for communicating who the brand is; for transmitting values; for communicating what the firm is; for fostering collaboration; for taming the grapevine; for sharing knowledge; and for leading people into the future. Papadatos (2006), Woodside *et al.* (2008), and Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) argue that a way to provide a solid foundation for organisational storytelling is through archetypal stories, with such elements as anticipation, crisis, mentoring help to assist the protagonist, and triumph in that order (Papadatos, 2006).

Woodside *et al.* (2008) define an archetype as 'an unconscious primary form, an original pattern or prototype in the human mind'. These archetypes are constructed around myths, which are traditional stories 'about heroes/supernatural beings, often exploring the origins of natural phenomena or aspects of human behaviour' (Woodside *et al*., 2008). Hjelmgren (2016) identifies press releases, websites, intranets, speeches, and annual reports as storytelling execution strategies and argues that to gain credibility, brand storytelling should be based on truth, real people, and describe real events and actions.

People reason narratively and not argumentatively, and respond to and are driven to action by stories more than lectures or statistics (Woodside *et al.*, 2008). Two essential elements to storytelling are chronology and causality, while taking into cognizance those aspects of the story that emphasis imagination and those that enable readers and viewers to feel the characters (Woodside *et al.*, 2008). Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) argue infusing a story with archetypes, myths, narrative patterns and elements sans brand persona makes the stories disconnected and fails to connect with consumers. According to Herskovitz and Crystal (2010), the brand persona focuses storytelling through consistent messages, and foments a deep enduring bond with consumers. Brand persona-based storytelling is hinged upon 'the inspiration and wonder of the poet' and creative language skills works best in fields such as the financial and health services where trust is a crucial commodity, and can make brands become icons (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010).

Table 1: Brand Journalism and its Forms

Form	Execution Strategies	Benefits	Issues	Defining Features	Aims/Goals
Brand Journalism	• Print (newspapers and magazines • Radio/TV broadcasts • Corporate blogs • Content-driven websites • Newsletters • Social media	• Adds depth and relevance to the brand experience. • Encourages trust and loyalty. • Creates inclusive individuality	• Ethical issues: apparently compromises journalism tenets of trust and objectivity. • Considered company propaganda.	• Inculcates trust and objectivity in content creation to inform, educate, and entertain. • Does not have a direct selling motive.	• Unite communities of consumers through content. • To build trust and strengthen the firm/consumer relationship. • Create brand equity through editorial credibility • Increase direct ROI in the form of purchase intention and sales lead generation.
Content Marketing	• Email newsletters • Websites • Blogs • Webinars • Ebooks • Whitepapers • Infographics • podcasts	• Affords an avenue for brand awareness creation. • Reinforces brand values. • Helps capture audience attention • Facilitates brand loyalty.	• Has more in common with journalism than marketing • Challenging to measure ROI on content marketing. • Difficult to get management buy-in.	• It is an online publishing strategy driven by conversation. • Content is purposeful, helpful, compelling. • Employs journalism's 5Ws and H to guide content marketing strategy. • May have direct/subtle selling motive	• Enhance brand awareness and reinforce brand messages. • Nurture passionate base of subscribers. • Seeks to foment customer upsell and conversion.
Corporate Journalism	• Print-based media channels	• Produces relevant dynamic brand messages		• Avoids hype, sensationalism, and propaganda. • Pursues relevant, credible and accurate stories.	• To combine organizational communication with journalism to align company goals.
Brand Narrative	• Corporate blogs • Video-sharing sites • Print-bases media • Television	• Aids brand awareness and sense making. • Provides a link to connect a brand's past,		• Tells brand stories using anecdotes, mythical tropes. • Based on truth, real people, describes real events and	• Aims to stoke readers' imagination to bring marketing strategies to life by making

		present, and future		actions (this characteristic is dependent on the industry a firm is in).	the abstract tangible

2.5.7 BRAND JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS

Brand journalism and Public Relations (PR) share certain things in common. For instance, they both favour a multiple-way approach to communications, and they are both marketing communications elements (Fill & Jamieson, 2006; Light, 2014). However, brand journalism is not PR nor vice versa. Curtin (2008) asserts PR practice developed after the first world war in response to the effects of industrialisation and big business, which had ignored and treated citizens and employees with contempt under a ‘public be damned’ dictum. P.T. Barnum popularised the practice, but Ivy Lee’s public information model for big business helped usher in the development of modern public relations at the turn of the century in 1900 (Curtin, 2008).

Grunig (2006) expounds that Strategic PR (SPR), on the other hand, was developed in the 1960’s and positions PR as more than a messaging, publicity, and media relations function to assume a strategic management function. Khodarahmi (2009) argues no single definition for PR and SPR exist. Grunig and Hunt (1984) define PR as the ‘management of communication between an organization and its public’, while Ledingham and Bruning (1998) perceive PR as the management of relationships. Cutlip, Center and Broom (2006), however, define PR as ‘the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success depends’. Despite these views on what PR is, Wells and Spinks (1999) argue that the main thrust of PR is the sustained development, influence, and modification of public opinion.

PR is essentially a crises management function which requires practitioners to define the problem, communicate and implement setup plans, and evaluate the entire process (Khodarahmi, 2009). With regard to SPR, Khodarahmi (2009) argues certain elements contribute to ensuring its effective development. These are internationalism; competition; specialisation; strategic expertise, evaluation of PR activities; adoption of new technology, personnel development and recruitment (Khodarahmi, 2009). Khodarahmi (2009) further argues SPR campaigns require communications, strategic thinking, and proactive plans, all to aid the adoption of an appropriate approach which would not offend sensibilities. SPR requires integrated communications which, in turn, requires management commitment and a set of managerial skills.

A number of scholars concur that PR practitioners have been telling stories since the practice's inception (Curtin, 2008; Swenson, 2012). Swenson (2012) argues brand journalism borrows from PR, especially as both aim to build long-term trust between a company and its consumers (Grunig & Grunig, 1998; Grunig & Grunig, 2000; Light, 2014). Grunig (2006) also mentions that PR employs a two-way symmetrical communications model to develop and cultivate relationships with strategic publics, which is implicit in brand journalism. However, there is a clear distinction between Strategic PR and brand journalism. While PR has been integrated into marketing units (Khodarahmi, 2009), there are certain scholars such as Grunig and Grunig (1998) who argue PR must be separated from other management functions. In apposition, it is clear brand journalism's position in marketing; as a marketing communications tool and an alternative approach to traditional marketing communications (Swenson, 2012; Light, 2014).

SPR perceives the company's publics in blocks, for instance, either as employees, suppliers, governmental agencies, financial analysts *inter alia* and communicates to them as such (Grunig, 1992). Brand journalism, however, fashions compelling narratives targeted at the atomic unit of the public, that is, the individual who wants to be 'seen' and respected (Light, 2014). Brand journalism's ability to aid in the construction of consistent powerful brands 'in an environment that demands global consistency, local individuality, and personal relevance' simultaneously by producing compelling narratives (Light, 2015) using both the corporation and customers as sources of news is what sets brand journalism apart from SPR. SPR has been unable to do same as brand journalism has with inclusive individuality. Furthermore, as Khodarahmi (2009) argues, SPR is hindered by international borders. Khodarahmi (2009) asserts new technology, feminisation, and globalisation are issues plaguing SPR practice. Brand journalism is unencumbered by such issues.

Integrated communications, a key factor of SPR success, requires commitment, a set of managerial skills, and analytical thinking (Khodarahmi, 2009). Brand journalism also requires management commitment as well (Swenson, 2012; Cole & Greer, 2013; Light, 2014). However, brand journalism requires creative and storytelling skills in personnel who must be sinuous and highly creative/imaginative; skills missing in marketing functions (Simmons, 2006; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010) but abundant in journalism, specifically, narrative journalism (Lovén, 2012). Furthermore, while SPR communications emphasise putting people at ease and increasing stakeholder confidence regarding an organisation's strategy (Khodarahmi, 2009), brand journalism's stories go beyond that to create communities around the content.

Furthermore, though extant literature on brand journalism is clear on how to create compelling content, for example through framing (Cole & Greer, 2013), grounded in the brand's persona (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010), and connecting to consumers through archetypes (Fonnesbaek & Andersen, 2005; Papadatos, 2006; Woodside *et al.*, 2008), and an editorial policy to guide practice (Light, 2014), SPR literature reviewed are not so distinct on how to create compelling content. New media is something SPR is grappling with (Khodarahmi, 2009), particularly as PR is perceived as media relations employing traditional media, principally the print medium, in concert with other tools of communication to communicate messages to publics (Grunig, 1992). However, not only is brand journalism defined by new media while still using broadcast media, it emphasises owned media; that is, the organisation must be a media company (Swenson, 2012; Cole & Greer, 2013; Light, 2014).

2.6 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Scholars such as Swenson (2012), Cole and Greer (2013), Light (2014) and Wilcox (2015) concur brand journalism is a marketing communications element that can attain success where traditional marketing communications elements have stumbled. The following section, therefore, explores marketing communications and the flaws of popular marketing communications elements.

The term 'communication' is rooted in the Latin word 'communis', which means to make something known or to make something common (Lunenburg, 2010; Velentzas & Broni, 2014). According to Losee (1999), 'communication occurs if, and only if, information moves from the input to one process, to the output from a second process, the latter process being the inverse of the first process'. Fill (1995) and Holm (2006) define communication as 'the process by which individuals share meaning', while Smith, Berry, and Pulford (1997) define the term as 'the act of sending information from the mind of one person to the mind of another'. It has also been defined as 'any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person, information about that person's needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective states' (Velentzas & Broni, 2014). Keyton (2011) contributes to the pool of communication definitions by defining it as 'the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another', while Kourkouta and Papathanasiou (2014) define it as 'the exchange of information, thoughts and feelings among people using speech or other means'.

It can be inferred thus from these definitions that communications is a process that involves the exchange of cues, be it verbal or non-verbal, between a sender and a receiver. Despite the simplicity of these definitions, Smith *et al.* (1997) and Smith and Taylor (2002) underscore the complexity of communication, with Smith *et al.* (1997) arguing communications is an interpersonal activity dependent on the context within which the information is sent. Kourkouta and Papathanasiou (2014) state that the context within which communication occurs may be psychological, social, and cultural. They also add that communication occurs within a physical space. This assertion, however, is challenged by Velentzas and Broni (2014) who contend that 'communication can occur across vast distances in time and space'. Communication is further anchored in such factors as a pre-identified receiver; proof that the information has been received and is understood; the information's ability to persuade the receiver; and a channel devoid of noise (distractions) to carry the information and facilitate feedback (Smith *et al.*, 1997). Meanwhile, the effectiveness of communication can be hampered by language and the behaviour/attitude of receivers (Losee, 1999; Lunenberg, 2010; Kourkouta & Papathanasiou, 2014; Velentzas & Broni, 2014).

Communication in Marketing falls under the Promotion element of the Marketing Mix (Fill, 1995; Smith et. al., 1997; Smith & Taylor, 2002), and the Promotion element, as Fill (1995) and Rowley (1998) argue, refers to every tool a firm has in its arsenal to communicate its offerings to target audiences. Marketing Communications has been described as a strategic management process concerned with the creation and management of high equity brands using communication tools (Reid, 2002). Smith *et al.* (1997) define marketing communications as:

> A systematic relationship between a business and its market in which the marketer assembles a wide variety of ideas, designs, messages, media, shapes, forms and colours, both to communicate ideas to, and to stimulate a particular perception of products and services by individual people who have been aggregated into a target market (p. 49).

The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), on the other hand, defines marketing communications as:

> The process of presenting an integrated set of stimuli to a market with the intent of evoking a desired set of responses within that market set…and....setting up channels to receive, interpret and act upon messages from the market for the purposes of modifying present company messages and identifying new communication opportunities (Fill, 1995, p. 5).

While Fill (1995) lauds the CIM's definition for underscoring such essential concepts as feedback and the message set, he critiques it for overlooking marketing communication's role in adding value through symbolism. Fill (1995) proceeds to define marketing communications as 'a management process through which an organisation develops, presents, and evaluates a series of messages to identified stakeholder audiences'. Govoni (2004) also defines marketing communications as:

> The combination of the elements, activities, and techniques an organisation employs to connect with and persuade the target market to engage in a particular action or response, such as buying a product, using a service, or accepting an idea (p.123)

Keller (2009) defines marketing communications as 'the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade, and remind consumers-directly or indirectly, about the products and brands they sell' (Rowley, 2008). Keller (2009) expounds that 'marketing communications represent the voice of the company and its brands and are a means by which it can establish a dialogue and build relationships with and among consumers'. Marketing communications, according to Keller (2009), allow companies to link their brands to other people, places, events, brands, experiences, feelings and things; create experiences and build communities both on-line and off-line, contribute to brand equity-by establishing the brand in memory and creating a brand image; and drive sales and even affect shareholder value.

Common concepts running through these scholarly definitions of marketing communications, and which can be said to encapsulate the essence of marketing communications, is the message/stimuli, the meaning/response the stimulant must convey-where meaning refers to an outcome of perception (Finne & Strandvik, 2012), the vehicle that conveys the meaning, the business that sends the message, and their customers/receivers. The vehicle that conveys meaning is referred to as the marketing communications channel. Smith *et al.* (1997) asset that newspapers carried the first marketing communications messages to a larger, sophisticated, and diverse audience. Radio carried messages wider still, spanning continents. Radio was followed by television.

However, these channels did little to facilitate immediate audience feedback. But with mobile technology and the internet, audience feedback has not only been swift and impactful, but has compelled firms to address the building of relationships with their customers (Todorova, 2015).

2.6.1 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS MIX

Sales promotion, advertising, personal selling, direct marketing, and public relations comprise the key elements of the promotion mix, which is, marketing communications (Fill, 1995; Govoni, 2004). Advertising has been defined as any paid form of non-personal communications about a good/service/idea by an identified sponsor to persuade a receiver to act now or in the near future (Fill & Jamieson, 2006; Onditi, 2012; Karimova, 2014). It being 'a paid form' suggests a cost element, while its feature as a 'non-personal communication' implies a use of a mass media element to communicate messages. Fill and Jamieson (2006) argue that while these features guarantee messages reach vast multi-faceted audiences, they present flaws that affect advertising effectiveness. Advertising performs an array of roles within marketing communications, key being to facilitate attention, persuade, and remind audiences about a product or service (Bacik, Fedorko & Simova, 2012; Onditi, 2012; Todorova, 2015). Other roles of advertising include to enhance a brand's perceived quality (Onditi, 2012), reflect current social trends, and to provide a medium through which audiences 'learn about normative expectations as well as to drive a sense of self (Fowler & Thomas, 2015).

Fill and Jamieson (2006) and Onditi (2012) argue personal selling, unlike advertising, involves a face-to-face engagement with consumers that makes the communication process more personal, as it requires sales people acting as microcosms of the brand, to engage with smaller audiences at an individual level. This enables the immediate facilitation of feedback necessary for modifying and customising messages for consumers, consequently enabling the firm to exert control over the consumer (Tedorova, 2015). However, personal selling may only be used to support a marketing communications campaign (Tedorova, 2015). Sales promotion refers to short-term inducement of value given to generate interest in purchasing a good or service (Onditi, 2012; Todorova, 2015). Onditi (2012) argues, however, that because sales drop off when deals end, sales promotions can only be used as support in a marketing communications campaign (Onditi, 2013). Continuous use of sales promotions may also prove hazardous to a firm's prospects as customers may come to delay purchase till deals are offered, or may doubt the quality of products or services (Onditi, 2013).

Direct marketing is an interactive marketing system that uses one or more advertising media such as flyers, catalogs, email marketing, telemarketing, television among others to effect a measureable response at any location' (Onditi, 2012; Tedorova, 2015). Companies that use direct marketing can target particular audiences as well as adjust messages as circumstances change (Fill & Jamieson, 2006). Onditi (2012) defines public relations as 'a form of communications management that seeks to influence the image of an organisation and its products/services'. Kim (2013) adds that it is a tool for managing crises. Its practitioners, therefore, tend to focus on publicising the positive sides of the entire company by communicating through press releases, news conferences, charitable donations, volunteer activities, fundraising, lobbying among others (Fill & Jamieson, 2006; Onditi, 2012; Todorova, 2015).

Rowley (1998) expanded these elements of the promotion mix to include sponsorship, packaging, exhibitions, word-of-mouth, e-marketing, corporate identity, and point-of-sale merchandising. Keller (2009), contrarily, identifies advertising; sales promotion; events and experiences; public relations and publicity; direct marketing; interactive marketing; word-of-mouth marketing; and personal selling as the major types of marketing communications. Meanwhile, Holm (2006), who maintains marketing communications tools number around a score, argues for the inclusion of art (music, literature, architecture) as macro-level marketing communications tools. The number of marketing communications tools and its major types notwithstanding, Danaher and Rossiter (2011) group these tools into non-personal tools (traditional media) and personal tools (those driven by the internet; and direct marketing). Rowley (2001) similarly groups marketing communications tools into linear communications which follow a single step communications method (traditional communications); and non-linear communications, which follow a multiple-step communications method (tools driven by the internet).

2.6.2 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS: A CRITIQUE

Marketing communications is crucial to marketing strategy through the roles it performs. Fill & Jamieson (2006) argue that marketing communications enables organisations to differentiate themselves from competition in saturated markets, communicate consistent messages through time, and address specific communication needs of members of the distribution network. Rowley (2001) also argues marketing communications has the ability to facilitate the creation of presence, relationships, and mutual value especially in a digital space. Furthermore, new developments in the media space imbue marketing communications with the ability to facilitate interactions with consumers around marketing communications messages ((Smith *et al.*, 1997; Karimova, 2011). Karimova

(2011) asserts active engagement and reaction, physical action, involvement, feedback and two-way communication, and sender/consumer control over content and medium define interactive marketing communications.

However, despite these roles marketing communications plays, scholars (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009; Keller, 2009; Light, 2014; Fuxman, Elifoglu, Chao, & Li, 2014; Teixer, 2014; Wilcox, 2015) have argued that marketing communications' effectiveness has plunged in recent times. Others, such as Cole and Greer (2013), and Keller (2009) also assert that traditional advertising, particularly, is losing popularity with customers. Wilcox (2015) corroborates their assertion by presenting statistics which reveal almost 80 percent of consumers prefer getting to know a company through means other than advertising. Logan (2013) maintains that this plunge is as a result of consumers actively avoiding marketing communications messages, advertising in particular. According to Bellman, Rossiter, Schweda, and Duane (2012) and Kent (2013), audiences go to great lengths to avoid such messages either by fast-forward zipping and skip-button zapping messages on pre-recorded programming, or through channel-change zapping. Kent (2013) argues that audiences also engage in anticipatory zapping. Furthermore, advertising has been especially accused of promoting stereotyping, sexism, materialism and gratuitous consumption among others (Francis, 2015).

The proliferation of messages (Reid, 2002; Roozen, 2013) and disempowered communications professionals/departments (Reid, 2002) have been identified as major factors accounting for marketing communications' ineffectiveness. Onditi (2012), explaining the fall in marketing communications effectiveness, argues that audiences often register an intense dislike to increasing hard sell solicitations and loud or insistent messages, which they consider nuisances and an invasion of privacy. They are also considered intrusive as they interrupt media programming. Furnham, Gunter and Richardson (2002) call this effect cognitive interference. Hede and Kellett (2011) also note changing consumer demographics and media preferences, and the transformation of the global environment spearheaded by the internet as factors contributing to the plunging efficiency of traditional marketing communications.

These elements of marketing communications, with the exception of public relations, also lack credibility (Fill & Jamieson, 2006). Fill and Jamieson (2006) and Todorova (2015) argue this is because ‘receivers perceive the third party (the media houses) to be unbiased and to be endorsing the offering. They view the third party’s comments as objective and trustworthy. Onditi (2012) cautions that should marketers neglect these issues, low consumer response rates stemming from negative consumer attitudes will continue to be registered.

Companies that offer customer intimacy through their marketing communications messages create value for their customers (Onditi, 2012). Yelkur, Tomkovich, Hofer and Rozumalski (2013) argue advertisements could offer this value only if they were longer, as longer advertisements increase the likelihood of likeability. However, Logan (2013) argues, longer messages are not enough to guarantee marketing communications effectiveness as consumer attitude towards marketing communications messages are affected by such factors as type of media, quality of content, and the medium’s perceived believability. Moreover, longer advertisements are unlikely as the length of advertisements is affected by budget constraints and creative needs (Yelkur *et al.*, 2013).

Traditional advertising budgets are gradually shrinking (Fuxman *et al.*, 2014). The shrinking popularity of traditional advertising in favour of newer forms of reaching audiences is highlited by eMarketer (2016). eMarketer (2016) projects that television as a medium of traditional advertising will cease to be the biggest advertising medium in the United States of America (USA) by the year 2020. Already, total media advertising spending share for print and radio media stood at 15.4 and 7.8 percent respectively in 2015 and are projected to drop to 11.1 and 6.1 respectively by the year 2020 in the USA (eMarketer, 2016).

2.6.3 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS MESSAGES

A defining feature of marketing communications is the message/stimuli, which has been grouped into planned and unplanned, service, and product messages, and absence of communication (Grönroos, 2000a). Planned communication messages, Grönroos (2000a) argues, comprise content disseminated over tools the firm exerts control over. These include sales promotion, advertising, brochures. With unplanned marketing communications messages, content is implied, spontaneous and include content from various other news media and word-of-mouth. Product messages are those related to product design, pricing, usefulness; while service messages encompass those messages generated from customers' interactions with the service processes or amongst themselves based on the product (Duncan & Moriarty, 1997; Grönroos, 2000a, b; Fortini-Campbell, 2003). Grönroos (2000b) introduced absence of communication (where a company is silent over service breakdowns or processes). Building on Grönroos (2000b), Finne and Strandvik (2012) introduced the concept of invisible communication messages to refer to the company deliberately maintaining silence, or refusing to communicate because it does not recognise or acknowledge a message.

2.7 THEORETICAL GROUNDING

2.7.1 THE ATTENTION, INTEREST, DESIRE, ACTION (AIDA) THEORY OF MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

The AIDA theory is often explained as a stimulus-response, linear information processing, hierarchy of effects tool of communication (Gilligan & Crowther, 1983; Karlsson, 2007; Irina, 2013; Singh & Sahin, 2015). As a stimulus-response model of marketing communications, it is argued that the communication message serves as a stimulus that produces a response in the receiver/audience to purchase a productive/service (Karlsson, 2007; Singh & Sahin, 2015). As a linear information processing model, it is presumed that audiences consume marketing communication messages along a linear spectrum beginning with who sent the message; what message was sent; through what channel was the channel sent; and to whom was the message sent (Gilligan & Crowther, 1983; Singh & Sahin, 2015).

AIDA is also considered a hierarchy of effects model. The hierarchy of effects is the term given to a group of marketing communication models that assess the impact of marketing communications campaigns. These models operate with the presumption that upon exposure to a marketing communications message, audiences progress through a series of sequential and rational steps that affect their interaction with the message (Barry & Howard, 1990; Cavill & Bauman, 2004; Mackay, 2005; Bauman, Bowles, Huhman, Heitzler, Owen, Smith, Reger-Nash, 2008; Ranjbarian, Shaemi, Jolodar, 2011; Wijaya, 2012, Irina, 2013). The hierarchy of effects models have been lauded for their longevity, applicability across multiple disciplines, ability to enable the prediction of behavior, and for helping to organise planning, training and conceptual tasks within a firm' (Barry & Howard, 1990; Wijaya, 2012).

St. Elmo Lewis is credited with developing the Attention, Interest, Desire (AID) aspects of the theory in 1898 (Barry & Howard, 1990; Aryal, 2005; Wijaya, 2012; Irina, 2013; Rawal, 2013; Li & Yu, 2013; Rehman, Javed, Hyder, Ali, 2015). Lewis (quoted in Wijaya, 2012) postulated that a marketing communications message must garner attention. To successfully attract attention, meanwhile, Mehling (2007) argues that a firm/sender must first define who their audiences are to enable them create messages that will differentiate them from their competitors. However, inherent in attention, the message ought to be compelling enough to cull interest, thus sustain attention (Wijaya, 2012). At the interest stage, Mehling (2007) argues the message must intrigue the customer, and contain information about the product/service. Mehling (2007) also underscores the importance of the channel of information delivery, clarity of information, as well as message design to sustain consumer interest.

According to Lewis, interest must end in desire to purchase (Wijaya, 2012). Desire is ‘the feeling that follows an inclination for wanting certain things, and sometimes accompanies a state of unpleasantness’ (Irina, 2013). Desires, as Mehling (2007) argues, can be created through careful design of the message, and by ensuring expectations crafted about a product/service are realistic enough to create an intention to purchase.

2.7.2 VARIANTS OF THE AIDA MODEL

In 1925, Strong contributed the dimension of Action to AID, making it AIDA (Barry & Howard, 1990; Karlsson, 2007, Wijaya, 2012; Irina, 2013; Singh & Sahin, 2015). Action represented the physical manifestation of the consumers’ desire to purchase a product/service. At the action stage, calls to action are implemented toward product/service purchase (Lee & Hoffman, 2015). Variants of the AIDA model, borne of critique, have been proposed. Popular variants of the model have included Attention, Interest, Conviction, Action (AICA) by Printer's Ink Editorial in 1910. Conviction, Wijaya (2012) argues, refers to the consumer's belief of the authenticity of a communications message. A strong conviction is positively correlated to the desire to purchase (Wijaya, 2012). In 1915, Samuel R. Hall proposed an Attention, Interest, Confidence, Conviction, Action (AICCA) variant, while Harry D. Kitson proposed a Attention, Interest, Desire, Conviction, Action (AIDCA) model in 1921. Merrill Devoe, in 1956, proposed the Attention, Interest, Desire, Memory, Action (AIDMA) variant of the AIDA model (Barry & Howard, 1990; Wijaya, 2012).

Lavidge and Steiner (1961) have also proposed a variant to the AIDA model. They postulated that after the consumer became aware of the communications message, they were more likely to seek more knowledge about the product/service being peddled. This became the Knowledge Stage. The Stage, consequently, influenced a Liking Stage, leading to a Preference Stage, followed by a Conviction Stage, and ending in a Purchase Stage (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961). These stages were categorised into 3 dimensions of Cognitive (made up awareness and knowledge and describing how consumers processed information); Affective (made up of liking and preference); and Conative (made up conviction and purchase) (Ranjbarian *et. al.*, 2011; Duffet, 2016).

Although generally accepted, varied opinions of how the 3 stages should be ordered have been proposed. Krugman (1965) proposed a cognitive-conative-affective sequence for products/services which recorded low consumer involvement. Barry & Howard (1990) assert that in low involvement situations, customers are 'passive and disinterested recipients' of marketing communication messages. This is in opposition to high involvement situations where the consumer actively seeks to satisfy a pressing need.

Purchase decisions are, therefore, made based on emotion and cognition (Irina, 2013). For situations where the purchasing behaviour of consumers came first, Ray *et al.* (1973) proposed a conative-affective-cognitive order so attitudes formed can reinforce consumer choice, while selective learning reinforces purchase decisions (Ranjbarian *et al*., 2011). In situations where an affective basis instead of a cognitive basis was required for purchase, Zajonc and Markus (1982) proposed a affective-conative-cognitive sequence.

Another variant of the AIDA model contributes a Satisfaction component to AIDA, leading to the development of AIDAS by Arthur F. Sheldon in 1911 (Barry & Howard, 1990; Wijaya, 2012). The satisfaction component highlighted the need for the firm to continue to satisfy the consumer so as to guarantee repeat purchases and promote positive word-of-mouth (Barry & Howard, 1990; Ranjbarian et. al., 2011; Wijaya, 2012; Herman & Mkwizu, 2016). Wijaya (2012) also introduced another variant to the AIDA model, necessitated by the impact of information technology on communication. Wijaya (2012) named this new variant Attention, Interest, Search, Desire, Action, Like/Dislike, Share, and Love/Hate (AISDALSLove).

Wijaya's (2012) Search (S) component pays homage to today's critical-thinking/skeptical consumer who will make an informed decision after multiple searches to verify claims in communications messages, or to compare similar messages from competing brands before making a purchase decision. Wijaya (2012) argues searches can be internal (pulling up alternative messages from memory for assessment) or external. External searches may take the form of media, retailer, independent, experiential or interpersonal searches (Wijaya, 2012). Wijaya (2012) equates Like/Dislike (L) to after-purchase experiences, where expectations may be positively disconfirmed, negatively disconfirmed, or simply confirmed. As Wijaya's (2012) variant was set within the context on new media powered by the internet, the Like/Dislike component is reflected by social media sites as Facebook with buttons which facilitate the expression of such sentiments.

With Share (S), Wijaya (2012) argues that new media enables consumers to share their experiences on social media sites as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, and review sites among others. Wijaya (2012) links the Share component to the Like/Dislike component. For instance, consumers can register their satisfaction with a purchase experience by activating a Like button and leaving a positive comment, or activating a Dislike button and leaving a scathing/unpleasant comment. These actions, Wijaya (2012) argues, carry significant consequences for a brand. The Love/Hate (Love) component Wijaya (2012) argues, refers to the long-term effect of marketing communication messages on a consumer to a brand. These feelings are as a result of consumer perceptions that their brand knows/does not know them; or through a community of consumers formed around appreciation or otherwise of the brand. Wijaya (2012) thus stresses the need for a focus on marketing communication messages with long term effects for loyalty for the brand, especially as communication messages are evolving from informing and persuading with the intent to purchase, to delivering 'social inspiration to the society'.

2.7.3 CRITIQUES OF THE AIDA MODEL

The AIDA model has been lauded for its ease in describing marketing communication processes, as well as for its flexibility. For instance, Herman and Mkwizu (2016) argue that the marketing communication process does not have to follow all four stages; some stages can be skipped. The theory has, however, been criticised for implying that purchase is an immediate occurrence after desire, when purchase is actually a memory effect that occurs at a later time (Sinh, 2013; Herman & Mkwizu, 2016). Furthermore, the theory has been criticised for having stages that are not equal in importance, with another critique being the non-existence of empirical evidence to reinforce the stance that consumers act in a linear manner that ends in action/purchase (Karlsson, 2007). The model has also been critiqued as being suitable for only high involvement purchase situations. Barry and Howard (1990), furthermore, have also questioned the relevance of the cognitive-affective-conative sequence to understanding the impact of messages. They also argue knowing where a stage ends and another begins is difficult to define.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXT OF STUDY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The chapter puts the study in context, presenting discussions on marketing communications in Ghana, specifically with regard to elements such as advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and corporate sponsorship. The chapter also presents a profile of the study population, the Ghana Club 100 List, and profiles of the firms selected for the study.

3.1 MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS IN GHANA

3.1.1 ADVERTISING

Advertising is considered the most prominent of all the elements in the marketing communications mix (Ying, 2005; Okyere, Agyapong & Nyarko, 2011). Okyere *et al.* (201) argue advertising in Ghana assumes a similarly prominent status by virtue of its visibility and enormous budgetary allocations. While little, however, is known about the start of advertising in Ghana, or industry spending on advertising in Ghana (van den Besselaar, 2011), Murillo (2010) writes that advertising has long been part of Ghana's socio-economic fabric. For instance, Murillo (2010) writes that in pre-independence Ghana, the United Africa Company (UAC), a subsidiary of Unilever, a multinational general goods company, utilised advertising to a great extent, although its ads featured Caucasian characters, were created in the country of the company's origin, and when Africans were featured, their roles were mostly informed by stereotypical imperialist perceptions.

This changed, however, after the 1948 Accra riots, which mostly occurred because of Ghanaian frustration with the price monopolies multinational firms held over the Ghanaian market. Subsequently, the UAC used advertising to repair its public image by portraying Africans as valued stakeholders. But basically, advertising in Ghana was used to raise brand knowledge of products, which resulted in overwhelming purchase of branded products over unbranded ones (Murillo, 2010). Van den Besselaar (2011) concurs with Murillo (2010), adding that advertising in Ghana developed late compared to the west. Low literacy rates pre-World War II meant low newspaper (the primary channel then for adverts) circulation, thus low possibility of discernment for desired impact. As most Africans were not considered target consumers, European settlers and elite Christian-mission educated Africans formed the primary advertising audience.

Van den Besselaar (2011) argues that in those times, the purpose of advertising was to market luxury goods to European settlers and sell supplies to traders. Advertising, pre-independence, was also a function of capitalism and used to manipulate consumers into purchasing new and often gratuitous wants. Targets were also mostly men, more than women, and the working class (van den Besselaar, 2011). According to van den Besselaar (2010), portrayal of Africans in ads became more positive after independence, and progressed more towards reflecting society and understanding consumers. Ads also targeted more of the Ghanaian working class, which had increased as a result of independence and the promotion of many Ghanaians in their work places (van den Besselaar, 2011). Van den Besselaar (2011) also tracks the evolution of the channels used to disseminate advertising content. According to van den Besselaar (2011), channels, during colonial occupation of the country, were limited to newspapers, metal signs and posters.

After independence, they increased to billboards, publicity vans, newspapers, radio, cinema screenings, and sandwich-board men. This was the result of the rapid development of media infrastructure (van den Besselaar, 2011). In recent times, advertising channels in Ghana have come to include network media such as cell phones, and electronic media such as websites (Adjin-Tettey, Bolfrey, Bugase, Adotey & Dodoo, 2013).

The advertising industry, however, suffered a hit when juntas passed decrees that affected the private sector. For instance, a ban was placed on all 'cigarette advertisement on state television, radio, and in print media in 1982 (Karikari, 1994). Karikari (1994) writes that the privatisation and commercialisation of the Ghanaian broadcast media, specifically in the years following the country's return to democratic rule in the early 90's, opened up the hitherto stifled advertising industry. The industry, since then, has grown tremendously. Owusu-Dabo, Lewis, McNeil, Anderson, Gilmore, and Britton (2009) link the growth over the past two decades to strong economic growth. The industry's growth, however, has resulted in an advertising aggression and clutter that keeps increasing in intensity to the point of violating consumer privacy (Nartey, 2010). Furthermore, advertising is also considered by most Ghanaians as deceptive (Nartey, 2010). Moreover, although perceived as a necessary tool, it is not considered sufficient in retaining customers (Adjin-Tettey, Bolfrey, Bugase, Adotey & Dodoo, 2013).

3.1.2 PUBLIC RELATIONS

On Public Relations (PR), scholars maintain that despite expansive research on public relations done globally and in select African countries, its status in Ghana as a field of study has received little academic attention, considering projections that the field would experience exponential growth following rather faltering beginnings (Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009; Agyapong, 2011; Boakye, Nsor & Tabi, 2012). The start of PR in Ghana, as Wu and Baah-Boakye (2009) expatiate, was marked by perceptions that it was an occupation and not a profession. Knowledge about what exactly PR is was so unformed that there was some cognitive dissonance among PR practitioners concerning their organisation and societal roles. Additionally, PR ranked very low on the organisational totem pole (Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009).

Fast forward over two decades later and studies indicate public relations knowledge has grown in scope and thought. Practitioners consider themselves mediators and communicators. PR is also perceived as moving fast toward professionalism (Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009), with the all-important function of advising Management (Agyapong, 2011). Practitioners also use sophisticated approaches such as market research, to understand and communicate with publics (Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009). However, the most frequently-practiced public relations model in Ghana, which is spurred by globalisation, is the cultural interpreter model to facilitate international business in Ghana (Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009; Murillo, 2010; Kilu & Akrong, 2014). From a local perspective, the predominant role of practitioners is media relations, where they disseminate accurate but favourable information about their organisations, mostly applying a one-way communications model (Dornyo & Adiku, 2015). Other roles include acting as the face of the organization, a role reserved for female practitioners (Kilu & Akrong, 2014). These indicate PR in Ghana is limited to image management, offering little for consumers.

3.1.3 PERSONAL SELLING

With regard to personal selling, Nyarko (2015) indicates salespeople in Ghana provide much needed customer education. As a result, a healthy amount of marketing communications budget is allotted to personal selling, especially by insurance firms. These firms, who have benefited from a recent positive economic outlook in Ghana, have increased their recruitment of personal sellers to counter increased competition, and ineffective and expensive outdoor and electronic advertising. However, personal selling in Ghana is highly stressful, salespeople are grossly under-resourced, and consumers are often wary of them (Agyapong, Muhammed, Acheampong, 2016).

3.1.4 SALES PROMOTION

On sales promotion in Ghana, Darko (2012) and Sakara and Alhassan (2014a) argue this particular marketing communications element is commonly deployed by Ghanaian firms in highly competitive industries such as those in telecommunications, to combat competition. Sakara and Alhassan (2014a) claim sales promotion has gained currency in recent times among Ghanaian firms because of its ability to accrue revenue within the shortest possible time. Usually controlling Ghanaian markets during times of celebration, sales promotion is done to introduce new products, attract new customers and retain existing ones, and sustain sales of casual products (Yusuf, 2010). Its strategies, particularly those employed by Ghanaian firms, include free tokens, premium or bonus offers, coupons, exhibitions and fairs, scratch and win, money-back offers (Yusuf, 2010), bonus spots on broadcast media, guarantees and warranties, souvenirs and discounts (Preko, 2012). Sakara and Alhassan (2014b) argues sales promotions in Ghana encourages competition, stimulates consumer purchase, and increases short-term revenue.

However, like the other marketing communications elements, sales promotion is not without its issues. Yusuf (2010) argues sales promotions raise ethical concerns, especially as promotional strategies are often exploited to induce consumption and production. Furthermore, conditions for winning are not explicitly expatiated to customers cum participants. Sakara and Alhassan (2014b) also add the effectiveness of sales promotion is not only difficult to assess, but is also not self-sufficient as a primary marketing communications tool, despite its ability to influence consumer choice.

3.1.5 CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship, according to Amoako, Dartey-Baah, Dzogbenuku, and Junior (2012), is a support in cash or kind given by businesses to non-profits usually in return for advertising opportunities or publicity. Amoako *et al*. (2012) argue ‘sponsorship activity has attracted little academic attention despite its growing popularity among Ghanaian firms. Loglo (2009) maintains it is most popular among telecommunication firms, crediting its popularity to the cut-throat competition that arose out of the deregulation of the telecommunications industry. The rationale for engaging in sponsorship includes an entrenched, unambiguous brand positioning, enhanced image, avoiding advertising clutter, and increased sales (Loglo, 2009). Others include increased brand awareness, brand preference, brand recall, and to promote goodwill (Amoako *et al.*, 2012). Criteria for sponsee selection includes the ability to expose the sponsor to its target audience (Loglo, 2009) and types of sponsorship include television and radio programmes, sports, arts and educational (Amoako *et al.*, 2012).

However, sponsorship is not without its short falls either. Loglo (2009) argues sponsorship has evaluation problems, making it essentially challenging to empirically gauge its effectiveness. Amoako *et al.* (2012) add that corporate sponsorship suffers from an absence of standardisation between sponsors and the sponsored. They also add that it can be risky, such as the sponsored erring on the side of vice and tarnishing the image of the firm by association.

3.2 THE GHANA CLUB 100

Instituted by the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre in 1998, the Ghana Club 100 is a list of the top-performing 100 companies in Ghana (Ghana Investment Promotions Centre, 2017). The Club was launched with the objectives of establishing an annual and current analysis of Ghana's corporate sector, developing a uniform criteria for evaluating corporate performance, providing incentives for improved corporate performance, and developing an open information culture within Ghana's corporate sector (Ghana Investment Promotions Centre, 2017). The Club embodies corporate excellence, and its members are expected to serve as role models for the private sector. Companies are ranked on the list along 3 criteria: size, profitability, and growth. Size refers to a company's turnover, which is measured by their gross interest income in addition to fees and commissions for banks, while turnover for insurance companies is measured by net premium earned and investment income (Ghana Investment Promotions Centre, 2017). The GIPC does not explicitly state how non-banks/non-bank financial institutions are rated based on size.

The profitability criterion is measured using Return on Equity (ROE), that is, the return that management has created for the company's shareholders based on a 3-year company average (Ghana Investment Promotions Centre, 2017). Growth, the third criteria, is assessed based on a firm's excellence in product development, marketing and effective management which have set the company on a path of impressive growth over a 3-year compounded annual growth rate (Ghana Investment Promotions Centre, 2017). Also featured by the Club is sector rankings. This recognises the best performing company from a particular sector; Agriculture and Agribusiness, Education, Financial Services, Health, Information & Communications Technology, Infrastructure, Manufacturing, Media, Petroleum & Mining Services, Services, and Tourism- based on their overall position on the Ghana Club 100 List. The Club also features Discretionary Awards given companies deserving of particular mention in the GIPC's estimation (Ghana Investment Promotions Centre, 2017).

3.3 PROFILE: DATABANK GROUP

Databank was founded in 1990 with the mission to empower its customers to achieve financial independence by promoting financial literacy and offering a diverse range of investment products (Databank Group, 2017). To achieve this mission, Databank provides a range of services spanning corporate finance, brokerage, fund and asset management and research, and private equity finance (Databank Group, 2017). Databank Group values leadership in setting the pace in its industry, and nurturing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in their people; excellence in the delivery of its services and products; humility in serving its clients, and integrity in their dealings with investors (Databank Group, 2017).

3.4 PROFILE: LATEX FOAM RUBBER PRODUCTS LTD.

Latex Foam Rubber Products Ltd. has been in existence for over 40 years, since its incorporation in 1969 to produce foam products for the furniture and bedding industry. It is the oldest in its industry and aims to continue to lead the country's manufacturers of foam products (Latex Foam Ghana, 2017). It also aims to satisfy its customers by providing them with quality and innovative foam products, as well as cater for the larger society within which it operates (Latex Foam Ghana, 2017).

3.5 PROFILE: DALEX FINANCE

Dalex Finance & Leasing Company Ltd. is a non-bank financial institution established in 2006. Its vision is to be the most respected and preferred financial services brand, while its mission is to be the best performing non-bank finance institution in Ghana (Dalex Finance, 2017). Dalex Finance also strives to make a genuine difference in the lives of their stakeholders. Dalex Finance values integrity in terms of openness, honesty, fairness and consistency; teamwork; learning and knowledge sharing; and responsibility with regard to owning their actions despite the outcome (Dalex Finance, 2017).

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents an exposition of the study's methodology, beginning with the research paradigm of choice, and justifications for the choice of a qualitative approach to the study. Also discussed are the study's sampling techniques, ethical considerations, and the study's limitations.

4.1 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Creswell (2013) argues that all research are grounded in philosophical assumptions, which he describes as 'abstract ideas and beliefs that inform the research process'. These philosophical assumptions have been identified as ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996; Willis, 2007; Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) argues the ontological philosophical assumption is concerned with the nature of reality, while the epistemological assumption is concerned with what knowledge is, how it is acquired, and what qualifies as knowledge (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). The axiological assumption, meanwhile, is concerned with the researcher's values and the role these values play in the research. The methodological assumption is concerned with the logic adopted in the research process (Creswell, 2013). For instance, researchers, ontologically, might be guided by the notion of the existence of a single reality, while others might believe in the existence of multiple realities. With regard to epistemology, some researchers, in the pursuit of knowledge, might choose to extricate themselves from the knowledge acquisition process, while others might immerse themselves in the phenomenon under study to acquire knowledge.

With regard to axiological assumptions, researchers may admit openly, their biases and values and how these impacted their studies, while others may remain reticent about their values and biases and leave these out of their study (Creswell, 2013). Under methodological assumptions, researchers may adopt deductive reasoning, that is formulating and testing hypothesis; or inductive reasoning, which is building theory based on data (Clover & Balsey, 1984; Babbie, 1990; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). According to Creswell (2013), these philosophical assumptions are embedded in research paradigms, which he defines as 'basic sets of beliefs that guide action'. Willis (2007) similarly defines paradigms as consisting of 'general theoretical assumptions and laws, and techniques for their application that the members of a particular scientific community adopt'. These paradigms, as a host of researchers identify, include Positivism, Postpositivism, Social Constructivism, Feminist theories, Critical Theory and Critical Race Theory, Queer Theory, and Disability Theories (Oliver, 2010; Burns & Chantler, 2011; Filax & Sumara, 2011; Parker & Roberts, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Babbie, 2013).

The study adopted the Social Constructivism/Interpretivism paradigm. This is because the study seeks to understand reality (Creswell, 2013) and not measure it, as pertains in Positivist and Postpositivist studies, whose inquirers adopt a rigid cause-and-effect orientation to acquiring knowledge (Oliver, 2010; Crook & Garratt, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Babbie, 2013). Inquirers of the Positivist/Postpositive place undue emphasis on objectivity, neutrality, distance, control, rationality, and abstraction' at the expense of alternative and Social Constructivism/ Interpretivism ideals as commitment, empathy, closeness, cooperation, intuition, and specificity' (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). In the context of this study, reality refers to what the dimensions, key characteristics, and role of brand journalism in marketing communications are. According to Alvesson and Kärreman

(2011) and Creswell (2013), knowledge about the study's reality, which must provide nuanced illustrations of the phenomenon under study, is achieved by asking probing, open-ended questions of respondents, and interacting closely with them.

Though not applicable to this particular study as it bears no political nor sociocultural implications, it will suffice to include that the paradigm also supports the exploration of multiple versions of reality as opposed to the Positivist's single version (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Boateng, 2014). For instance, in studying the impact of a government policy on a society, a study that subscribes to the Social Constructivism/Interpretivism paradigm is likely to include the unique experiences of 'others' such as females, racial or ethnic minorities, and the disabled, as opposed to the Positivist paradigm, which is likely to select the predominant race, ethic group, or the gender and sexual orientation they identify with – in this case a single version of reality- and generalise such results. The Postpositivist is also likely to subscribe to a single reality, which they maintain can be accurately understood. The knowledge regarding this reality, however, will be imperfect as it was subjected to probabilities (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011).

Transformative or alternative paradigms on the other hand, such as Critical Race, Feminist, Queer and Disability theories have critiqued the Social Constructivism/Interpretivism paradigm for doing little in the pursuit of truth or 'advocating action' to help the marginalised (Creswell, 2013). However, none of these paradigms could be adopted because not only is this study not about the marginalised, but each of the alternative paradigms embraces a unique struggle which exists beyond the parametres of this study. For instance, Feminist Theory aims to rectify the marred experience of the female, which is oft ignored and, if recognised at all, is distorted (Burns & Chantler, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Babbie, 2013). Critical Race Theory challenges narratives that advance a master race, and confront dominant narratives that seek to confine minorities within impetuously demarcated societal margins (Parker & Roberts, 2011; Creswell, 2013).

Queer Theory aims to challenge the rigidity of individual identity as that which is fixed, that is, either male or female with regard to sexual identity, and what is considered normal, or singular (Filax & Sumara, 2011). Disability Theories, according to Creswell (2013), address inclusion of the disabled in society, and society's attitudes towards the disabled.

4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopts the qualitative approach to inquiry (Walcott, 2009) based on the specific task at hand, which is to understand brand journalism and its roles in marketing communication. The choice resonates with scholarly assertions that the qualitative approach is most suitable when an issue needs to be explored (Creswell, 2013). The quantitative approach, which is used when a study seeks to make systematic comparisons in order to account for the variance in a phenomenon (Silverman, 2010), was rejected as it is most unsuited to this study. Creswell (2013) argues research perspectives, that is, qualitative and quantitative approaches to research, form part of the research process. Both qualitative and quantitative research pursue the acquisition of knowledge by identifying unresolved issues through critical review of literature. Both also assume empirically-verified knowledge is the foundation of knowledge development (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). There are differences between the two, however, with Willis (2007) arguing the major difference between the qualitative and quantitative approaches to research are their foundational assumptions. For instance, quantitative research is associated with the

Positivist and Postpositivist paradigms (Willis, 2007; Silverman, 2010), while qualitative research is associated with the Critical and Interpretivist paradigms (Willis, 2007).

According to Boateng (2014), qualitative research explores 'the meanings, attitudes, values, and beliefs people associate with a phenomenon in order to establish a better understanding'. The qualitative approach, it is argued, takes a wider interest in the level of meaning. It seeks to provide space for research subjects to express their opinions through their own words, with respect to what they are thinking, feeling, their values, experiences and observations to so the researcher can access them (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011).

Silverman (2010) similarly argues that the approach emphasises subjectivity by underlining the voice of respondents as well as the authenticity of human experience. Qualitative research promises to avoid statistical techniques, and bridges the social distance (Silverman, 2010). Qualitative research is also contextual, 'which is useful for describing the nature of a problem, issue, situation, or phenomenon' (Boateng, 2014). Malterud (2001) argues that with qualitative research, text-based material obtained from observations or talk is systematically collected, organised and interpreted. The interpretation is then used to explain social phenomena as experienced by individuals.

The qualitative perspective has been the subject of criticism from scholars. For instance, Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) argue coding in qualitative data does not fully reflect social phenomena. Silverman (2010) adds that the approach is complex and chaotic as data collection, analysis and writing are practically inseparable. He argues, furthermore, that observation is not considered an important data collection method as it is believed to be difficult to conduct observational studies on large samples. Moreover, observation is not entirely reliable as it is heavily subjective, with different observers recording different observations of the same phenomenon (Silverman, 2010).

The approach also aims to control meaning through language. Thus, it maintains language must be literal, limits the use of metaphors, and employs the use of statistical data and correlations to understand social conditions and measure meaning (Silverman, 2010; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). The perspective, however, has received some criticism. For instance, it has been critiqued as being 'hard, trivial, bloodless, reductionist, reactionary, and even dead' (Jones, 2011). Additionally, the questionnaire data collection instrument of quantitative research has been critiqued for yielding inadequate insight into social phenomena (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). It has also been critiqued for lacking depth (Babbie, 2013).

4.3 TYPE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

A case study approach to qualitative research was used as the study aims to understand brand journalism by exploring its dimensions, key characteristics, and roles it plays in marketing communications. To achieve this aim, firms identified as practicing the phenomenon had to be studied. This is in line with the assertions of scholars such as Yin (2003) and Creswell (2013) that a case study approach is appropriate when studying single or multiple instances of a phenomenon. Willis (2007) asserts the case study relies on inductive reasoning, and is one of 'the most used forms of social science research'. Baxter and Jack (2008) perceive a case study as a phenomenon occurring within a bounded context, while Oliver (2010) and Babbie (2013) assert it 'emphasises single instances of a social phenomenon. Boateng (2014), meanwhile, defines a case as a bounded system which may refer to an activity, group, process, or person.

Yin (2003), Creswell (2013) and Boateng (2014) assert the case study approach describes in detail, single or multiple cases and addresses the study's issues and research questions within a contemporary setting/context; utilises several data gathering tools as documents, interviews, and observations; enables cross-case analysis; and supports the discussion of issues, implications, and themes as a legitimate method of uncovering knowledge, *inter alia*. Baxter and Jack (2008) name the researcher's inability to manipulate respondent behavior, and a vague delineation of the boundaries between the context and phenomenon under study as some of the factors that have to exist before a case study approach can be adopted. Case studies, moreover, may be exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive; and have two applications; single-case and multiple-case (Boateng, 2014).

According to Baxter and Jack (2008) and Silverman (2010), designing a case study entails determining the case or unit of analysis, binding the case and determining the type of case study, determining the conceptual framework, determining the sources of data, data management, analysing data and reporting the case study. Boateng (2014), on the other hand, contends designing a case study entails identifying a research question; determining the type of case study; selecting participants or groups; collecting data; analysing data; composing the report; and evaluating validity and reliability. Creswell (2013) adds that the researcher concludes their analysis making assertions 'about the overall meaning derived from the case.

There are other types of qualitative research, however. These are Narrative, Phenomenological, Grounded Theory, and Ethnographic (Willis, 2007; Frankham & MacRae, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Boateng, 2014). Creswell (2013) argues Narrative research involves the collection of stories from the told experiences of individuals. This type of research may be a biography, life, or oral history of a single individual or a small group of individuals. Researchers of this orientation gather data from a variety of sources such as pictures and documents. Challenges, however, include the use of identifying and using extensive data, and personal active contact with the participant(s). Phenomenological research explores what a concept or phenomenon, usually a human experience such as sexual identity or domestic abuse, means to a number of individuals who personally experience it (Creswell, 2013). Challenges may include difficulty in finding participants given the research topic (Creswell, 2013).

Babbie (2013) argues Grounded Theory is an inductive approach 'that attempts to derive theories from an analysis of the patterns, themes, and common categories discovered in observational data'. According to Creswell (2013), the aim is to move beyond mere description to 'generate or discover a theory'. Ethnographic research originates from anthropology (Frankham & MacRae, 2011). As it involves the study of other cultures, researchers are required to immerse themselves in the culture, gather data by oberservation, and keep audio or detailed material of the extended observation (Creswell, 2013).

4.3.1 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

Baxter and Jack (2008), Silverman (2010) and Boateng (2014) argue that the case is the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis for this study thus, is 'brand journalism practice in firms'. In narrowing the case, Baxter and Jack (2008) suggest binding to ensure reasonability in scope, and what will and will not be studied, which are indicative of the study's depth and breadth. Baxter and Jack (2008) identify time, place, activity, definition, and context as the borders along which a case may be bounded. In this regard, the study is bounded in 'place' by Ghana; in 'time' by how long the firm has been practicing brand journalism; in ‘activity’ by the forms of brand journalism practiced; in ‘context’ by having selected indigenous large-scale firms in Ghana’s private sector, and in definition by operationally defining brand journalism, based on a synthesis of scholarly and practitioner definitions, as a ‘combination of the principles of journalism and an organisation’s communications strategies (Bull, 2013) to create compelling multi-dimensional, multi-faceted brand content (Light, 2014) to inform, entertain, and persuade a brand’s audience.

4.3.2 TYPE OF CASE STUDY

The focus of this study is nascent (Lehto & Moisala, 2015). Therefore, the Exploratory/ Collective type of case study are adopted. The choice is informed by Stake (2000) and Creswell (2013), who argue that the Collective case study, one of three types of case studies, deals with the examination of a number of cases in order to investigate a general phenomenon. The other types are the Intrinsic case study, which makes no attempt at generalising beyond the single case. It describes a case for description sake. Stake (2000) argues that this makes this type of study weak and unsuitable for academic studies. The Instrumental case study, on the other hand, deals with examining a case to provide insight into an issue, (Stake, 2000).

Boateng (2014) also identifies the Exploratory type of case study which deals with exploring an area where little is known or little research has been done. This study also adopts the multiple-case application. The multiple-case application aids the literal or theoretical replication of theory or explanation-focused research. Baxter and Jack (2008) expatiate that when a study is used to predict similar results, it subscribes to a literal application of the case study approach; while a theoretical replication refers to when the study is used to predict ‘contrasting results but for predictable reasons’.

4.4 SURVEY DESIGN

The study adopts the cross-sectional survey of survey design. Cross-sectional studies, according to Babbie (1990) and Boateng (2014), involve data collected from a sample to describe a larger population at only one point in time. Babbie (1990) argues that such a survey is not only used to describe phenomena but also to determine relationships 'between variables at the time of the study'. The cross-sectional study is also suitable when work is due within a rather limited time frame and the study is unfunded (Babbie, 2013). The cross-sectional survey is one of two major survey designs, the other being longitudinal surveys Babbie (1990). Longitudinal surveys, which refer to surveys enabling data analysis over time, comprise Trend, Cohort, and Panel studies (Neuman, 2007; Saunders *et al*., 2009). Trend studies involve the collection of data from a population on the same issue at different points in time so researchers can note and compare trends in, say attitudes, over time. This form is, however, time intensive (Babbie, 1990). Babbie (1990) also argues that though researchers may be able to discover changing patterns in Trend studies, it is impossible to determine exactly which members of the population are causing the change. In Cohort studies, which are also time intensive, researchers focus on one sampling unit, and collect data from sub groups within that unit at various intervals over time (Babbie, 1990). Panel studies, which are also time-consuming, involve complicated data analyses, are expensive (Babbie, 2013). Panel studies, moreover, focus on collecting data from the same sample over a period of time on the same issue (Neuman, 2007). Therefore, if there is a pattern of change, the researcher is able to zone in on the source of the change and explain the cause (Babbie, 1990).

4.5 TARGET POPULATION

Using the Ghana Club 100 List as its target population, the study targeted large-scale firms in the private sector. Large-scale firms were chosen because they are financially sound, with access to extensive support through tax policy, finance and general trade policies (Edmiston, 2007). This access to external and internal financing (if monopolistic as profitability is generally higher in this case) enables such firms to employ more and thus create division of labour, pay higher salaries than small and medium-sized enterprises, and offer fringe benefits as health insurance and opportunity for career advancement (Edmiston, 2007). This access to deep pockets also creates boundless capacity to invest in Research and Development, introduce innovations and take better advantage of innovations, as well as presents a greater opportunity to innovate (Edmiston, 2007). Large-scale firms were also chosen over small and medium-sized enterprises as there is a divide between management and consumers, making the former less accessible. Large-scale firms find it challenging to sustain trust gained, and are unable to quickly adapt to change (International GCSEs and Edexcel Certificates, 2016).

The private sector was chosen because it is highly competitive, employs 1-10,000 plus personnel; most companies within it have local, regional, national, and international geographical dispersion; companies within it are producers of both goods and services; the companies are profit driven. However, the firms have limited openness/transparency, with varying contacts with customers (Lindskog *et al*., 2010). The private sector encompasses multinational and small and medium-sized enterprises (Lindskog *et al*., 2010). Scholars (Kragelund, 2004; Kuada & Sørensen, 2005; Arthur, 2006; Yartey, 2009; Center for Economic Development, 2013; Wentworth & Makokara, 2015; Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2016) concur that an economy's private sector is critical to national development. Arthur (2006) particularly asserts the private sector is a critical factor for business sustenance and expansion, poverty reduction, stimulation of the growth of the economy.

In Ghana, the private sector dominates the economy (Paul, 1989; Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). The Ghana Statistical Service (2012) expatiates that the private sector employs 93.1 percent of persons active economically, with the private formal sub-division employing 7.0 percent of the total. With regard to customers, all potential and actual customers of the firms; Latex Foam, Databank Group, and Dalex Finance, were targeted. The type of customers to be interviewed was informed by the need to assess the impact of brand journalism on both these types of customers especially since a company's market is comprised of these two.

The rationale behind the act of selecting large-scale firms in the private sector is in line with Babbie (1990), who differentiates between a population and a survey population thusly. A population refers to 'the theoretically specified aggregation of survey elements' while a survey population refers to 'that aggregation of elements from which the survey sample is actually selected' (Babbie, 1990). According to Babbie (1990) and Singleton and Straits (2010), the research problem determines the specific nature of the population. Therefore, per this study's research problem, large-scale firms in the country's private sector were targeted.

4.6 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

In determining the sample, the Purposive sampling technique was used. The aim was 'to obtain cases deemed information-rich for the purposes of the study' (Sandelowski, 2000). According to Bull (2013), features of brand journalism content include subtle or no selling pitch, feature/editorial style, content that appeals to the audience's emotions, and compelling information indirectly related to the brand's products/services. These were used as a framework to identify what qualifies as brand journalism content. To begin with, this researcher systematically went through the website of every company in the Ghana Club 100 List (2015 Edition-the 2016 Edition is yet to be out doored when this study was being conducted). This was tedious but necessary. While on the website, the first point of call was the media/news page, as this was where brand journalism content is likely to be published. It was through the content on these pages that Databank Group and Dalex Finance were purposively sampled. Where the website provided no indication that the firm might be practicing brand journalism, this researcher moved on to the same company's social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook where available.

The random purposeful sampling technique was used to sample customers (potential and actual) of each firm as it 'adds credibility to sample when potential purposeful sample is too large' (Creswell, 2013). To achieve this, the researcher visited each company's Facebook page, regardless of whether they published brand journalism content on that medium, and randomly selected customers who had interacted with any content at all. These were contacted and inquiries were made into whether they had encountered brand journalism content in any of its forms from the company. Those that replied in the affirmative were eventually sampled.

Purposive/Judgment sampling was chosen as it is commonly utilised to obtain qualitative material (Malterud, 2001). Under Purposive sampling, Silverman (2010) argues researchers seek out cases where the phenomenon under study is likely to occur, as is illustrated in the preceding paragraphs. As a result, the parametres of the population, as intimated previously, are critically demarcated beforehand (Singleton & Straits, 2010; Babbie, 2013). Creswell (2013) distinguishes between two types of purposeful sampling: the random purposeful which was employed when sampling the customers of the three firms; and stratified purposeful, which 'illustrates subgroups and facilitates comparisons'.

Sampling is employed in scientific inquiry as it is often 'impossible, impractical, or extremely expensive' to accrue data from the survey population in its entirety (Babbie, 1990). There are two major sampling designs; Probability which is more suited for quantitative studies, and Non-probability, which is more suited for qualitative studies (Baker, 1988; Babbie, 1990; Singleton & Straits, 2010; Babbie, 2013). Three major sampling techniques exist under the non-probability design; these are the Convenience, Quota, and Purposive techniques. With Convenience (also referred to as accidental, haphazard, and fortuitous) sampling, the researcher samples units that are conveniently available (Babbie, 1990; Singleton & Straits, 2010). However, while this technique saves money, effort and time, it does so by sacrificing credibility, representativeness, and information (Babbie, 1990; Singleton & Straits, 2010; Creswell, 2013).

Quota sampling, on the other hand, strives to select reprensentative samples as proportional to the population as possible. For instance, the number of males chosen for a study must be proportional to the number of males in a population. However, aside from its inherent bias borne of the researcher's freedom to select units they please, the technique is unable to accurately estimate the population's parametres (Baker, 1988; Babbie, 1990; Singleton & Straits, 2010; Babbie, 2013). Creswell (2013) also identifies other techniques such as Opportunistic, which allows the inquirer to take advantage of the unexpected and follow new leads. He also identifies the Politically Important sampling method whose aim is to attract desired attention or avoid attracting undesired attention. Other sampling methods Creswell (2013) identifies include the Extreme or Deviant Case, which the researcher uses to learn from highly unusual manifestations of the phenomenon under study; and the snowball or chain, which identifies cases of interest from people who know others who know what cases are information-rich. Researchers choose this technique when it becomes challenging to locate members of a sampling unit (Babbie, 2013).

4.7 SAMPLING SIZE

Using the Ghana Club 100 List, Databank Group, Dalex Finance and Latex Foam Rubber Products Ltd. were selected as they checked all the case boundaries previously indicated. The study's sample size for companies comprised 3 interviewees; the chief marketing officer, Databank Group; the public relations officer, Latex Foam; and the head of marketing, Dalex Finance as they were identified as information rich. 15 customers, 5 for each company, were also purposively sampled to attain a balance between the six and twenty range (Creswell, 1998; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). In effect, 12 customers were interviewed as no new information was forthcoming. Thus, in all, 15 respondents were interviewed for the study. The sample size was informed in part by Creswell's (2013) observations that a general guiding principle in qualitative studies is to study few cases extensively, as the goal is not to generalise but to enlighten. Creswell (2013), therefore, suggests not more than 4 or 5 data sources in a case study to enable analyses of themes across cases.

However, the issue of the most suitable sampling size also raises concerns about data saturation. Fusch and Ness (2015) define data saturation as 'when there is enough information to replicate the study when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible'. They maintain that there is no one ideal sample size for all qualitative research, while other researchers suggest different sizes per type of study. For instance, Guest *et al.* (2006) suggest six interviews while Creswell (1998) suggests that for phenomenological studies, between five and twenty-five may be appropriate, and for grounded studies, any number between twenty and thirty interviews may be appropriate.

Grounding his suggestions in research objectives, Kuzel (1992) argues that between eleven and twenty-one interviews are ideal when pursuing disconfirming evidence, and between five and nine data sources for a homogenous sample. Furthermore, to enhance validity, Crouch and McKenzie (2006) suggest data sources numbering less than twenty. Despite the lack of consensus on an ideal sample size, data saturation still remains important as too much of it can lead to information overload, and too little of it can impact the validity of the study's results. Fusch and Ness (2015), therefore, suggest a method of ensuring data saturation is the interview, which must produce in-depth data that is thick and rich. They explain rich data as nuanced, layered, detailed and intricate; and thick data as a lot of data.

4.8 DATA SOURCES

Data for the study came from two sources; primary and secondary. The former comprised data collected from interviews with the heads of the firms' marketing functions and their customers, with the aid of aptly-designed interview guides, while the latter comprised such data as audiovisual data and text-based digital material such as electronic newsletters and Facebook content. The use of these multiple and varied data sources are supported by the case study approach (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2013; Boateng, 2014). They (the data) facilitate obtaining a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study, help attain rigour, and enhances credibility of data in research. Data for the study is permutated under two sources; Primary and Secondary.

4.9 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Open-ended interview guides were used to collect data. In open-ended interview guides, respondents provide their answers own answers to questions (Willis, 2007; Babbie, 2013). Two sets of open-ended interview guides; one for industry practitioners and another for the organisations' customers, were designed to facilitate the collection of data. The questions, which were informed by literature reviewed, were couched to reflect each of the study's objectives; that is the dimensions of brand journalism, the key characteristics of brand journalism, and the role of brand journalism in marketing communications. The questions also reflected the theory used to anchor the study. 13 questions were initially and painstakingly drafted for heads of the marketing functions of the selected firms. To test the questions for robustness, they were rigorously examined by this researcher's primary supervisor, whose superior insight and subsequent comments warranted a second draft. By the end of the exercise, a number of questions had been modified and others had been added. This researcher thus went into the field with 25 open-ended questions and with the understanding that follow-up questions asked in the course of the interview will increase the number as well.

The same technique was applied to the interview guide designed for the firm's customers. Initially, 13 questions were generated which were informed by literature reviewed and reflected each of the research objectives and the theory adopted to anchor the study as well. However, the questions were later modified and increased to 17 upon rigorous examination by the primary supervisor. For both sets of interview guides, robustness of questions comprised interviewee comprehension of questions, phrasing of questions to guarantee the right response, conciseness and brevity, relevance of questions, refining questions to eliminate ambiguity, negative and biased items and instances which will require the respondent to provide the same response (Babbie, 2013). The questions were also rigorously examined to ensure adequate reflection of the study's objectives and theory (Babbie, 2013). To achieve robustness, and to also provide a feel of how the actual one-on-one interview might transpire, the primary supervisor simulated an interview with this researcher. The final set was submitted to identified customers, again with the expectation that follow-up questions asked in the course of the interviews would either limit or increase the number.

The choice of data collection instrument is in line with Crouch and McKenzie's (2006) assertions that 'interviewing is one of the most frequently employed qualitative methods' with the primary form being the personal one-on-one interview. Another form of interview usually employed is the focus group interview (Barbour & Schostak, 2011). Crouch and McKenzie (2006) argue that the personal interview 'targets the respondents' perceptions and feelings', with the aim of generating data which provides 'authentic insight' into the experiences of interviewees. In conducting interviews, Creswell (2013) suggests a series of steps that begins with formulating general, focused, open-ended research questions. Other steps include identifying the interviewee; using adequate recording procedures; designing and using an interview protocol; and determining the type of interview such as a telephone interview. Qualitative data collection instruments generally comprise interviews and observation; generally categorised into complete participant, participant as observer (Creswell, 2013), covert, and non-covert (Oliver, 2010; Jones & Somekh, 2011).

4.9.1 RECORDING PROCEDURES

This researcher used a phone with a highly positively reviewed sound recording phone application downloaded from Google PlayStore to capture the conversation with interviewees during one-on-one interviews. The phone was placed on airplane mode to bar incoming calls and notifications from disrupting the interview. For Facebook and WhatsApp interviews, this researcher used a laptop with a stable internet connection to communicate with respondents who could only be interviewed via these platforms. For phone interviews, this researcher was able to record conversations with a call recording phone application also downloaded from Google PlayStore. The researcher ensured there was ample storage space on her phone-in excess of 5 gigabytes, before each interview.

4.10 DATA COLLECTION

To first gain access to the firms under study, this researcher sent letters introducing herself and the topic of study to each firm. The letters were endorsed by this researcher's primary supervisor on a Department (Marketing and Entrepreneurship) letterhead. Once at the firms, this researcher acquired the contact numbers of company personnel who offered to facilitate meetings with the Head of Marketing, the Public Relations Officer, and the Head of Marketing for Dalex Finance, Latex Foam, and Databank Group respectively. A write-up of the concept being studies, which comprised an introduction, benefits of brand journalism to practice, and why the firms were chosen for the study, together with an interview guide, were submitted to the firms to be given the key respondents as well.

Follow ups were made via phone calls, text messages, and in person to the firms till interviews with the identified personnel were scheduled and eventually carried out. The face-to-face interviews lasted between an hour and twenty minutes and two hours and twenty minutes. Overall, this researcher transcribed over four hours of audio material with key respondents over a two-week course. For client interviews, this researcher purposively sampled five customers each of the selected firms. These were identified based on their having 'liked' their firms' brand journalism content online, specifically on Facebook. Those that were not familiar with brand journalism as this researcher explained to them, were disqualified. This researcher then sent private messages to the selected clients introducing herself, the topic under study, and why their help was being sought. Those clients who replied the messages agreeing to be interviewed were then sent soft copies of the interview guides. From there, interview dates were scheduled. Interviews with the clients spanned face-to-face, phone conversations, Facebook Instant Messaging, and WhatsApp Messaging.

For clients living within the proximity of this researcher and able to make time, face-to-face interviews were conducted with them. In all, eight of such respondents were interviewed face-to-face; one of these, though living quite a way, was willing to make the trip to meet with this researcher on campus. The other types of interviews; 3 phone calls, 3 Facebook interviews, and 1 WhatsApp interview, were carried out as the respondents maintained they would be unable to honour a personal interview. This was either due to their busy work schedules over the weekdays, or their far-flung location. For instance, some of these respondents were living in Dunkwa (Central Region) and Takoradi (Western Region). The duration of bother phone and face-to-face interviews spanned between twenty and 40 minutes, while those for Facebook Instant Messaging and WhatsApp spanned over two hours.

The online interviews reduced costs that would have been incurred had this researcher made the trip to interview the respondents. It also made data transcription easier and granted the respondents time to mull over the questions and respond adequately without feeling rushed (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) argues that innovative data collection methods such as online interviews require respondents to have access to a stable internet connection and basic reading and writing skills. He also argues that they present new challenges to the researcher such as having to strengthen textual data interpreting, and online interview skills.

In contacting clients via Facebook, this researcher encountered a number of challenges. First of all, a number of respondents chose not to respond to the messages of introduction, while some did but later declined because they simply could not make the time. One other daunting challenge this researcher faced was dispelling the fear expressed by some clients that this researcher may be attempting to defraud them. To assuage their fears, they requested this researcher send them pictures of herself, which she did with an element of trepidation herself. While this act was successful in guaranteeing client participation in the study, others were still skeptical, especially after this researcher took relatively too long to send a picture on one occasion. The delayed response caused the client to infer that this researcher was a fraudster and thus declined to be interviewed.

The other challenge was having to deal with a respondent who, it turned out, had agreed to be interviewed because he was in pursuit of an amorous relationship and thus kept asking incessant personal questions of this researcher, such as her relationship status and plans for the future. When this researcher attempted to draw the respondent back to the focus of the interview, his prolonged silence may have indicated a loss of interest in the exercise and thus threatened to derail the interview. This researcher thus offered to answer a personal question for every interview question he would answer. This approach worked and the interview was saved.

4.11 DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analysed thematically to identify common themes with regard to the dimensions, key characteristics and roles of brand journalism, and illustrations to support the themes. Saldaña (2009) argues that a theme 'is a phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data means'. In other words, a theme describes or interprets manifest or latent observations of a phenomenon. Themes are often recurring concepts extracted from data, and shape said data by categorising it. The themes 'and their related data serve as illustrative examples to support the interpretation' (Saldaña, 2009). According to Saldaña (2009), thematic analysis involves two cycles; themes are stated in the first cycle for meaning condensation, and then spun together in the second cycle for meaning interpretation, which explains why the phenomenon occurs or what it means. Data is thus analysed thematically based on themes extracted from and informed by literature.

According to a number of scholars (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Saldaña, 2009; Babbie, 2013; Creswell, 2013), researchers also have access to other vast array of techniques with which to analyse data according to the type of qualitative study. For instance, Babbie (2013) argues that Ethnographic researchers employ conversation analysis, which scrutinises the way respondents answer questions that includes pauses and other kinds of interjections. Other techniques include coding, which is associated with Grounded Theory research. The case study approach supports thematic analysis.

4.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Piper and Simons (2011) define ethical practice as 'doing no harm'. Prior to conducting the study, therefore, a letter of introduction endorsed by this researcher's primary supervisor was submitted to the selected firms which were chosen purely on a purposive basis. This researcher thus had no vested interested in the firms, which would have marred the outcome of the study. This echoes Creswell's (2013) assertions that ethical pitfalls can occur prior to conducting a study. With regard to the clients of these companies, since they were reached out to online, a text message introducing this researcher, together with this researcher's contact number, was sent to customers identified based on the comments, likes, shares, and loves they left on marketing communications content on the company Facebook sites.

The letters and text messages sent the respondents disclosed the purpose of the study. In the firms, gatekeepers were identified to facilitate interviews with the respondents. A write-up of the scope of work, together with an interview guide, was given the gatekeepers to be forwarded to the respondents. The scope of work comprised an introduction to brand journalism, forms and execution strategies, benefits of brand journalism, target population and sample, implication of the study for the firms, and why the firm was chosen. Follow-up visits were made to the interview sites and phone calls were also made to the gatekeepers till interview dates were scheduled. For the customers, after having gone through the interview guides, those interested in granting an interview either gave a date and time for the interview, or contacted me via WhatsApp. These precautions were taken in line with Piper and Simons (2011), Creswell (2013), and Babbie's (2013) assertions on the need for voluntary participation/informed consent.

Barbour and Schostak (2011) and Creswell (2013) assert that the personal interview raises such issues as the perception of power and trust which could threaten the outcome of interviews. Therefore, in collecting the data, this researcher employed a conversational/collaborative method, which involved not only asking questions but allowing the respondents to ask questions both regarding the study, as well as personal. Creswell (2013) argues this method dispels a power imbalance inherent in qualitative interviews that inhibit respondents, especially introverted ones, from fully expressing themselves. This method had its challenges such as extremely personal questions asked of this researcher which could have potentially derailed the interview.

Since this method seeks to respect the interviewees' role in co-creating raw material for knowledge creation, it encourages them to talk, sometimes deviating from the focus of the question asked. This researcher, however, allowed them to express their views, despite its implications during transcriptions, especially as they often made revelations pertinent to the study. Furthermore, while it was challenging to provide rewards to certain participants either because of distance or prominence in status, this researcher did offer to treat some interviewees to lunch and when those were declined, offered to defray their transportation costs, which was accepted.

In analysing data, Creswell (2013) and Babbie (2013) argue a common ethical issue is researchers going native, that is, siding with participants. Another ethical issue is disclosing only positive results, and ignoring participant privacy. To avoid these pitfalls, multiple perspectives and contrary findings were reported, and aliases or fictitious names were developed for participants to ensure confidentiality and anonymity (Babbie, 2013). In reporting data, Creswell (2013) argues ethical issues include falsifying findings and conclusions, plagiarising, and communicating in obtuse and convoluted language. To avoid these, findings and conclusions were honestly reported, current APA citation guidelines were used to reprint or adapt others' work, and appropriate, clear, and straightforward language was used.

4.13 DATA MANAGEMENT

Conversations captured via audio recordings were extracted from the phone unto a laptop, labelled accordingly and placed in labelled folders. For instance, the interview with the PRO of Latex Foam Rubber Products was labelled, 'Audio Latex Foam' and placed in a folder labelled 'Latex Foam'. The transcribed report was also labelled 'Transcription Latex Foam' and placed in the 'Latex Foam' folder. Audio recordings of interviews with the companies' customers were also extracted and copied unto a laptop and labelled accordingly. For instance, an interview with a customer was labelled 'Audio LFC1', where LF referred to 'Latex Foam', and 'C1' referred to the status of the respondent as a customer and the numerical order in which that customer was interviewed. The transcribed report was labelled 'Transcription LFC1'. These were saved in the 'Latex Foam' folder and located on the Desktop for easy access. Back-up copies of all data were created and saved unto a pen drive, unto this researcher's cloud account, and the transcribed reports were all emailed to this researcher's inbox.

4.14 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The use of the Ghana Club 100 List limited the pool of firms that could have been selected to participate in the study, affecting the study's representativeness. For instance, there is a strong possibility that a large-scale firm in the private sector practiced brand journalism. However, they were overlooked because they did not appear on the List.

Furthermore, the choice of firms in the private sector excluded those in the private sector who probably practice brand journalism in a form worth studying. The same applied to the choice of large-scale firms over small-scale ones, and Accra over other cities in Ghana.

The choice of a cross-sectional survey, in addition, eliminated the possibility of extensively mapping the phenomenon's nuances and complex dimensions, especially with regard to how a particular firm practiced, it over time. This would have been possible had a longitudinal approach been adopted. However, factors such as time and financial constraint prevented this from occurring.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected for the study, the findings, and discussions (see Appendix 1 for a summary of findings and case histories). Data was collected through in-depth interviews with 15 respondents. The interviews spanned face-to-face with 3 industry players and 5 customers, 1 WhatsApp interview, 3 Facebook interviews, and 3 telephone interviews. The variations in interviewing occurred because respondents either lived in regions other than Accra or could just not find the time to meet with the researcher one-on-one. Collected data was analysed using thematic analysis technique proposed by Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure and Chadwick (2008). Themes were generated both inductively and deductively. Deductive thematic analysis is the process where a framework or structure that has been predetermined is used to analyse data (Burnard *et al.*, 2008). Inductive thematic analysis, on the other hand, is the process where themes are generated from the texts of interviews using no predetermined structure or framework (Burnard *et al*., 2008; Creswell, 2013). Individual cases are presented with quotes to illustrate themes inductively and deductively derived. Findings and discussions are done concurrently.

5.1 OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENTS

Respondents comprised 3 industry practitioners; the Chief Marketing Officer, Databank Group; the Public Relations Officer, Latex Foam Rubber Products; and the Head of Marketing, Dalex Finance. The different cadres of interviewees stem from brand journalism being a relatively new concept in marketing communication. As such, it does not have an agreed department of accommodation. Hence, its practice is located in varied departments such as Public Relations (PR) and Marketing in different organisations. This was also evident in the case companies where brand journalism resides in Marketing in Databank and Dalex Finance, and outsourced in Latex Foam and supervised by their PR Team. As previously mentioned while setting the context of this study, Databank Group is a non-banking financial institution founded in 1990 with the mission to empower its customers to achieve financial independence by promoting financial literacy and offering a diverse range of investment products. To achieve this mission, Databank provides a range of services spanning corporate finance, brokerage, fund and asset management and research, and private equity finance. Databank Group values leadership in setting the pace in its industry, and nurturing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in their people; excellence in the delivery of its services and products; humility in serving its clients, and integrity in their dealings with investors. Latex Foam Rubber Products Ltd., on the other hand, was incorporated in 1969 to produce foam products for the furniture and bedding industry. It is the oldest in its industry and aims to continue to lead the country's manufacturers of foam products. It also aims to satisfy its customers by providing them with quality and innovative foam products, as well as cater for the larger society within which it operates.

Finally, Dalex Finance & Leasing Company Ltd. is as well a non-banking financial institution established in 2006. Dalex Finance strives to make a genuine difference in the lives of their stakeholders, and values integrity in terms of openness, honesty, fairness and consistency; teamwork; learning and knowledge sharing; and responsibility with regard to owning their actions despite the outcome. The respondents have worked with their respective firms for a total of 10 years as indicated in the section on case histories (see Appendix 2 for case histories). Additionally, although each firm regularly disseminates marketing communications messages, their practice of brand journalism is relatively recent, not extending beyond the past 3 years. Each of the 3 representatives responded to questions regarding each of the study's objectives and their responses are coded as:

CMO, DG: Chief Marketing Officer, Databank Group;

PRO, LF: Public Relations Officer, Latex Foam;

HM, DF: Head of Marketing, Dalex Finance.

Respondents also comprised customers of each of the 3 firms previously identified. Their responses, which covered the study's objectives, were coded using acronyms representing the firm they identified with, their status as customers of that firm, and the numerical order in which they were interviewed. For instance,

DGC1: Databank Group Customer (1)

See Appendix 3 for an overview of respondent's views on the key objectives discussed.

5.2 THE DIMENSIONS OF BRAND JOURNALISM

The analysis opens with what the study found to be dimensions of brand journalism, starting with its execution strategy, then forms, followed by actors, content and ethics as practiced by the cases. Following the dimensions are the key characteristics of brand journalism. To ascertain the key characteristics of brand journalism, the study adopted Fill and Jamieson's (2006) 4Cs framework of the key characteristics of marketing communications. This is followed by the role of brand journalism in marketing communications to wrap up data analysis on the objectives of this study. Other notable findings relating to the AIDA theory, this study's theoretical underpinning, and factors that can impact the effectiveness of brand journalism are also presented.

5.2.1 EXECUTION STRATEGIES

Execution strategy refers to the communication channels used to disseminate marketing communications messages (Cole & Greer, 2013). Popular marketing communications channels are print (which generally includes all print-based materials such as magazines, newsletters, newspapers, fliers, handbills and others), radio and television (Smith *et al*., 1997), generally referred to as traditional media (Shivarudrappa, 2014), and the internet and mobile technology ((Todorova, 2015), also referred to as new media (Shivarudrappa, 2014) (see Chapter 2, section 2.6). Others exist, such as billboards, pylon signs, and sandwich men (van den Besselaar, 2011) Execution strategy wise, content marketing is mainly driven by the internet (Liebtag, 2013; Holliman & Rowley, 2014), while corporate journalism employs traditional media (Swenson, 2012). Brand narratives may employ both traditional and new media but leans heavily on content crafted from mythical tropes to provoke thought and entertain (Simmons, 2006). Brand journalism, it has been argued, employs both major types of communications channels to disseminate content that is subtle or devoid of a direct selling pitch (see Chapter 2, table 1). To identify the execution strategy that exists in selected firms, secondary data, in addition to respondents' contributions, were analysed in relation to literature.

DATABANK GROUP

Describing the entire array of marketing communications tools at their disposal, the respondent said:

> '*For outdoors we use billboards. We use banners primarily. We also use flag pole banners. And then we're moving to do smaller signs like at bus stops and stuff. We*

use social media; Facebook and Twitter. We use the newspapers, radio. Then we also do online, not social media but through our website and advertising on the other websites as well. Then we have, where we actually get volunteers who from time to time will go out…' (CMO, DG, 23 February, 2017).

'*…we're moving to video. We have a number of videos but we're adding to that as well in terms of doing more interview type videos…*' (CMO, DG, 23 February, 2017).

'*…We don't do TV primarily because of the cost. So we've stayed away from TV*' (CMO, DG, 23 February, 2017).

'*So (on brand journalism) we do articles all the time […] and yes, the information, every slide or every article is not saying buy databank up front; it's saying what you should know about retirement, how should you plan […] So every Friday, he's (the CEO) on there (radio), he's talking, he gives like a rundown on sports for the week, but at the end of each show then they switch to investments and he shares some invest ent tips…*' (CMO, DG, 23 February, 2017).

Based on literature references indicated earlier, Databank Group employs a host of communication platforms to disseminate their marketing communications messages in general. The range of communications platforms is being expanded as well. Databank Group, however, refrains from television due to costs. While their other platforms could be utilised for brand journalism, Databank Group instead utilises only radio (paid and earned), newspapers (paid), and newsletters (owned). Furthermore, the CMO indicates that not every communiqué is asking customers to buy Databank products up front, indicating a subtle selling pitch. This illustrates a major feature of brand journalism (see Chapter 4, section 4.6) confirming the company practices brand journalism. Databank Group also employs traditional media as channels to disseminate their messages as evidenced by their use of radio, newspapers, and newsletters which is replicated in digital format. It may, therefore, be deduced that Databank Group practices corporate journalism. This confirms Kuada and Hinson's (2014) assertions that Databank Group practices some kind of journalism they label as financial journalism.

Databank Group's use of traditional media also leaves out new (social) media. But does the absence of brand journalism practice on social media affect customer perception of the channels of communication?

> '*When you're on social media, you can just say something to please somebody although there might not be comments that might hurt your brand. But I think that when companies are on TV they're much more careful. And then also the source too is another thing. Because when they're on TV, they'll be very careful of the person that they will send on TV but social media they can just get a social media person who might not really be well-trained to be there to handle those issues*' (DGC1, 24 March, 2017).

> '*I would suggest that radio, TV are not the only channels they should use. So basically, radio and TV they should continue, but also use social media to get the youth or those who are interested in it*' (DGC2, 24 March, 2017).

> '*For me the TV is more believability. I think that when you take television and social media, the impact on television, to me, because it travels very far so I think that the impact will be much more than social media. I would even prefer calling you directly or even calling me directly then I can really battle with you about whatever you're telling me. So for me there's the believability and then also, because it would be very difficult for you to come on national TV to say anything*' (DGC1, 24 March, 2017).

> '*Even if you cannot read or write, maybe it comes in a language that you can understand. Then TV would have been the next option because even if you're deaf and you can see what they're doing you can read the lips. Then they can go on social media. They can just use the commonest ones like Facebook and they can just be posting their messages*' (DGC4, 26 March, 2017).

The transcripts reveal absence of brand journalism content on social media does not seem to affect the firm's customers either, as they actually prefer radio and television. These sentiments notwithstanding, other customers suggest a bouquet of channels to capture all audiences, as employed in integrated marketing communications. Findings also indicate the various channels mean different things for different people and use it as such. This echoes the Uses and Gratifications Theory, a mass communications theory which holds that audiences exert control over media instead of media controlling audiences (Ruggeiro, 2000; Cummings 2008)

LATEX FOAM

Describing what they do in relation to brand journalism, its PRO states,

> '*we try to give them some content which is […] away from what our core business is because we need to show them that we still care […] (to create) […] that emotional attachment; that trust*' (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

The content the firm disseminates is indirectly related to its core business, and appeals to customers' emotions. These features confirm Latex Foam practices brand journalism as they corroborate Bull's (2013) description of the features of brand journalism (see Chapter 4, section 4.6). Latex Foam also utilises a number of communication channels to disseminate marketing communications messages.

> '*…you have your TV, you have radio, and then there's the social media bit. Then there are other forms like bulk SMS messaging…*' (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017)

Of these, the only platform the firm utilises to disseminate brand journalism content is Facebook. The PRO of Latex Foam explains their choice of social media, specifically Facebook, thusly:

> ‘*The basic reason is that’s where you’ll find most of the youth. But then again, you can be sure of all kinds of groups in there as well […]. And obviously, as a smart business you don’t want to miss out*’ (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

Latex Foam’s use of only Facebook, a communications tool powered by the internet (new media) to disseminate brand journalism content indicates it practices content marketing, as described by Liebtag (2013) and Holliman and Rowley (2014) who maintain that content marketing is driven entirely by the internet and exists solely online. Customers reacted to the choice of the communication platform thusly:

> ‘*Social media has become part of me. I learn a lot from [Facebook]*’ (LFC1, 22 March, 2017)

> ‘*It’s also convenient for me to learn about such content through Facebook because of late that’s the easiest means to get to your customers. And many people prefer social media to listening to radio, like the youth like this, not all of them like to listen to radio and watch TV to see the product being advertised so it’s the best way to reach out to masses and the youth or to potential buyers*’ (LFC3, 22 March, 2017).

> ‘*Facebook has different emotions. You can express your emotions by liking it, or disliking it, or by showing what it is and it’s very convenient. Facebook is where they can absolutely get me*’ (LFC4, 30 March, 2017).

Customers’ reactions indicate an acceptance and contentment with the choice of Facebook as a communication platform.

DALEX FINANCE

To describe what the firm does under brand journalism, its Head of Marketing stated:

> '*we talk about the things (our customers) care about […]. So, you see (the CEO) on TV talking about the economy. It's because our customers care about the economy. We don't think of it as any marketing principle to lure people; we just talk about it with care and passion at core; there's no manipulation in there […] It's just telling the story of what we love and what we care about*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

Dalex Finance considers its practice of brand journalism as telling a story which its customers consider compelling. Furthermore, content is not intended to entrap customers. Therefore, there is no selling pitch. These echo the features of brand journalism according to Bull (2013) (see Chapter 4, section 4.6).

Dalex Finance's marketing communications channels comprise traditional and modern channels.

> '*We have sponsorships; that's one of the easiest ways to get to a collective group of people […] we do print media, so those were the old models; we do a little bit TV, a little bit radio; sponsor live shows. Into the new school we have social media which is now the new thing. Social media is very strong and is picking up. We focus more on our Instagram and Facebook and not so much twitter because of our target market*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

For brand journalism, Dalex Finance relies heavily on earned media, specifically radio and television interview spots. In explaining radio and television as its platform of choice for disseminating brand journalism content, the Head of Marketing for Dalex Finance states:

'*We're in Ghana, as much as technology is fast spreading, there's this group who're still very conservative and would like to stick to the old models and TV has been one of the surest ways of disseminating serious information. As much as social media is catching on, we find something as more credible on TV as we find on social media*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

A respondent concurs, stating:

'*So, TV to me makes it more believable to see the person in there and look at the body language and then you listen to the comment as well*' (DGC1, 24 March, 2017).

The choice of television and radio was informed by market research.

'*Dalex is Dalex because we're always learning. There's constant research going on in Dalex at any particular point in time so everything you're seeing is as a result of different and various levels of [research]*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

The Head of Marketing further explains the firm's rationale behind choosing radio and television.

'*Now, if you're going to work, you can't watch TV, and most people will engage in external media which is radio and television when they're free. And the freest time, listening is the only thing you can do while you're driving, safely cos watching is not advisable*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

Customers' views corroborated the Head of Marketing's sentiments and touted the merits of radio and television.

'*Radio is cool for me. It has been a traditional thing so if you really want to get your messages out there and very fast, I think radio will be the very first thing because [you're] on the move, even when you're sitting in trotro [public transportation], so radio would have been the first option. Even if you cannot read or write, maybe it comes in a language that you can understand. Then TV would* *have been the next option because even if you're deaf and you can see what they're doing you can read the lips*' (DGC3, 26 March, 2017).

'*People listen to radio more. If you sit in the car you listen to radio. For me, I listen to radio more, in the morning you're forced to listen to radio. If you want to get a lot of information you have to listen to radio. If you're bored you have to listen to radio*' (LFC2, 23 March, 2017).

Dalex Finance's choice of radio and television were informed by their audience make-up which, in turn, is based on their products.

'*Our average investment product is about 4000 Ghana cedis, which automatically pushes our clientele range to high net worth clients. So for that the channel of communication wouldn't be on Twitter, it wouldn't be on Instagram, it would barely be found on Facebook. These people what do they watch? They watch news, they watch BBC, at best they watch some TV3 news, probably GTV. So, there are certain channels we'd use in reaching out to them. So we'd go with news, we'd go with Citi Business News, we'd go with Star FM, like most of the big news-centred stations. If you have that much money you should be thinking about how to preserve it, how to keep it; so you're constantly on the lookout for news relating to things which will affect your money*' (HM, DF, 7 February, 2017).

Channels Dalex Finance uses to disseminate brand journalism content are traditional media, specifically television and radio. Based on the execution channels used to disseminate brand journalism content, and as presented by Swenson (2012), it may be argued that Dalex Finance practices corporate journalism. Brand journalism has, however, not replaced traditional marketing communications in these firms though.

For Databank Group, traditional marketing communications in use before the introduction of brand journalism:

'*…had run its course; we just can't continue to rely on word of mouth alone and hope that it would carry us cos it won't. Not that it wasn't working*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

'*We haven't stopped using those channels (other marketing communications elements). We just adopted something which would be more efficient and more widespread*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

According to practitioners, customer response to brand journalism has been positive. Their sentiments are corroborated by their customers who, as indicated earlier (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.1) endorsed their firms' use of specific communication platforms to disseminate brand journalism content. Below are quotes from practitioners providing insight into just how much their customers have embraced brand journalism content.

'*The response has been fantastic thanks to social media analytics. Thanks to Google analytics, you can measure how well you're doing out there. Most radio stations have how many viewers or listeners they have, TV and radio. So we weigh them against the customers that are signing in at other particular points in time. Just by someone coming in or calling our customer care line asking what does Dalex do or how do I get a loan, how do I invest with you. Just that alone is a measure of success because at base, we're trying to drive conversation, we're trying to gain interactions; we're getting in engagements. So it's a win if a customer just calls us and enquires about Dalex*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

'*It's been very good because there's a gap. Companies are not spending the time to educate Ghanaians. So there's a definite hunger for information and so people who get it, they're very receptive to it because it means that they're learning something and when they make an investment decision, ultimately, any kind of decision, it's based on more information than less*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

'*Of course, of course. The returns are immense primarily per the feedback we're getting from Facebook as a company*' (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

It may be inducted that execution strategy-the communications channel employed to disseminate brand journalism content, is what determines the form of brand journalism practiced. This indicates that the execution strategy defines the form of brand journalism (explored in the next session), a firm is likely to practice and in fact, is intertwined with forms of brand journalism. For instance, because LF's execution strategy is Facebook, a social media communications tool driven by the internet, its practice of brand journalism is labelled as content marketing. This intricacy made it challenging for both dimensions to be analysed separately. Evidence also suggests brand journalism practice in firms is nascent. This is evidenced by the lack of depth of execution strategies, probably caused by a lack of understanding of the concept. For instance, the Head of Marketing, DF, admits '*I think I'm even new to the term brand journalism,'* indicating that brand journalism is being practiced in the dark. This confirms ADMA's (2013) position that brand journalism is a 'complex and evolving discipline'. That it performs crucial functions is why the firms continue to practice it.

Databank Group limits its use of communication platforms for brand journalism to only radio, newspapers, and newsletters with cost seemingly the underlying determinant informing choice. Latex Foam, on the other hand, uses only Facebook primarily because it is the platform likely to draw the attention of the youth and other outliers. Cost was also identified as a reason for these limited options. For Dalex Finance, the choice of platforms is driven by what a potential customer is likely to listen to or watch; and what their actual customers, based on the products they purchase, are likely to listen to or watch. However, the Dalex Finance case provides evidence that cost incurred in purchasing airtime should not be an issue. Because Dalex Finance depends primarily on earned media, the matter of financial resource in inhibiting the firm's practice of brand journalism was a non-factor.

All three firms could also explore in depth, the possibility of using shared and owned media in addition to earned media channels, especially to circumvent expensive channels of communication.

Firms that practice brand journalism may have to use multiple channels of communication as they possibly can to ensure extensive brand awareness. The PRO of Latex Foam admitted that the company may be missing out on acquiring new customers and getting acquired customers informed because of their limited practice of brand journalism, having restrained themselves only to Facebook. It is also best to engage customers across majority of media platforms as these platforms mean different things to different people. But on the whole, evidence indicates the firms' choice of communication platforms for brand journalism is very limited. A reason that could be advanced to explain the limited choice of communication platforms is the seeming lack of comprehension surrounding brand journalism practice, affecting enlightenment on how any communication channel could be used to disseminate brand journalism content.

This finding confirms Holliman and Rowley‘s (2014) assertion that lack of insight into what ADMA (2013) calls the complex and evolving nature of brand journalism is an impediment to its practice. Findings also indicate brand journalism is used to compliment other marketing communications elements by merging say, brand journalism and sponsorship. This finding upholds Swenson's (2012) definition of brand journalism as a combination of journalism and elements of marketing communications.

5.2.2 FORMS

Forms of brand journalism have been discussed in the literature as variants of brand journalism. Liebtag (2013) for instance, notes that a form of brand journalism is content marketing, while Swenson (2012) and Petulla (2014) note corporate journalism and brand narratives, respectfully, as forms of brand journalism. Execution channel seems to be the primary differentiating element. For instance, content marketing is driven entirely by the internet (Holliman & Rowley, 2014) while corporate journalism employs traditional media (Swenson, 2012). Differences in dissemination strategies notwithstanding, the common strand linking these variants is the narrative approach to telling a brand's stories devoid of overt selling plots. This study argues that brand journalism encompasses all its variants as its execution strategy combines both traditional and modern (internet-driven) media and does not rely solely on traditional storytelling tropes to convey meaning (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.6). To identify the form of brand journalism that exists in selected firms, secondary data, in addition to respondents' contributions, especially on what they label their form of brand journalism practice, were analysed in relation to literature.

DATABANK GROUP

On what DG calls its practice of brand journalism, its CMO stated:

> '*For me it's marketing communications. That's kind of how everything gets lumped together for us. I haven't stopped to separate the journalism component from the more advertising aspects of it because there are different elements to it. But for me they all come under marketing communications*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

As indicated previously under Execution Strategies, DG practices brand journalism. However, it does not refer to the practice as such. The CMO explains that the rationale for calling the practice marketing communications is because they have not *'stopped to separate the journalism component from the more advertising aspects of it',*

> '*In the most traditional and basic term, we still call ours communications marketing, basically*' (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

Latex Foam (LF), whose brand journalism practice consists of content published to its Facebook page, like DG, labels its practice of brand journalism along the lines of marketing communications.

> '*…we need to get even our staff to understand the direction in which we're going with the marketing of the products in which we engage in. So normally you don't want to coin terms that are quite complex and complicated such that your own frontiers cannot embrace and run with. Mind you, you have various entry levels of staff; you have different cognizance and IQ levels, exposure, educational backgrounds and things like that so we try as much as possible to get everybody to understand the language and the direction in which our theme or goal has to be in at any given point in time […] So we try to keep it simple; very simple*' (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

The PRO, LF mentions that the reason for not calling it by any particular term is to eliminate the potential for confusion since staff have varying propensities to assimilate new information.

> '*I think I'm even new to the term brand journalism […] (but we call it) 'Brand publishing; publishing what we care about. So at core what we do is to publish the things people care about but then in our own words*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

The case is different regarding Dalex Finance (DF), however, which calls its practice of brand journalism, 'Brand Publishing'. This practice entails the firm's CEO and Director of Operations speaking to a wide range of issues as panelists on radio and television programmes. However, brand journalism as a concept is new to them.

It may be inducted, based on respondents' submissions, that brand journalism is yet to be fully realised. As a result, its practice is superficial and myopic, and lacks a clear direction. A visible illustration of how superficial and myopic it is in practice shows in how the practitioners term the practice. Calling it a part of marketing communications (Databank Group and Latex Foam) or brand publishing (Dalex Finance) fails to highlight brand journalism as a practice that requires the combination of traditional journalism principles with elements of the marketing communications mix. This, therefore, limits the extent to which it can be conceived and ultimately practiced or fully harnessed.

How practitioners term brand journalism practice also disconfirms Wilcox's (2015) assertions that public relations professionals prefer to use the term brand journalism as there is 'greater emphasis on journalistic writing and less emphasis on selling products'. While there truly is less emphasis on selling products, none of the respondents, especially the Public Relations Officer of Latex Foam, called it brand journalism. And while journalistic principles were upheld, little emphasis was placed on 'journalistic' writing.

5.2.3 ACTORS

'Actors' refers to individuals responsible for crafting and or conveying brand journalism content (Bull, 2013; Cole & Greer, 2013). Bull (2013) maintains actors must have a journalism background because they are versed in content creation and know how to build relationships with audiences through the content they create. Bull (2013) further expands on the actors as people with print and online editing skills; people who can use still images, text, video, audio, and infographics to convey meaning. Bull (2013) further mentions Search Engine Optimizer (SEO) specialists, web developers, web analysts, and marketers to conduct interviews, and marketing research. Cole and Greer (2013), however, add that actors may be third party agents hired by a firm to craft brand journalism content on their behalf. These agents may have in their employ, or access to the actors Bull (2013) describes.

On who crafts brand journalism content, the CMO, DG said:

> '*So we have a full marketing team. We have a copy writer, a graphic designer, and then there's me*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

Based on Bull's (2013) description of who brand journalists ought to be, a copy writer and a graphic designer, together with a marketing team are not entirely adequate as it is devoid of the journalist who understands the audience not from a profit-oriented perspective.

> '*So every Friday, he's (the CEO's) on there (radio), he's talking, he gives like a rundown on sports for the week, but at the end of each show then they switch to investments and he shares some investment tips and explains it…*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

These indicate that in Databank, brand journalism is helmed by the marketing unit and sometimes in collaboration with the firm's CEO. The actors partly corroborate Bull's (2013) assertions of who a brand journalist may be. The practice takes the form of either the CEO speaking on issues of national concern on earned media; serving as a social commentator on firm-sponsored sports programmes, textual content in newsletters and magazines, and provision of tips on investment through paid media.

Regarding textual brand journalism content, Databank Group has in its employ, a copy editor who crafts messages, and a graphic designer responsible for the messages' aesthetic appeal. The copy writer, though having a first degree, is without a journalism background. The CMO notes the quality of the copy writer's work is inconsistent.

> '*…so some days are good, some days not so good. So good is you can write something and it can go through on the first or the second pass, but bad is we're going to like five, six, seven versions of something before it gets done…*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

Bull (2013) argues journalists are capable candidates to helm the creation of brand journalism content because they are versed in content creation. That absence of a brand journalism background may explain the copy writer's inconsistency. However, the CMO insists that creativity is a quality any copy writer who works for the firm must possess as indicated in the following quote.

> '*… for me what I look at is, I'm cool with, you have your first degree. I'm not fussed whether you have a Masters or not. I am more interested in, for the copy writer, the creativity that you can bring to the table and how far your mind can go in generating ideas'* (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

The CMO, DG**,** further explains:

> '*…to be very honest with you the degree holds as much water only during the interview, after that it means nothing. It's literally what you bring to the table each day and once you get in the door… it (the degree) doesn't really matter actually, and it won't help them to keep their job. It was like a foundation to get in the door*

but it's what they are able to do on a day to day; that is what they get evaluated on' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

Aside creativity, excellent writing skills is another basic requirement.

'*I would look to see what kinds of writing background that they have. More importantly though, I am looking for samples of their writing*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

The CMO, DG, also describes the process of selecting a content creator thusly:

'*…I also put them through several writing exercises. Then I can gauge for myself how strong their writing skills are. So they have to do grammar tests. They also have to do creative writing tests for me to see…*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

The CMO also looks out for a positive attitude to work, which includes '*meeting deadlines'*. The CMO reveals this particular quality is something that is yet to be adequately tested at the interview stage.

'*So even more important than being a brilliant writer is doing your work and doing it on time and doing it well, which people struggle with. They generally struggle with meeting deadlines and all of those things. It's sad. I find it quite sad because you have a whole generation of people that are coming up and they don't understand the importance of putting everything into work. They come in and to be honest, feel that because they have the degree, that's all, they're cool. So, they have this sense of entitlement that the company needs them more than they need the company. And generally, they are in for a rude awakening when they come in and that to me is the thing that I still have to figure out how to 'catch' in the interview stage. I don't know how yet but umm, you can test for competencies but you don't know how to test for attitude and that is the final stage*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

All Databank Group's marketing communications messages are linked to their various products. Content is, therefore, required only when campaigns for its various products are being run. Therefore, for the copy writer, the key mandate is to provide '*copies on whatever you're given, on time, correctly*-error *free in grammar and it should be compelling'* (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

The respondent also indicated there is a steep learning curve to be overcome by content creators, especially those unfamiliar with the investment terrain, which can be overcome with the right attitude.

> '*The struggle also is the investment industry is not an easy industry. So it's not just about writing. You also need to understand how investment products work and all of that. So you find people come in and they're ok writers but they struggle with the accuracy of the information. If you're not self-motivated enough to go and study what you need to study and do the extra work to bring yourself up, then it's a lot of struggle. So again, the degree is good, the ability to write is good, but then you still have that. But if you have the attitude then I think it will help you to fill the gap cos then you'll be motivated to go and learn what you need to learn so you can produce. But the knowledge of the industry is also very critical*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

Regarding Databank Group's non-textual brand journalism practice, which is defined by its CEO's appearances on media, it is mostly paid for, and is sometimes initiated by the CEO. On how the firm acquires airtime spots, the CMO states:

> '*[…] some through the relationships that we have with the different stations. So for example, you find that Happy FM is part of Global Media Alliance and we have a good relationship with them so through that, we'll sit down at the beginning of the year and say, ok, here are all the different ideas that we have. They all come*

with their ideas, we'll tell them our objectives as well and then we'll kind of land on something' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

The CEO sometimes takes the initiative.

'*Sometimes [the CEO] himself will initiate it and say ok [CMO], someone has come to me with this idea, what do you think?*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

At other times, the Marketing Unit proposes the idea.

> '*Other times we'll go to him and we'll say, you know what, first quarter of the year, we need to get you out there so we're going to put you on Citi FM this week and that is just a straight thing where we purchase the space on Citi FM to get him that time. It's quite expensive so we may say, ok we'll do Citi FM this week, so I think the first month January [of this year] like every week, he was back to back on different stations just to make sure that people kind of hear him. At the beginning of the year we got that New Year message talking about the importance of investing, where the economy is headed, that kind of thing*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

However, because of the costs incurred, the firm sometimes banks on its relationship with media houses for a favourable arrangement.

> '*…depending on the relationship you have, you may pay for one spot and then they give you an extra spot, or you may pay for 15 minutes but when you get there you get 30 minutes. So that's where relationships come in*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

Using a CEO as the actor departs from what western scholars have said about brand journalists (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.3 on description of the brand journalist). Bull (2013), however, does urge senior executives to get involved in social media by answering consumer questions. It may be also noted that they (key executives) are, perhaps, likely candidates since they know their firm. Whether or not this strategy works in a developing economy setting is discussed in subsequent sections. Meanwhile, the CMO's insistence on creativity corroborates Bull's (2013) requirements on the skills a firm will need to draw on.

LATEX FOAM

On who helms Latex Foam's brand journalism practice, its PRO had this to say.

> '*…we had to sublet that part of the business. That is so because like every other business, you don't want to drift away so much from your core so that if there are things to do with manufacturing, you have your in staff to work at, they will then be handling extracts like social media engagements and things like that. But of course, we're over sighting whatever they do so whatever you see out there has been checked by us at the head office to make sure that of course, there again so PR to make sure that there are no damages; we don't want things going out and come back and clean up the mess so we monitor them strictly but they have a free hand to dream as wide as, to be creative as much as possible*' (PRO LF, 20 February, 2017)

This is a departure from who helms Databank Group's brand journalism practice. However, it corroborates with Cole and Greer's (2013) assertion that brand journalism practice may be outsourced to third party agents. An analysis of the firm's Facebook page (their primary vehicle for brand journalism content dissemination) indicates the agency has access to graphic designers and image editors who work in collaboration with the firm's public relations department. These fall into descriptions Bull (2013) has proffered of who a brand journalist may be.

DALEX FINANCE

In Dalex Finance, the Head of Marketing said the following regarding actors:

> '*He (the CEO) also makes various appearances on radio shows. He weighs in on a lot of issues across platforms across radio stations. I cited Citi Business, Joy Prime News, TV3 Hot Issues; he makes various appearances on air on a vast number of shows. And it's not just the CEO, we have our Director of Operations as well; he's a panelist mostly on TV3*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

The actors' presence on media is earned. Dalex Finance's Head of Marketing explains how they get on air.

> '*They get invited. There's this aspect on the news where they weigh in on certain aspects relating to the economy. He's called upon to be a panelist because he's an authority when it comes to those topics. If I tell you the number of interviews we grant in a month, you'll be surprised. Average in a week we do not less than 4 interviews. Averagely in a bad month, 16. There can be a day where we just have interviews and shows from morning till evening*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

Dalex Finance's Head of Marketing states the actors are able to fulfil the interviews on earned media because of effective scheduling.

> '*It's all about scheduling and proper time management. If you tell us ahead of time. There are instances when the nation will come to a halt because of a breaking or a trending news. Those are unique circumstances but averagely, it's a schedule*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

These transcripts indicate the case is different in Dalex Finance. The firm's CEO, to a large extent, and its Director of Operations, carry out the firm's brand journalism practice. The practice takes the form of the CEO and Director of Operations appearing on earned media (radio and television) programmes to act either as resource persons on issues of national concern, or as social commentators. Like Databank Group, Dalex Finance uses key figureheads of the firm in the persons of its CEO, and Director of Operations to disseminate brand journalism content. They, however, depart from Databank Group when it comes to how active the marketing team participates in helping generate brand journalism content. It seems to be non-existent. This also disconfirms Bull's (20130 assertions on the actors of brand journalism by specifically using key figureheads and little to no input from the marketing or PR departments.

The CEOs' and Director of Operations' involvement bring another revelation to the fore. That is, the kind of actors involved in brand journalism practice reflects the extent to which Management has bought into the practice. In Dalex Finance, the practice is helmed by its CEO and Director of Operations. There seems to be complete Management buy-in as the practice is perceived as a company value, and is considered another method of doing business as illustrated by the following quote.

> '*So Dalex intends to make profit from how the consumer feels, must relate to the consumer and think as the consumer, provide before they even think about it. So we found a way; we're selling money in different forms, in different ways*' (HM DG, 7 February, 2017).

In Databank Group and Latex Foam, Management buy-in, though commendable, is limited. In instances where the need arises to expand the scope of brand journalism practice, the CMO of Databank Group states:

> '*It would have to be done very cautiously. You have to always think about how it's perceived by the people whose money you're managing. So it's one of those things that you always have to deal with*' (CMO DG, 7 February, 2017).

The CMO concludes thusly:

> '*You have to also manage the perceptions around the things you do because if not then people might misinterpret it and it can go horribly wrong*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

As a result, the CMO suggests:

> '*It would have to be done in a way that doesn't make it look like it's a permanent thing but may be you link it to let's say you're doing an investment fair so it's tied into something that's still investment on a bigger plane*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

A similar sentiment on the implications of the absence of total Management buy-in is expressed by the PRO of Latex Foam.

> '*Management members, sometimes I can sit and appreciate where they are coming from. Rightfully so. They should be calling the shots most of the time, you know, sort of giving everybody else direction but you realise that in practice you have professionals, you have people with, I would say with specialised expertise who are masters in their fields and they have the best solutions to certain things when it comes to their field of experience. So managers try, some do try to open themselves up to new things and to new reasoning; but others are cagey as they can be. That's their only way of sort of wedging themselves. It comes with some insecurities as well you know because they don't want to give themselves off as oh, we didn't know this to be ignorant about anything basically. Then again leadership does not guarantee you know it all anyway*' (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

In dealing with Management resistance that may upend the practice, the PRO stated:

> '*So for that, purely by experience from where I sit that kind of situation has always been managed by personal skills. Personal relational skills. I don't think there's any written book that can really tackle it adequately. Personalities count a lot*' (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

These sentiments corroborate Bull's (2013) assertions that senior executive buy-in is a crucial requirement for brand journalism to succeed. Bull (2013), however, mentions that brand journalism must be accepted throughout the entire company, 'where individuals from other departments are expected to take on roles' such as engaging in social media or contributing to content creation. It does not seem like that has happened in the firms since in DG, brand journalism seems to sit with the only the marketing team; sits with PR in Latex Foam, and sits with senior executives in LF.

While creativity remains a key requirement of brand journalists as indicated by the CMO and PRO of Databank Group and Latex Foam respectively, it seems the need for a journalist versed in content creation is not felt or required. This perhaps, could be because the practice of brand journalism is not very extensive nor its nature fully known and appreciated. The absence of journalists in creating brand journalism in Ghana runs contrary to Holliman and Rowley (2014) who claim that practitioners understand the importance of journalists in creating compelling content but experience challenges in recruiting such.

Findings indicate brand journalism practice in Dalex Finance, though deliberate, does not seem to have any clear deliverables. To enhance its credibility within the firm, brand journalism practice must be apportioned clearly-defined deliverables. Furthermore, While Bull (2013) maintains that firms should employ journalists to plan, create, and disseminate brand journalism content, Cole and Greer (2012), Light (2014), and Houtari et al. (2015) suggest the entire process may be outsourced to third parties. While none of the firms studied employed journalists to helm the practice, thus running contrary to Bull's (2013) suggestions, Latex Foam was found to outsource its brand journalism practice. This corroborates Cole and Greer (2012), Light (2014) and Houtari et al.'s (2015) assertions that brand journalism practice can be outsourced to third parties.

Another finding is the criteria for getting invited to speak on earned media; actors must be considered social authorities by gatekeepers of media houses. Another intriguing find is Management involvement in brand journalism practice presents a number of implications for brand journalism.

1. ***Management involvement in brand journalism practice makes it easier and ethical***. Dalex Finance intends to expand its scope of brand journalism practice. When it does this, the practice and expansion is likely to be relatively easier as Management has accepted brand journalism as key to the firm's success. Furthermore, it is likely to be relatively easier and ethical as it is unlikely there will be conflicting interests or deceptive motives. To illustrate, the firm's Head of Marketing states the firm values engaging in discussions with their customers (actual and potential) about what the customers care about with care, passion, and honesty.
2. ***The absence of total Management support inhibits brand journalism practice.*** In firms where Management is either not sold on the concept of brand journalism, or requires more education before buying into it, the practice can be inhibited. This confirms Holliman and Rowley's (2014) assertions that a lack of understanding of brand journalism by Management can greatly inhibit its practice. To circumvent the effect, the CMO of Databank Group suggests brand journalism activities be linked with campaigns. This stance contradicts Holliman and Rowley (2014), who argue that for brand journalism to function effectively, it must be part of the

company culture, as practiced by Dalex Finance, and not campaign-led as the CMO of Databank Group suggests.

5.2.4 CONTENT

Content, key to brand journalism, has been discussed in literature as messages, generally consisting of words and or images, used to engage audiences, and from which audiences can draw meaning (Bull, 2013; Holliman and Rowley, 2014). As Swenson (2012) indicates, content can take the form of text and still images in magazines, as text on corporate blogs, and text and still images on social media sites (Bull, 2013), and as videos and podcasts (audio content) (Holliman and Rowley; 2014). Due to sub themes generated inductively from data, the dimension of content was analysed according to structure, source/elements driving content selection, type, and differentiation of message.

- **Structure**

Structure refers to the style of writing. In journalism, there are two major styles of content. These are the inverted pyramid style which approaches content creation by beginning with the climax (most important bit) of a story or event and ends with the least important bits. The climax is written in what is called a lead, which is crafted using Kipling's six little words, otherwise known as the 5Ws and H (Who, What, When, Where, Why and How) (Bull, 2013). This style of writing is considered formal, lending to its 'hard news' tag. Deuze (2008) argues hard news echo pre-existing social structures and create relationships that hold society together. The other is the feature/editorial style, otherwise known as soft news. This style deviates from the inverted pyramid style by treating a story from least important to important. It is considered informal as it takes time to craft a story, slowly building to a climax before winding down. Here, a writer has the time to infuse content with anecdotes and insights drawn from personal experience or those of others. It is also intended to appeal to audience's emotions (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsh, 2009). Structure was analysed by studying firms' brand journalism content, which comprised text and still images in newsletters, magazines, and Facebook pages; podcasts; and audiovisual content on their YouTube pages.

DATABANK GROUP

On audio content, DG's CMO had this to say.

> '*So every Friday, he's (the CEO) on there (radio), he's talking, he gives like a rundown on sports for the week, but at the end of each show then they switch to investments and he shares some investment tips and explains it so that helps us and it helps us to tap into a whole new audience that we haven't and on a level that they like because they love sports, they're coming to listen to sports and then they hear him*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

> '*At the beginning of the year we got that New Year message talking about the importance of investing, where the economy is headed, that kind of thing*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

DG's brand journalism content comprises text and still images in newsletters and audio. These fit in with what Swenson (2012) and Holliman and Rowley (2014) consider as formats of brand journalism content. The firm's CEO makes regular appearances on radio, where he shares thought leadership infused with anecdotes of personal experiences. In the process, the CEO accrues potential clients who may have been swayed by his comments. Furthermore, frequent name mentions and associations with the firm, by the host of the radio show, adds to the subtleties of brand journalism affords firms in creating and enhancing brand awareness for them. An analysis of the firm's newsletters indicated that they feature such brand journalism content as 'Top 5 Things Universities look out for in an Applicant'. It highlights each requirement and presents an exposition, before moving on to another requirement. The structure of the content of both audio and text does not follow the inverted pyramid structure common to hard news journalism story telling narratives, but rather leans towards features (textual-soft news) and editorials (radio and television versions of features).

LATEX FOAM

Content on Latex Foam's Facebook page was found to consist mainly of minimal/poignant/pithy text accompanying still images that appeal to audience's emotions. These fit in with Swenson (2012) and Holliman and Rowley's (2014) descriptions of what brand journalism content should be. Appealing to audience's emotions also indicates that the structure of brand journalism content leans towards features. Content is also indirectly related to the firm's core business, such as content on sleep or ergonomics. This corroborates features of brand journalism (see Chapter 4, section 4.6). Such content has been considered compelling by their customers.

> '*The information, the message they put out; it's like many people would like to [read] that message being put out or the brand journalism that they're doing. Like if you buy this or get this, this is how you sleep well. So I thought many people would be interested in that so let me also…*' (LFC3, 4 April, 2017).

> '*Them showing or putting out there in detail the proper way to sleep, obviously was one of the reasons why. So basically telling us that their mattresses (sic) and how they are supposed to sleep would help and not really bring that situation in terms of back pains and spinal and things like that*' (LFC4, 30 March, 2017).

DALEX FINANCE

Regarding the content, DF's Head of Marketing said:

> *'Our CEO goes on air and talks about anything, talks about budget deficit; talks about presidential staffing; talks about agriculture; talk (sic) about unemployment. When he talks about the economy or inflation, it doesn't just hit him, it applies to me, it applies to you, it applies to customers we have, it applies to customers we don't even have yet*' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

Of the Director of Operations, the Head of Marketing stated:

> *[The Director of Operations] is a panelist on TV3. There's this aspect on the news where they weigh in on certain aspects relating to the economy. He's called upon to be a panelist because he's an authority when it comes to those topics; when it comes to issues relating to the economy; when it comes to issues relating to governance…'* (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

Similar to DG's CEO, Dalex Finance's CEO and Director of Operations make regular appearances on radio and television. These formats corroborate what Bull (2013) and Holliman and Rowley (2014) assert may be the formats of content. An analysis of audiovisual content indicates the structure of content also favours the feature/editorial style as the actors constantly infuse experiences as private citizens and as key figureheads in their firms so audiences can relate to them.

- **Source/Elements Driving Content Selection**

Elements driving content selection have been described in literature as the factors necessitating the creation of brand journalism content (Bull, 2013; Holliman & Rowley, 2014). For instance, according to Bull (2013), planning content creation must entail critical looks at why the content is being created, among others.

On what necessitates brand journalism content creation, the CMO of Databank Group said:

> *'It's need driven. So the need is Ghanaians need to prepare better for retirement so what are all the different ways we need to, under different people we need to speak to in getting that done. Some things are directly for the individual, some things are for employers of individuals. And so we look at it in those ways'* (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

This is in line with Bull's (2013) assertions that firms look at why they need to create brand journalism content. For Databank Group, brand journalism content creation is to inform and educate the general public on the need to prepare for retirement or what students considering tertiary education should consider.

On what necessitates brand journalism content creation in Latex Foam, its PRO says:

> *'Again, the fact that we needed that emotional build up, that emotional attachment and the customer care experience bit of it also. And just a general caretaker stance that we feel; we feel a responsibility to be much more caring about our clients. These three things are driving our content'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

For Latex Foam, creating emotional attachments, generally taking care of their customers both pre-existing and potential, and ensuring great customer care experience is what they consider when creating content selection. This indicates that neither Latex Foam nor the other firms practice brand journalism in a vacuum. Furthermore, Latex Foam's focus on customer care highlights Bull's (2013) sentiments that customer service departments must be involved in brand journalism content creation.

On what necessitates the creation of brand journalism content in Dalex Finance, the Head of Marketing said:

'Our product will drive our content selection. What you saw in the videos was our products with a story woven around it. So our product, what we care about, the values, the other aspects relating to the product, i.e. the economy, investments, finance and other related fields come in' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

What necessitates brand journalism content creation amongst all three firms, in sum, looks to fulfilling the need of the customer (pre-existing and potential) be it what to do to prepare for retirement, the need to belong, or the need for affirmation respectively. This lends credence to Holliman and Rowley's (2014) assertions that content 'should be created along the needs of the customer or intended recipient'. However, it deviates from their assertion that the 'needs must be defined by research and testing'. It seemed rather, that firms defined those needs around their products and not necessarily whether their customers truly wanted to belong, receive affirmation, or be educated on planning for retirement.

- **Type of Marketing Communications messages**

A defining feature of marketing communications is the message/stimuli, which has been grouped into planned and unplanned, service, and product messages, and absence of communication (Grönroos, 2000a). Planned communication messages, Grönroos (2000a) argues, comprise content disseminated over tools the firm exerts control over. These include sales promotion, advertising, brochures. With unplanned marketing communications messages, content is implied, spontaneous and include content from various other news media and word-of-mouth. Product messages are those related to product design, pricing, usefulness; while service messages encompass those messages generated from customers' interactions with the service processes or amongst themselves based on the product (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.3).

Commenting on the type of message Databank Group's brand journalism content takes, its CMO said:

> *'Yes, it (type of message) is largely product based and planned. Everything is done deliberately*' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

The CMO's response also indicates type of brand journalism content is planned aside being product based. This corroborates Grönroos's (2000a) assertion that marketing communications messages may be product based and planned.

For the type of content/marketing communications messages Latex Foam's brand journalism content adopts, the PRO of Latex Foam said:

> *'It definitely is planned. So you have product information, industry information, you have complementary information to whatever product is on question at the time. So there's a pool of auxiliary info, literature to do with general sleep. So as we try to push the properties of a product to you, we're careful to marry this literature already available regarding the need it serves'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

Although the PRO did not say it, an analysis of Latex Foam's brand journalism content revealed messages are unplanned, in addition to planned and product based. This also corroborates and does not deviate from Grönroos's (2000a) assertion that marketing communications messages may be product based and planned, as well as unplanned.

On the type of marketing communications messages Dalex Finance adopts for its brand journalism content, the Head of Marketing says:

> '*It is mostly about the product and it is planned'* (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

This corroborates Grönroos's (2000a) assertion that marketing communications messages may be product based and planned.

- **Content Differentiation**

According to Bull (2013), content differentiation is when brand journalism content is altered to fit the communication platform carrying the content. This requires a thorough knowledge of the platform and deciding what to post on it. For instance, content for Facebook, which supports text, still images, and lengthy videos cannot be the same for content for Twitter which allows a maximum of 140 characters, memes and gifs and seconds-long videos. Analysis of data indicates that neither Latex Foam nor Dalex Finance differentiates its brand journalism content. This is because Latex Foam uses only Facebook, leaving little room for multiple platforms that could be analysed. Dalex Finance also uses only radio and television, both of which use a similar style when it comes to creating packages (radio and television programmes).

The PRO, LF said:

> *'The practice (brand journalism) I would say that we haven't even fully harnessed it', while the HM, DF, said 'I think I'm even new to the term brand journalism'. These transcripts may shed some light into just how superficially brand journalism is practiced, thus the lack of diversity in platforms'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

There was, however, some evidence from analysis of secondary data to suggest Databank Group tries to differentiate its content across its communication platforms. However, it is not very extensive and comes off as advertising as content is not altered but only lifted and pasted onto its Twitter page.

> *'I don't normally spend time to listen much just because it's Databank. It's basically because I know I have an alternative of getting the information I need. So even if I don't, I'll still get the information I need. There's a certain feeling that most of the things Databank will tell me, I know them already. [But if they used other media to tell me something I probably didn't know about], in that case they would have gotten me'* (DGC3, 24 March, 2017).

The transcript indicates how lack of content differentiation can affect audience reception to brand journalism content.

The actors, through radio and television appearances, are able to leverage the popularity of the third-party agents (media houses) into creating awareness for their brands. This confirms Holliman and Rowley's (2014) position that brand awareness is an objective of brand journalism. The actors' presence and constant reminder of their status while on air foments brand knowledge and ultimately salience within a relatively short span, which may have been challenging to achieve with traditional marketing communications. With regard to what drives content selection, the product and the messages that can be crafted around the product mostly form the elements driving content selection for Databank Group and Dalex Finance.

It could, therefore, be inferred that for investment firms, the product is what drives content selection as the case is different for Latex Foam. For Latex Foam, the primary element driving content selection is the wellbeing of their clients. To sum it up, however, it may be inferred that firms are guided by their values and the needs of customers when planning brand journalism content. This finding confirms Holliman and Rowley's (2014) assertions that brand journalism content focuses on the needs of the audience. Another finding was that practitioners try to understand their customers to inform the selection of content. This confirms Liebtag (2013) and Kilgour, Sasser, and Larke's (2015) assertions that it is crucial for brand journalism strategists to understand their audience when creating content to ascertain their preferences and needs.

Regarding the type of marketing communications message, it may be established that they are mostly planned and product based. Some of Latex Foam's brand journalism content are unplanned, as they were not the original creators of the message. These findings confirm Duncan and Moriarty (1997), Grönroos (2000a, b) and Fortini-Campbell's (2003) assertions that marketing communications messages may be crafted around a product and be planned and unplanned.

A key feature of brand journalism practice is differentiation of content across platforms. Findings indicate most firms practicing brand journalism in Ghana do not differentiate content. This may be attributed to the lack of in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and how it works, which has limited the realisation of its full potential. A lack of differentiation across communication platforms implies the same information, with perhaps minimal variations to the structure and not the content to suit the communication platform, is being disseminated. If it is the same content across all active channels of communication, people, especially clients, are unlikely to listen-they zone out (do not channel zap but do not accord it rapt attention either) because they know they can get the same information on another of the firm's communications platforms. This renders the practice redundant.

5.2.5 ETHICS

The issue of ethics is a tetchy subject in both journalism and marketing (Chapter 2, section 2.3.6). The issue is aggravated in brand journalism, which most opponents perceive violates ethical rules of traditional journalism (Bull, 2013). This notwithstanding, adhering to core journalism values of 'honesty, integrity, accountability and responsibility'; acknowledging 'facts that may compromise the integrity of a story or opinion'; 'minimizing potential harm to sources or subjects of stories'; and exposing 'truth as fully as possible' have been identified as some ethical guidelines brand journalism practitioners must adhere to (Bull, 2013). Aside these, Bull (2013) also asserts brand journalists must avoid such practices as astroturfing ('a form of advocacy in support of a corporate agenda, designed to give the appearance of a grassroots movement usually to negatively impact a competitor). Bull (2013) also asserts brand journalists must avoid sockpuppetry (a brand journalist who promotes a brand without revealing their connection to that brand) and sponsored conversations. Sponsored conversation occurs when brands 'shower bloggers with endorsement deals and other enticing offers to speak positively about the brand' (Bull, 2013).

On ethical brand journalism, the CMO, DG says:

> '*We have our corporate values that first kind of guides everything that databank does. And those values are leadership, excellence, integrity, humility. Beyond that, as an investment firm, there's certain things that you should do and should not do. Things like you should be transparent; you should not hide information or misrepresent information. The industry in Ghana still is very very opaque. So for me I'll say the editorial policy that guides is the international standards of how an investment firm should communicate. That is the guiding principles that we use here'* (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

Databank Group also has internal checks to ensure the veracity and credibility of brand journalism content.

'Some of the things we have to do like hard research, especially when quoting, for example, university fees. At times we may speak to the university professors. So we have in addition to doing external research we also have resource experts linked to each of our funds and a lot of them sit on our board of directors. So depending on what it actually is, then that will determine where we go to for ideas' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

Clearly, astroturfing, sockpuppetry, and sponsored conversations are not practices Databank Group is involved in. Furthermore, they uphold such ethical values as honesty and transparency, and expose the truth as fully as possible. These are in line with Bull's (2013) views on ethical journalism practice.

Regarding ethical brand journalism practice in Latex Foam, the PRO, says:

'*As a business, given the territory that we're in, we try to relate more to the culture of the community in which we operate. So what you consider as morally good; morally right, is what we also condone as morally ok. So in that case you don't necessarily find conflicts per se. we try to limit that to the barest minimum as much as possible. That notwithstanding, you don't want to be oblivious of best practices globally, anyway'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

The PRO's sentiments also echo views expressed by Bull (2013) regarding ethical brand journalism practice such as responsibility and accountability to the community in which the firm operates.

On ethical brand journalism practice at Dalex Finance, the firm's Head of Marketing says:

'I think the first will be not plagiarizing, so original content, not plagiarizing; even if we had to quote someone proper referencing is done. We tell the truth. And when opinions are expressed it is clearly stated that these are opinions that are expressed but even as much as we try to express our own opinion, these are opinions held by,

at least, ten million other Ghanaians. We subscribe to international best standards' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

Aside unacceptable practices which the firm does not condone, Dalex Finance also upholds truth among others in their brand journalism practice. This confirms Bull's (2013) assertions that ethical brand journalism content involves honesty and acknowledging facts that may compromise the integrity of content.

Findings indicate firms do not practice brand journalism in a vacuum. They are guided by either their own standards of morality, subscribe to international codes, or social expectations. This finding reflects Forsyth's (1980) relativism ideology in ethics, where journalists (in this case practitioners) may either choose to be guided by moral philosophies they have personally formed, which are anchored to situational contexts; or may decide to subscribe to universal moral absolutes regardless of context. With regard to idealism, findings indicate practitioners are highly idealistic and pursue desirable goals with a morally upright approach to brand journalism, instead of achieving desired goals by skewing brand journalism content.

When it comes to brand journalism practice in Ghana, it is early days yet. Because the firms do not practice it extensively, ethical conundrums have not presented themselves yet. The finding, therefore, disconfirms assertions that brand journalism is a landmine for ethical issues (Bull, 2013). However, there is no standardized ethical framework these firms subscribe to, further adding to the sense of incoherence. This confirms Lehto and Moisala's (2015) assertions that no ethical framework exists to guide brand journalism practice.

5.3 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF BRAND JOURNALISM

The key characteristics of brand journalism were analysed using Fill and Jamieson's (2006) 4Cs framework. The Framework 'shows the relative effectiveness' of five elements of the marketing communications mix; advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing, across the four characteristics of Communications, Credibility, Cost and Control.

5.3.1 COMMUNICATIONS

According to the Framework, Communication has a number of indicators. These are the ability to deliver a personal message; the ability to reach a large audience, and level of interaction the marketing communications elements allows between the brand and its consumers. The following responses where proffered regarding brand journalism's communications characteristic.

- **Ability to Deliver a Personal Message**

  'Social media offers intimacy and personalisation' (DGC1, 24 March, 2017).

  'With the touch of a button on your phone, you can tell them exactly what you, I mean the visuals are there. You can tell exactly what they're trying to show you. It's intimate. Like I said you can respond instantly. And then you know they can get feedback from you and what you think. It's like I'm actually directly communicating to them, so I can give feedback or I can like or I can comment or I can like or dislike. For radio, television, like I said earlier, you can hear it, you can see it, but you can't feel it and you cannot send instant feedback like you can do on Facebook' (LFC4, 30 March, 2017).

In the Framework, personal selling ranked high in delivering a personal message as a sales person directly delivers a personal message to a customer (pre-existing and potential), receives feedback and attempts to solve or answer queries in real time (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.1 and Chapter 3, section 3.1.3). Brand journalism, based on customer responses concerning feedback, intimacy, and personalisation; and secondary data analysis of how relatively quickly (answers to enquiries bore time stamps) inquirer's queries were answered seems to bear the communication characteristic of delivering personal messages.

- **Ability to Reach a Large Audience**

Advertising ranked very high on ability to reach a large audience in the 4Cs framework because it can reach a large audience. It is one of the reasons why it remains popular among businesses (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.1 and Chapter 3, section 3.1.1 for extensive discussions on advertising). Regarding this particular characteristic to brand journalism, respondents said the following.

> *'On TV, it looks like a much bigger platform where the masses are huge, you have a lot of people listening and watching'* (DGC1, 24 March, 2017).

> *'I felt like he was speaking to the whole country (via the television)'* (DFC2, 15 April, 2017).

Respondents' views indicate that brand journalism shares a similar characteristic with advertising in its ability to reach large audiences as well.

- **Level of Interaction**

In the 4Cs framework, advertising ranked low on level of interaction between firm and customer, while elements such as personal selling ranked high. Customers want to be recognised as individuals by the firms they associate with, instead of as faceless members of a generic demographic.

> '*Facebook has different emotions. You can express your emotions (interact with the content) by liking it, or disliking it, or by showing what it is and it's very convenient'*. (LFC4, 30 March, 2017).

> *I think that the TV would make much impact in terms of listening, watching body language, interview, the guests are there, then you have the journalist there, then the call ins (sic) will also come in…*' (DGC1, 24 March, 2017).

Respondents views corroborate Light's (2014) assertions that inclusive individualists (people who want to belong but feel a need to be independent simultaneously) feel they belong when they are able to interact with the content, or live vicariously through and form opinions by watching, listening to, or reading views of others interacting with content (Light, 2014).

The ability to deliver a personal message, and the ability to reach a large audience, seems dependent on the execution platform chosen to carry the message. While mass media does not have the ability to carry a personal message (Fill & Jamieson, 2006), new media such as those driven by the internet can deliver a personal message. This feature is characterised by instant feedback options, and the strategic use of images to convey and or elicit emotion. The level of interaction with brand journalism content, once again, seems dependent on the choice of communication platform. It must be noted, however, that new technology has enabled some degree of interaction with traditional mass media. For example, live streaming radio shows on platforms such as YouTube enables listeners to become viewers, and engage in conversations around the content in real time.

5.3.2 CREDIBILITY

Credibility of content refers to how believable content is (Fill & Jamieson, 2006). Of the marketing communications elements identified in the 4Cs framework (see Chapter 5, section 5.3), only public relations ranked high on credibility. This is attributed to audiences perceiving the third party (the media houses disseminating public relations content) as trustworthy and honest (Fill & Jamieson, 2006). Holliman and Rowley (2014) argue that brand journalism content must be useful, good, accurate, relevant, and important. They further argue that audiences consider a number of factors such as credibility of website (or radio/television station, newspaper, magazine etc.) when assessing quality/credibility of content. Other indicators comprise predictive relevance and veracity, authority or the reputation of the source or author being widely cited in assessing quality of content.

In assessing the characteristic of credibility of brand journalism content, customers' responses were analysed and sub themes inductively generated. Customers provided the following explanations to why they believed the brand journalism content they were exposed to.

- **Factuality of Content**

Factuality of content refers to how factual the claims made in the content are. A respondent believed:

> '*[Because] it's a fact. What they say is rational*' (LFC1, 22 March, 2017).

This transcript confirms Holliman and Rowley's (2014) assertions that accuracy of information contributes to quality content.

- **Aesthetic Appeal of Content**

  '*They had striking pics to [back] up the story. The visual aspect helps'* (LFC5, 4 April, 2017)

- **Unlikelihood of Self-sabotage/ Perceived Reputation of the Brand**

  '*I believe also that they wouldn't publish unverified information'* (LFC4, 30 March, 2017).

  '*Because it comes from Latex Foam. You know Latex Foam. You assume that Latex Foam wouldn't put a wrong message there'* (LFC2, 23 March, 2017).

  '*He has a reputation too at stake; he has a face and then he has an organisation to protect'* (DGC2, 15 April, 2017)

These transcripts corroborate Holliman and Rowley's (2014) assertions that authority or the reputation of the source or the author being cited is a factor audiences consider when assessing the credibility of content.

- **Personal Belief in Research**

  '*They've done some researches that many of the masses don't know. And I trust research'* (LFC2, 23 March, 2017).

This customer was pursuing a bachelor's degree at a university. His emphasis on and belief in research, specifically availability of information on the authors credited as the source of the unplanned brand journalism content, informed his comment. It may, therefore, be inferred that highly educated persons appreciate brand journalism content, especially when sources are credited and they (customers) can follow up.

- **Absence of Contentious Comments**

  'Probably, other people have crosschecked to make sure other people who have seen it have certified it so…' (LFC2, 23 March, 2017).

  '*Nobody was bashing them on the page so I believed the message to be sincere'* (LFC5, April 4, 2017).

Contentious comments refers to comments from other consumers of brand journalism content who may have either posted scathing comments regarding their dislike of the content online, or refuted the veracity of brand journalism content, especially after following up on cited sources on unplanned content. It so happened that some consumers are swayed by the presence of such comments. However, absence of such comments enforced their belief in the credibility of brand journalism content.

- **Perceived Competency based on prior Experience**

  'I believe because of past experiences. I believe it because they act on what they say. Because they give me a reason to believe' (DGC1, 24 March, 2017).

In contributing to discussions on air, the CEOs draw from personal experiences and give examples of what goes on in their firms. Clients who experience this are able to confirm/verify thus accord believability to comments.

  '*I saw them as wise investors who are just not wasting money; they know how to manage the funds. And that's why I believed him'*. (DGC3, 24 March, 2017).

This customer, to set the context, narrated that DG has few branches. However, the firm had partnerships with banks with numerous branches, so its clients seeking to make deposits would not be inconvenienced by its lack of branches. To this customer, this made smart business sense as DG could save money it would have used to set up and ran a branch and redirect it into investing it for their clients. Therefore, when DG's CEO, in contributing to discussions, mentions how efficient the firm is, the customer believes because she can attest to it.

- **Perceived Competency of the CEO**

  '*He seemed to understand the issues he was speaking to*' (DFC3, 24 March, 2017).

  '*I thought he was knowledgeable on the issues he spoke to, and that made me think the company has the necessary qualification to offer the services they do'* (DFC1, 24 March, 2017).

  '*We all believe simply because we know what is happening in the country, and therefore, he comes out with a tangible solution to it so as a matter of fact, you'll believe it because the thing is happening now'* (DFC2, 15 April, 2017).

These responses corroborate Holliman and Rowley's (2014) assertions that authority or the reputation of the source or author being cited is a key factor audiences consider when assessing the credibility of content.

Findings indicate brand journalism is highly credible. However, what is deemed credible is highly subjective. Factuality of content; Aesthetic appeal of the content; the perception that the brand will not self-sabotage, and the perceived reputation of the brand; personal belief in research, perceived competency based on prior experience, and the perceived competency of the CEO (or actor) were identified as factors that determine brand journalism content credibility. These add to Holliman and Rowley's (2014) contributions to literature that audiences consider credibility of site, predictive relevance and veracity, authority or the reputation of the source or author being cited when assessing the quality/credibility of content marketing content.

According to Fill and Jamieson (2006), the only marketing communications element that is highly credible is public relations, which derives its credibility from the perceived unbias of third parties (news media) which audiences perceive as endorsing offerings or events. This study's findings indicate customers perceive brand journalism as credible. This confirms Bull (2013), Light (2014) and Wilcox's (2015) assertions which speak to brand journalism's credibility. Another finding, however, indicates third party credibility does not count very much as a factor influencing the credibility of brand journalism.

5.3.3 COST

Costs refer to the financial resources a firm dispenses to disseminate a message (Fill & Jamieson, 2006). According to the 4Cs framework, indicators of the Cost characteristic are absolute costs, cost incurred per contact, wastage (failure of the message to reach or impact intended recipient), and size of investment. Advertising ranks high in all indicators except cost per contact, meaning it costs a lot more to advertise, probability of advertising messages to go to waste is high, and the overall size of investing in advertising is high as well. However, cost incurred per contact is low since say, a 60-second ad can reach millions of people (Logan, 2013). The following transcripts illustrate views regarding the characteristic of Cost in brand journalism.

> '*Without money it makes it difficult to execute on a number of things especially your bigger ticket items like your radio and newspaper and those things. That is*

my single biggest challenge with getting things done, I would say' (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

'*Basically, it'll be resource. These things (brand journalism messages) need huge budgetary allocations to get them running'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

Respondents were unable to divulge costs relating to cost per contact, wastage, and size of investment as brand journalism practice is not extensive and lacks depth. And while exact figures of brand journalism's absolute costs were not quoted either, transcripts as presented above indicate that financing brand journalism is expensive. This confirms Bull's (2013) assertions that brand journalism is an expensive practice to maintain. It also corroborates Holliman and Rowley's (2014) findings that lack of budget resources are inhibitors to the success of brand journalism. It may also be noted that resource, or its lack thereof, does not only affect the extent to which a firm can practice brand journalism in all its forms, but it also affects the consistency of brand journalism messages as indicated by the following transcript.

'*It will be consistent as long as we maintain resources to that end. So the day that you see that we're off, it means resources have been withdrawn for that particular purpose. And that's (resources) the only thing that's going to keep it running'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

It is intriguing to note that Dalex Finance does not mention resource as a challenge, however. This is because the firm relies on appearances on earned media.

'[The CEO and Director of Operations] are invited by media houses as panelists/social commentators' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

This method implies there is no cost incurred. A customer makes a supporting statement thusly:

> '*But when they're called upon to explain certain things, and then they have the chance to explain it more, it becomes an add-on or an addition to their company. In that case they don't pay'* (DGC4, 26 March, 2017).

However, there is the possibility of the Dalex Finance's actors over-exerting themselves as, on average, the firm's actors grant an average of 16 interviews a week. While the Head of Marketing admits over-exertion is a possibility, it is a risk the firm is willing to take in the interim, while they expand their brand journalism practice and the actors involved. The following transcript illustrates this finding.

> '*It's more an asset than a liability. So no matter how he (the CEO) spreads himself thin, just think about it; what do we stand to gain, what do we stand to lose? If what we stand to gain is more than what we stand to lose, it's a win for us'* (HM DF, 7 March, 2017).

Resource to support brand journalism is noted as a challenge and an impediment to its practice.

The findings indicate brand journalism is generally a cost-intensive practice to maintain and confirm Holliman and Rowley's (2014) assertions that cost inhibits the success of brand journalism practice. For this reason, Bull (2013) and Light 2014) maintain it may only be practiced by large-scale firms, which, according to Kayanula and Quartey (2000) and Edminston (2007), tend to possess the financial wherewithal to pursue innovative strategies as brand journalism. To balance out the cost and reduce the risk of over-exerting actors, firms, even those seemingly with the financial wherewithal, may want to explore shared and owned media in addition to paid and earned media.

5.3.4 CONTROL

Control, according to Fill and Jamieson (2006) is the extent to which a firm has control over a message in the crafting, dissemination, and reception stages. The firm must be able to control how 'the intended message is transmitted and received' by the intended audience. Comprehension of the message is critical at this stage and is likely to be interrupted by communication noise which can occur at any stage of the communication process. In the 4Cs framework, indicators of Control are ability to target particular audiences; and Management's ability to adjust the deployment of the tool (communications element) as circumstances change. Sales promotion and direct marketing are the only two of the traditional communications elements that rank high on both indicators. The following transcripts explore the Control characteristic when it comes to brand journalism.

- **Ability to Target Particular Audiences**

On the Ability to target particular audiences, the CMO of DG said:

> '*Everyone above 18 largely. We have different products for the different groups; different services. But everybody is our client and everybody is a potential client because everybody needs to invest towards their future. We just tailor our message differently to the different groups'* (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

According to the CMO, the firm's target groups include students, pensioners, the companies that employ Databank Group to manage their pension funds and the general public whom they expect to invest towards their future. To acquire clients, the firm assumes their audience is unaware of the importance of investments. So, instead of going for the jugular and bombarding them with messages with incessant selling pitches, it combines free education (a function of journalism) through investment seminars featuring eminent personalities, with marketing communications elements such as sales promotions aimed at their target audiences. The entire process echoes Bull's (2013) assertions that brand journalism combines journalism elements and marketing communications to create compelling content devoid of or with subtle selling pitches to inform and educate audiences.

Commenting on the characteristic of Control, the **PRO, LF,** said:

> '*Everyone. So babies/children, youth, middle class upper class and then you have extravagant, luxurious'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

> '*That's (Facebook) where you'll find most of the youth. But then again, like I said, once it's engaged that much to accord it to trendy status, then you can be sure of all kinds of groups in there as well'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

The firm's use of Facebook, which is considered *trendy*, offers the appropriate platform to reach out to its varied customers. However, brand journalism content infused with elements to ensure credibility of content (see Chapter 5, section 5.3.2) is what helps to acquire and retain customers which to them, refers to the general public.

> '*Our average investment product is about 4000 Ghana cedis, which automatically pushes our clientele range to high net worth clients. So for that the channel of communication wouldn't be on Twitter, it wouldn't be on Instagram, it would barely be found on Facebook. These people what do they watch? They watch news, they watch BBC, at best they watch some TV3 news, probably GTV. So, there are certain channels we'd use in reaching out to them. So we'd go with news, we'd go with Citi Business News, we'd go with Star FM, like most of the big news-centred stations. If you have that much money you should be thinking about how to preserve*

it, how to keep it; so you're constantly on the lookout for news relating to things which will affect your money' (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

Unlike Databank Group and Latex Foam whose target audience skew towards the general public, Dalex Finance are more particular about whom they target, who mostly comprise of the public earning a certain amount in income. These are then specifically targeted with brand journalism content.

Findings indicate brand journalism has a number of characteristics that can be grouped under 4 main categories; Communication, Credibility, Cost, and Control. Under Communication is the ability to deliver a personal message, the ability to reach a large audience, and the level of interaction; and under Control is the ability to target particular audiences.

The ability to deliver a personal message, and the ability to reach a large audience, seems dependent on the execution platform chosen to carry the message. While mass media does not have the ability to carry a personal message (Fill & Jamieson, 2006), new media such as those driven by the internet can deliver a personal message. This feature is characterised by instant feedback options, and the strategic use of images to convey and or elicit emotion. The level of interaction with brand journalism content, once again, seems dependent on the choice of communication platform. It must be noted, however, that new technology has enabled some degree of interaction with traditional mass media. For example, live streaming radio shows on platforms such as YouTube enables listeners to become viewers, and engage in conversations around the content in real time.

Findings indicate brand journalism is highly credible. However, what is deemed credible is highly subjective. Factuality of content; Aesthetic appeal of the content; the perception that the brand will not self-sabotage, and the perceived reputation of the brand; personal belief in research, perceived competency based on prior experience, and the perceived competency of the CEO (or actor) were identified as factors that determine brand journalism content credibility. According to Fill and Jamieson (2006), the only marketing communications element that is highly credible is public relations, which derives its credibility from the perceived unbiasness of third parties (news media) which audiences perceive as endorsing offerings or events. The findings of this study indicate customers perceive brand journalism as credible. This confirms Bull (2013), Light (2014) and Wilcox's (2015) assertions which speak to brand journalism's credibility. The elements ensuring credibility of brand journalism content also confirms Holliman and Rowley's (2014) assertions that credibility of content is predicated on elements such as trustworthiness of communications channel, predictive relevance and veracity, authority or the reputation of the source or author being cited. Another finding, however, indicates third party credibility does not count very much as a factor influencing the credibility of brand journalism.

Resource to support brand journalism is noted as a challenge and an impediment to its practice.

The findings indicate brand journalism is generally a cost-intensive practice to maintain. For this reason, Bull (2013) and Light (2014) maintain it may only be practiced by large-scale firms, which, according to Kayanula and Quartey (2000) and Edminston (2007), tend to possess the financial wherewithal to pursue innovative strategies as brand journalism.

To balance out the cost and reduce the risk of over-exerting actors, firms may want to explore shared and owned media in addition to paid and earned media.

Databank Group and Dalex Finance both identify their audiences based on their products. For instance, Dalex Finance's business loans target people within a high-income bracket. The firm's Head of Marketing reasons these people are more likely to tune in to radio and television to glean information on what can affect their investments, than to Twitter. While this explains the company's use of radio and television as the platform for their brand journalism messages, findings do indicate brand journalism possesses the ability to target particular audiences. However, due to the limited and superficial practice of journalism, it remains to be confirmed if brand journalism can indeed target that niche audience Light (2014) terms 'inclusive individualists'. This, therefore, neither confirms not disconfirms Light's (2014) assertions that brand journalism is capable of targeting inclusive individualists.

5.4 THE ROLE OF BRAND JOURNALISM IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Marketing communications perform roles Fill (1995) describes as D. R. I. P – Differentiate, Remind, Inform, Persuade. Each of the elements of the marketing communications mix perform roles that reflect these overarching roles such as advertising's roles of differentiating brands and reminding. Roles of brand journalism have been discussed in literature as the functions brand journalism performs in firms (Bull, 2013; Light, 2014). These include driving sales and lead generation (see Chapter 2, section 2.5). A review of literature reveals the roles of journalism provided lacks distinction regarding the exact functions it performs in firms and for customers, and even in Business to Business contexts. This study aimed to make these roles more distinctive by delineating functions inductively generated into roles with regard to firms and roles with regard to customers.

5.4.1 ROLE TO FIRMS

Regarding the role of brand journalism to the firm under the banner of marketing communications, key practitioners had the following to say.

- **It Contributes to Building Brand Equity**

Brand journalism contributes to building brand equity as indicated by an inductive analysis of data. The transcripts below illustrate the function. The PRO, LF, said:

> *'To have retention for your brand so that at any point in time, those in that bracket, when they arrive to now be able to make decisions for themselves and can actually back it by what's in their pockets, they can choose us. So we're looking at brand recall; it also creates not only awareness, that emotional attachment; that trust; the fact that they feel 'oh, that is a go-to brand' in terms of this need or that need'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

> '*Growing data bank's brand equity [...] [It has been] going very well, actually; definitely people have heard and seen databank in ways they haven't previously'* (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

> '*It helps create brand awareness'* (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

Brand equity has been discussed in literature as 'the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand' (Keller, 2013). It 'occurs when a customer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds some strong, favourable, and unique brand associations' (Keller, 2013). Within this context, brand journalism has been able to build brand equity by creating retention of brand knowledge, awareness and familiarization among customers for the various firms/brands.

- **It serves as a Reminder of the Brand's Promise to Consumers**

  '*It's just like a reminder; we're still here. We aren't going anywhere, we're with you [...] Keep faith with us'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

This role is not generic to all firms as say, building equity. According to the PRO, brand journalism, through Facebook, was a way the firm could be closer to their customers in the hinterlands. Thus, it is peculiar only to those firms who have made it a vow to be to their customers, the closest thing a firm could be to something akin to a relative or a partner or friend that is full of life and cares and loves.

- **It Humanizes the Brand**

Brand journalism was found to humanize the brand after data was inductively analysed. The PRO, LF said:

> '*We try to give them some content which is even away from what our core business is because we need to show them that we still care, we're human enough; the brand is not just inorganic so to speak; the brand is alive, the brand produces, the brand breathes, it has life. So what do you expect from a partner, a friend, full of life? Really, it's care, love, effort, you know, all of that so we try to personalise as much as possible. Giving a human face to the brand is very very important cos you don't want your consumers feeling you're only in for the money'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

The closest brands may get to being considered as human so consumers can relate to them is by creating brand personalities (Aaker, 1997). Brand journalism, by humanizing the brand, proves to be a method by which brands can close bridges and build lasting relationships with consumers.

- **It Enhances a Brand's Competitive Advantage**

Inductive analysis of data indicates brand journalism enhances a brand's competitive advantage. The transcripts below present an illustration to support this finding.

> *'Supremacy. Supremacy in terms of competition. Supremacy by way of driving our quality'* (PRO LF, 10 February, 2017).

The CMO, DG also said:

> '*It helps us to tap into a whole new audience that we haven't and on a level that they like because they love sports, they're coming to listen to sports and then they hear him'* (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

Competitive advantage involves constantly starting new strategic initiatives, building and exploiting new opportunities at once (McGrath, 2013). The transcript indicates brand journalism is considered a tool that can be exploited for and sustain competitive advantage. However, sustainable competitive advantage has become impossible to achieve due to businesses falling prey to certain pitfalls such as the sporadic-innovation trap (McGrath, 2013). The sporadic-innovation trap describes the situation where firms are unable to keep up a constant stream of innovative strategies. Practicing brand journalism extensively and in-depth may prevent firms from falling to prey to the sporadic-innovation trap.

- **It Drives Profitability**

Inductive analysis of data indicates brand journalism drives profitability as reflected in the transcripts below. The CMO, DG stated that:

> *'[It has helped in] growing our assets under management. We have been able to extend our branch network from four. So when I came in Databank was twenty four years and we had four branches. Now we're thirteen. We'll add two more this year. So in two and a half years we've managed to expand it by nine, at the end of the year making it 11 that we've added. Assets under management, in 2014, under the mutual funds we have more than doubled our assets in the last two and a half years. So what took again, 24 years to get to, we've doubled it in two and half years'* (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

The HM of DF stated:

> *'So Dalex intends to make profit from how the consumer feels, must relate to the consumer and think as the consumer, provide before they even think about it. So we found a way; we're selling money in different forms, in different ways'* (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

The HM of DF again said:

> *'[We] leverage brand awareness (created by brand journalism) to bring in more activations, increase our client base, and maximise our profits'* (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

Brand journalism's function as driving profitability is a direct result of lead conversion and nurturing, customer conversion, and customer upsell, according to Holliman and Rowley's (2014). Even though it drives profitability, this function is considered a secondary goal of brand journalism. Its primary aim is to entertain, educate, and inform.

- **Enhances the Public Relations Function**

Inductive analysis of data revealed that brand journalism enhances the public relations function. To illustrate, a customer said:

> *'So it's been a big task as well to get people's minds turned to the fact that there's a new CEO and Databank is no longer being run by [its founders]. I mean they're the founders but it's under new management'* (CMO DG, 23 February, 2017).

Public relations is a crisis management tool and mostly reactionary (see Chapter 2, section 2.5.7). And while it works at improving a firm's image through two-way communications, it is still flawed. Where its functionality seems inadequate, brand journalism seems to pick up the slack.

- **Facilitates Positive Word-of- Mouth**

Inductive analysis of data indicates brand journalism facilitates positive word-of-mouth as indicated by the transcripts below. A customer said:

> '*Oh I tell people. I do tell people that if you want to make investments, you can go to Databank*' (DGC1, 24 March, 2017).

Another customer reported:

> *'[I told] one of my friends to actually go and purchase those for his guest house'* (LFC4, 30 March, 2017).

Another, yet still, said:

> '*Oh well, if somebody wants to invest, and then the person asks which kind of investment do I need, I say I invest with Databank so you could choose it*' (DGC2, 24 March, 2017).

According to Maisam and Mahsa (2016), word-of-mouth marketing occurs when consumers engage in conversations about a company's products or services that was not precipitated by that company's adverts on its products or services. Most companies often pay for positive word-of-mouth (Bull, 2013 [see Chapter 5, section 5.2.5]; Maisam & Mahsa, 2016). However, the transcripts as presented above indicate brand journalism generates positive word-of-mouth for companies at no cost compared to the other elements of marketing communications.

5.4.2 ROLE TO CUSTOMERS

- **Stimulates Search**

Inductive analysis drawn from the data indicates brand journalism can stimulate search as indicated in the quote below.

> '*Upon hearing about the CEO on air, it made me to become more interested. So this time around I may desire to even repeat research, as in now I may even want to do more and more. It made me go and search more'* (DGC4, 26 March, 2017).

According to Wijaya (2012), Search is something today's sceptical consumer does to make informed decisions and to compare similar messages from competing brands before making purchase decisions (see Chapter 2, section 2.7.1). In this customer's case as indicated in the above transcript, consuming or exposure to brand journalism content stimulates customers to Search. This enforces this study's argument that brand journalism is a marketing communications element, with its messages possessing the ability to stimulate Search.

- **Stimulates Purchase**

Inductive analysis of data indicates brand journalism can stimulate purchase as indicated in the quote below.

> '*I threw away my old mattress which I bought some time ago and bought a new one'* (LFC1, 22 March, 2017).

According to literature (Ranjbarian et. al., 2011; Wijaya, 2012; Herman & Mkwizu, 2016), marketing communications messages must be able to influence the customer to take Action, specifically a purchase action. The transcript above enforces this study's argument that brand journalism is a marketing communications element, with its messages possessing the ability to stimulate purchase.

- **Affirms Brand Choice**

Inductive analysis of data indicates brand journalism affirms brand choice as reflected in the transcripts below. A customer said:

> '*Yeah, it gives me so much confidence that and I feel proud of it. That one, it's a fact. Because it gives me the trust and confidence in products that I have because you have the CEO who's defending his brand, and if the CEO is defending his brand it gives you that pride that you're doing the right thing because it's not just anybody who's communicating, it's the CEO himself and obviously he has his credibility at stake and he'll not just come to say anything for saying sake'* (DGCI, 24 March, 2017).

Another customer opined:

> '*Let me say in Ghana here, a lot of CEOs don't do that (appearing as panelists on mass media). So when he sacrifices the time to come on TV like this, as I was saying he do explain a lot of things […] What he was saying, like he's talking about the whole country and therefore, someone like this leading this lane, that company, someone who thinks about a whole country and the same time leading a certain institution, you think that the company is a better company to be precise'* (DFC2, 15 April, 2017).

The transcripts presented above indicate the marketer's job is not over after acquiring a customer. They must constantly work to ensure any doubt the customer might have about switching loyalties is dispelled. To DGC1 and DFC2, it is important to them that key executives be the ones to dispel those doubts. When key executives lead the charge and perform admirably, consumers not only feel needed but their act allays any doubt customers may have had about whether they made the right choice with their brand.

- **Enhances Brand Awareness for Pre-existing Customers**

Inductive analysis of data indicates brand journalism enhances brand awareness for pre-existing customers.

> *'For me I would say I am already aware of their things. So it gave me more information. It enhanced my awareness of the brand. It enhanced my interests. Where enhance is renew or freshness. It enhanced my interest in their products'* (DGC1, 24 March, 2017).

Brand awareness, a component of brand knowledge, is measured by how much consumers are able to remember about brands presented under different conditions. While brand journalism may create brand awareness for new customers, for pre-existing customers, it enhances brand awareness as indicated by the transcript presented above.

- **Creates Desire to Purchase**

Inductive analysis of data further indicates brand journalism can create the desire to purchase. According to a customer:

> '*It made me want to purchase the products'* (LFC1, 22 March, 2017).

Another said:

> '*Yes. It made me desirous to purchase some of the brands products. Yeah. Like some of their orthopedic mattress and all that'* (LFC3, 4 April, 2017).

Desire, a key component of the AIDA theory, is 'the feeling that follows an inclination for wanting certain things' (Irina, 2013). It can be created through careful design of the message, and by ensuring expectations crafted about a product/service are realistic enough to create an intention to purchase (Mehling, 2007). The transcripts as presented above indicates brand journalism has the ability to create a desire for want. However, it must be noted that desire does not always end in a purchase action as certain factors as lack of financial means can obstruct purchase.

- **Nurtures Customers for Later Action**

Brand journalism was also found to nurture customers for later action. To illustrate, a respondent said:

> '*Yes, it does. When I do have the financial wherewithal to purchase a foam product it will be latex foam'* (LFC3, 4 April, 2017).

Another opined:

> *'[It has nurtured me by about] 50%. At least it's better than those people whose content I haven't seen. 50% because though you didn't only want to consider that, naturally deciding to buy or purchase without other factors. Developing a personal touch with potential customers would make it 100%'* (LFC2, 23 March, 2017).

Brand journalism's ability to nurture customers confirms Holliman and Rowley's (2014) assertions that brand journalism nurtures customers and maintains a pool of passionate subscribers. However, LFC2's comments indicate practitioners may want to consider supporting their brand journalism with other marketing communications elements to guarantee nurtured customers.

- **Creates Brand Awareness for New Customers**

Brand journalism was also found to function as facilitating the creation of brand awareness for new customers. To illustrate, a customer notes:

> '*I learnt more about the brand; they have a variety of products, not just mattresses. Not everybody knows. And then they make the brand appeal to you more. Like you're able to associate with the brand. Like when you're looking at the pictures, you be like 'wow, it's much more; you associate with it better than when you hear their advert somewhere like, oh Latex Foam partner for life but then when you see it, it becomes like wow I wish I was the one on the bed, the pillow'* (LFC2, 23 March, 2017).

Another respondent stated:

> '*...As in I get to know about their products and what they do and those kind of things'* (LFC3, 4 April, 2017).

According to Keller (2013), brand awareness is a component of brand knowledge directly related to the strength of the brand in the memories of customers, and measured 'by the consumer's ability to identify the brand under different conditions'. The transcripts indicate brand journalism functions as a facilitator of brand awareness, confirming Holliman and Rowley's (2014) assertions that brand journalism enhances brand awareness or reinforces it.

The equity building function of brand journalism confirms Keller's (2009) assertions that marketing communications can create equity for firms. Furthermore, brand journalism's profitability driving function confirms Light (2014) and Wilcox's (2015) assertions that brand journalism generates revenue for brands. However, findings indicate brand journalism performs other functions not identified in literature. This includes humanizing the brand, and facilitating positive word-of-mouth. Other functions discovered include enhancing brand awareness for pre-existing customers. Findings also indicate that in enhancing the public relations function, brand journalism helps alleviate change anxiety, and demonstrates that a new Management is just as capable or better than a previous management. The implications of brand journalism's roles to both customers and firms also disconfirm the debate that brand journalism is more journalism than marketing (Petulla, 2014).

5.5 OTHER NOTABLE FINDINGS

5.5.1 FACTORS AFFECTING BRAND JOURNALISM EFFECTIVESS

Holliman and Rowley (2014) generated a number of inhibitors that impede the success of brand journalism. These are the cultural shift from emphasis on selling pitches to educating, informing and entertaining; lack of senior Management buy-in; time lag to delivery of measurable results; time and budget resources; content clutter in media space owing to low entry barriers for content creation; unwillingness to engage in proper planning process; and high-quality content perceived as giving away thought leadership. This study confirms lack of senior Management buy-in, and budget resources as impediments to brand journalism practice. Unintentionally, however, this study uncovered other findings likely to affect brand journalism's effectiveness leading to wastage.

- **Lack of Content Differentiation**

Although of all customers interviewed, DGC3 represented the only instance of wastage of brand journalism messages. It indicates a lack of differentiation of content can adversely influence the effectiveness of brand journalism content (see Chapter 5, section 5.2.4).

- **A Dissatisfied Customer**

Factors causing customer dissatisfaction can stem from any number of issues. This study's findings indicate inconsistent updates about investment portfolios can cause customer dissatisfaction, which in turn affects how receptive they are to brand journalism content on broadcast media.

5.5.2 LINKING STUDY TO THEORY

The study was anchored in the AIDA Theory of marketing communications (see Chapter 2, section 2.7). Findings indicate dimensions of the AIDA Theory of marketing communications, with its variant AISDLSLove, take on certain implications with regard to brand journalism.

- **Attention**

Although all customers interviewed indicated they chanced upon brand journalism messages, the topic under discussion was compelling enough to sustain customer interest. What customers consider compelling, however, differed, ranging from anticipation of new helpful information to aesthetics/emotional pull.

- **Anticipation of New Helpful Information**

Inductive analysis of data indicates audiences pay attention to brand journalism content because they expect to receive some new information that might prove helpful to them. The transcripts below illustrate.

> *'[My attention was] sustained on the fact that there might be new things that they might come up with. And once I'm a customer, the sustainance (sic) is based on the fact that there might be new products or services that they might introduce that might help in my investments'* (DGC1, 24 March, 2017).

Another presents a similar point of view.

> '*Those informations (sic) give me knowledge and insight too'* (LFC1, 22 March, 2017).

Another maintains:

> *'It's like many people would like to listen to that message being put out'* (LFC3, 4 April, 2017).

Holliman and Rowley (2014) assert brand journalism content must be crafted based on the needs of customers. The transcripts indicate that approach is best as customers are less likely to zap channels if the content is about them, genuinely for them and of them (customer-generated content).

- **Affirmation of Brand Competency**

Inductive analysis of the data indicates audiences pay attention to brand journalism content because they want to gauge just how competent their brand is based on how others perceive it. A customer stated:

> *'...And also, sometimes too I want to find out whether their credibility is dropping or their credibility is going up. I get to know that from the interactions with the journalist or phone calls, phone-ins and all that to find out whether I still have to do business with them because my money is there or I have to withdraw my money from them'* (DGC1, 24 March, 2017).

- **Customers Consider Themselves Directly Affected by the Content**

Inductive analysis of data indicates customers pay attention to content when they believe they may be directly affected by the content. A respondent stated:

> *'I listened to it because I felt these issues he was discussing would not only impact me as a citizen but also on my investments in the long run'* (DGC2, 24 March, 2017).

Another respondent stated:

> **LFC4:** '*In the past I've had a relative who's had spinal problems and back aches and things like that and the back aches was also kind of related to the way they slept. So them showing or putting out there in detail the proper way to sleep and how they are supposed to sleep would help and not really bring that situation in terms of back pains and spinal and things like that'*.

This reflects the views of Dalex Finance's Head of Marketing on why they practice brand journalism.

> '*What Dalex seeks to do is we talk about the things people care about'* (HM DF, 7 February, 2017).

These transcripts as presented above hone in on and reinforce sholars' (Bull, 2013; Holliman & Rowley, 2014) views of the importance of crafting messages around the customer. Audiences are able to relate more and deeply to messages if they consider themselves to be or have been directly affected by the message.

- **Novelty/Newness of Information**

Inductive analysis of data further indicates audiences pay attention to brand journalism content for new information as illustrated by the transcript below.

> '*Knowledge was fresh'* (LFC5, 4 April, 2017).

It may also be noted that the pursuit of knowledge for the joy of it may not be a past time most people endulge in. In this regard, Bull (2013) maintains that brand journalists must know their audiences so they can design content audiences can connect with with minimal wastage.

- **Aesthetics and Emotional Pull**

Inductive analysis of data indicates audiences pay attention to brand journalism content because they are drawn to the emotional elements and aesthetics appeal of still images. A customer illustrates:

> '*The people. The people in the content. The people in the picture. There's one like that; like heaven, mother, child-those sensitive ones essentially bring out emotions so…'* (LFC2, 23 March, 2017)

The emotional pull are as a direct result of the feature approach to journalistic writing styles, which is intended to tug on emotions. The aesthetic appeal is as a result of the work of graphic artists, whom Bull (2013) identify as brand journalists.

- **Interest**

Where brand journalism content was interspersed with traditional advertising content, Search, which was external, occurred simultaneously with sustained interest. This is convenience that a platform powered by the internet offers. It also confirms assertions by some scholars such as Barry and Howard (1990) that consumers do not act on messages in a linear manner. Furthermore, while brand journalism messages created an interest in a brand and its products to new customers, they enhanced brand interest and awareness for pre-existing customers, where enhanced interest refers to *renewal* or *freshness.*

- **Search**

For non-internet driven platforms where customers are unable to search while simultaneously exposed to content, customers engaged in manual search. It must be noted that for certain customers such as DGC4, brand awareness had already been created through an encounter with personal sellers. In this case, therefore, brand journalism functioned as a stimulant that prompted search.

- **Like/Dislike**

Wijaya (2012) argues *like* is an indicator of positive after-purchase experience. This is directly linked to *sharing* experiences on social media. The findings of this study do not entirely confirm or disconfirm this assertion. Those who purchased products came back later to endorse content through likes. However, for other visitors to Latex Foam's Facebook page, liking content was not in confirmation of positive after- purchase. Some liked because they intuitively approved of the content. Furthermore, none, including those who had purchased the product after exposure to brand journalism content, shared the content. Further probing indicated they either required the content to show exceptional information before they would be prompted to share, or that they just were not the sharing type.

- **Desire and Action**

For new customers, brand journalism content created a desire for the product. It did not create a desire to purchase for pre-existing customers, however, as they had already made purchases, and thus found no need. New customers who had a need to fill, and had the purchasing power, acted on their desire for the brand's products. Action, however, was disrupted by such factors as no immediate need for the product, lack of purchasing power, and high-risk products. This finding confirms Karlsson (2007) and Herman and Mkwizu's (2016) assertions that marketing communications messages do not always end in action, while action in itself is subject to disruptions.

- **Love**

Wijaya (2012) does not indicate the forms Love could take as manifestations of the long-term effects of marketing communications messages. The operational definition of 'long-term' is not even stated. The study's findings, however, indicate customers exposed to brand journalism content are likely to spread positive word-of-mouth to show their love for the brand.

Based on findings, a conceptual framework for understanding brand journalism and its role in marketing communications is proposed.

5.5.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING BRAND JOURNALISM (E-F. A. C. E)

Based on findings, a conceptual framework for understanding brand journalism and its role in marketing communications is proposed. The framework outlines the dimensions of brand journalism (Execution strategy, Forms, Actors, Content, Ethics: E-F.A.C.E.) and their relationships. For instance, the execution strategy determines the form of brand journalism likely to be practiced, while actors impact content by crafting the brand journalism message. Also affecting content is ethics, which ensure that content is morally compliant. Content, disseminated through the right execution platforms, triggers the consumption process, beginning with attention. Findings indicate that what garners attention is subjective, comprising but not limited to anticipation of new helpful information; affirmation of brand competency; perception of being directly affected by the content; novelty/newness of information; and aesthetic and emotional pull of the content.

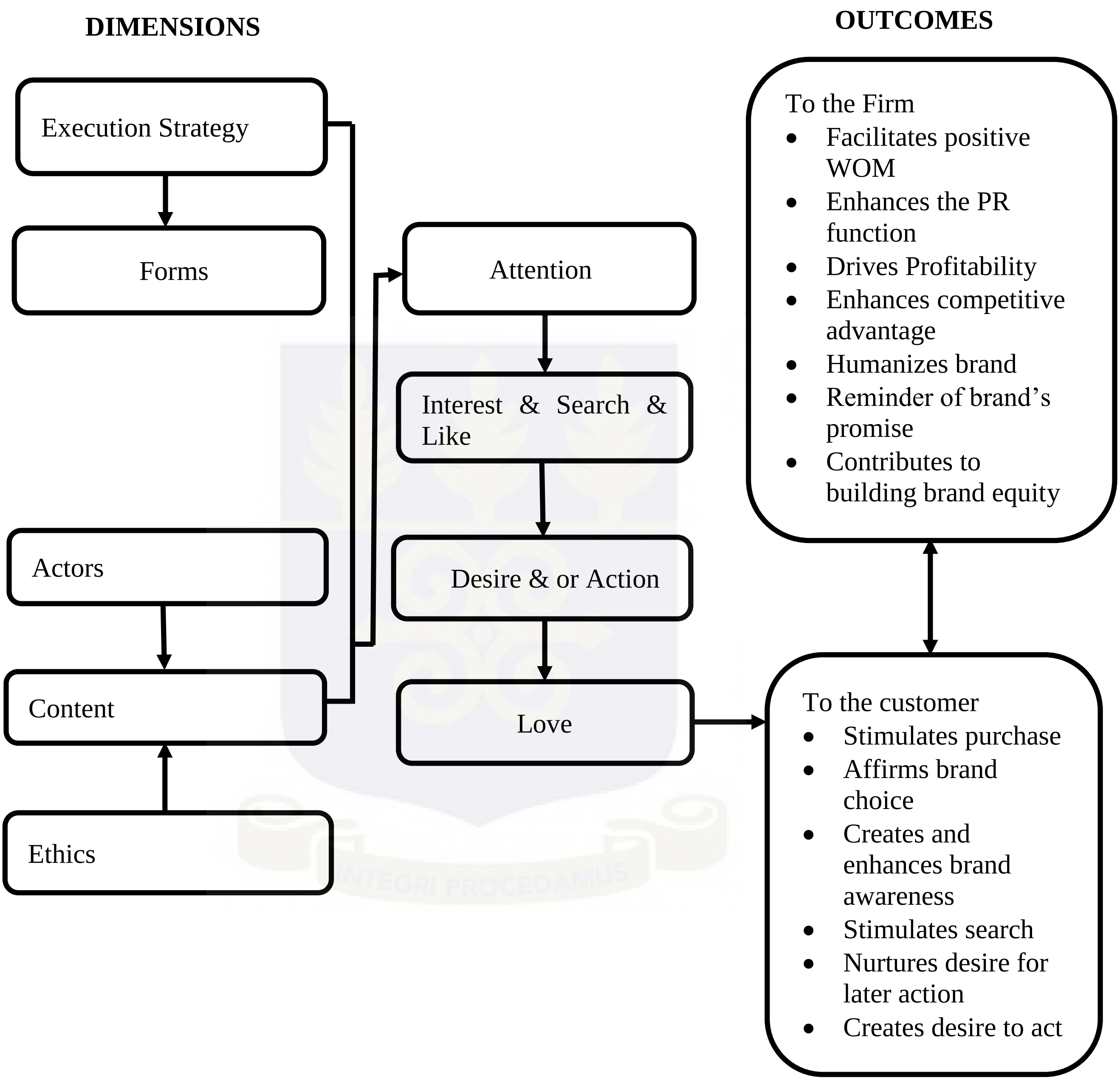
Attention leads to interest, search, and like which occur simultaneously especially in content marketing, and this leads to desire. Desire, however, does not always end in action as it may be thwarted by lack of purchasing power or no immediate need to purchase a product/service. Desire and or positive after-purchase conditions lead inexorably to love.

Out of love is born the roles of brand journalism in marketing communications. These roles can be permutated along two functions, one to the firm and the other to the customer. To the firm, brand journalism facilitates positive word-of-mouth, enhances the public relations function, helps drive profitability, enhances competitive advantage, humanizes the brand, serves as a reminder of the brand's promise to consumers, and contributes to building brand equity. To the customer, brand journalism stimulates purchase, affirms brand choice, creates and enhances brand awareness, stimulates search, nurtures desire for later action, and creates desire to act.

Below is a diagrammatic representation for understanding brand journalism and its role in marketing communications.

5.6 UNDERSTANDING BRAND JOURNALISM AND ITS ROLE IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Figure 5.1: A Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher's Construct: 2017

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the research, findings, and the conclusions emanating from the findings. Also presented are recommendations, based on the conclusions, and suggestions for future research. The aim of the study was to understand brand journalism and its role in marketing communications. It sought to achieve this by determining the dimensions of brand journalism; identifying its key characteristics using the 4Cs of Marketing Communications Characteristics; and identifying brand journalism's role in marketing communications. In respect of this, relevant literature was reviewed on brands and their role; journalism, its principles and roles; on brand journalism; and marketing communications. Additionally, an overview of marketing communications in Ghana was briefly discussed, together with Ghana's private sector, large-scale enterprises, and a profile of the firms selected for the study.

Using a qualitative design, data was collected from two groups of respondents. The first group comprised industry practitioners namely the Chief Marketing Officer, Databank Group; the Public Relations Officer, Latex Foam Rubber Products Ltd.; and the Head of Marketing, Dalex Finance. The second group of respondents comprised the firms' customers, both potential and pre-existing. Data derived from personal interviews with the respondents were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically. Findings were discussed against the background of existing literature.

6.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

6.1.1 DIMENSIONS OF BRAND JOURNALISM: E-F.A.C.E. (OBJECTIVE 1)

The objective was assessed based on key respondents' knowledge of the practice, and customers' interactions with the modes of message dissemination. Findings indicated brand journalism has five dimensions: Execution strategies; Forms; Actors; Content; and Ethics (E-F.A.C.E.). Concerning forms of brand journalism, findings indicated firms practice either content marketing or a loose (not extensively or in-depth) version of brand journalism. None practiced corporate journalism or brand storytelling. Furthermore, the form of brand journalism practiced was impinged on the platform chosen to disseminate the brand journalism message. As these platforms are limited, they affected the extent to which brand journalism, form-wise, could be practiced. With regard to actors, findings indicated that while some companies outsource their brand journalism content, others depend on in-house personnel with no journalism background; none actually hired journalists. Additionally, while Management endorsement of brand journalism was commendable in some cases, it was not encouraging in others, leading to a number of implications for firms.

On content, the structure of messages are generally in a feature/editorial style; the type of messages are either product-based planned (messages created by the firm based on the product), or product-related unplanned (messages are from other sources such as websites and are related to the product); while content is mostly driven by the company's values. However, there was a lack of content differentiation across channels, which was found to adversely impact the effectiveness of brand journalism messages. For instance, because a customer perceives all messages to be the same across channels (lack of content differentiation), they are likely to pay little to no attention to a message, say on radio, thus leading to wastage and hampering the message's ability to be impactful. With regard to ethics, companies did not subscribe to an overarching ethical code, choosing instead to either be guided in the practice of brand journalism by their own company code, a social one, or an international one. Again, the dimensions of brand journalism, as findings indicate, are Execution strategies; Forms; Actors; Content; and Ethics (E-F. A. C. E.).

6.1.2 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF BRAND JOURNALISM (OBJECTIVE 2)

The objective was assessed based on Fill and Jamieson's (2006) 4Cs Framework of Marketing Communications Characteristics, industry practitioners' knowledge of the practice, and customers' views. The 4 Cs as identified in the Framework are Communication, Credibility, Cost, and Control. Findings indicate brand journalism, with regard to Communication, has the ability to deliver a personal message, reach large audiences, and interact with customers at an intimate level. Regarding Credibility, findings indicate brand journalism is highly credible. However, creditability is nuanced as what respondents perceived as credible was subjective. For a brand journalism message to be credible, therefore, it must be factual and have aesthetic appeal, with the actor perceived as competent and unlikely to sabotage their own brand.

On Cost, it was discovered that brand journalism is generally cost-intensive, although aspects of its practice comes at no cost to the firm. This was, however, impinged on which PESO (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned) marketing communications model used and how it was used. For instance, Databank Group primarily used paid media which restricted the extent to which they could practice brand journalism; though Latex Foam used earned media, they outsourced their brand journalism practice, and its Management considered it expendable. But because Dalex Finance used earned media and in-house actors, the cost component of brand journalism was not considered a challenge to brand journalism practice. On Control, it was found brand journalism has the ability to target particular audiences. This characteristic was, also, dependent on the channel used to disseminate messages.

6.1.3 ROLE OF BRAND JOURNALISM IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS (OBJECTIVE 3)

The objective was assessed based on industry practitioners' knowledge of the practice, and customers' feelings towards brand journalism messages. As much as brand journalism, as a marketing communications element, differentiates, reminds, informs and persuades consumers to action, findings indicate it deviates from the other marketing communications elements as well. For instance, advertising functions as an enhancer of a brand's perceived quality. It also reflects current social trends and provides a medium through which audiences derive a sense of self and learn about normative expectations. Brand journalism, contrastingly, performs two distinct roles; to the firm and to the customer. To the firm, brand journalism functions as a driver of profitability; facilitates positive word-of-mouth; enhances the PR function; enhances competitive advantage; humanizes the brand; functions as a reminder of the brand's promise; and contributes to building brand equity. To the customer, it affirms brand choice; stimulates purchase; creates and enhances brand awareness; nurtures desires for later action; stimulates search; and foments desire to act.

6.1.4 OTHER NOTABLE FINDINGS

There were other notable findings relating to the factors that can affect brand journalism's effectiveness (see Chapter 5, section 5.5.1), and the AIDA theory, which was used to anchor the study (see Chapter 2, section 2.7). Regarding the former, it was found that brand journalism's effectiveness can be affected by a lack of content differentiation, and dissatisfied customers. With regard to the AIDA theory and its variant, the AISDLSLove, it was found that while brand journalism is capable of garnering attention due to compelling content, what customers deem compelling is subjective. Additionally, Interest was sustained and occurred simultaneously with Search and Like. This finding was, however, limited to only content marketing. Moreover, customers' 'like' of content was not necessarily an indicator of positive after-purchase experience than an innate preference for the message in its entirety. Furthermore, while brand journalism content elicited the inclination to want, the desire did not always end in action or purchase due to such factors as no immediate need and lack of financial wherewithal. Brand journalism, however, does nurture the desire till such future time when purchase was possible. Finally, Love was expressed through the spread of positive word-of-mouth.

6.2 CONCLUSION

The study, based on findings, concludes that there does not seem to be any framework guiding brand journalism practice. As a result, its practice, aside not being extensive, lacks depth. Furthermore, lack of Management endorsement of brand journalism affects the extent to which practitioners can practice brand journalism, and content probably lack depth because of the absence of journalists in creating content. There is also a lack of content differentiation which adversely impacts the effectiveness of brand journalism messages. The study further concludes that companies do not subscribe to an overarching ethical code, choosing instead to either be guided in the practice of brand journalism by their own company code, a social one, or an international one. Finally, brand journalism is generally cost-intensive although aspects of its practice come at relatively little cost to the firm. However, cost still acts as an inhibitor of extensive brand journalism practice.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study makes the following recommendations to firms based on the conclusions previously identified.

It was noted that brand journalism is not extensively practiced in form or depth probably due to a lack of framework to guide its practice. In essence, its potential remains largely untapped. Firms, therefore, may want to consider consulting this study's framework to guide brand journalism practice, and expand the forms of brand journalism practice by introducing other platforms such as corporate blogs, and other forms such as brand storytelling, to tell more compelling stories and give stories an in-depth treatment.

Practitioners may also want to consider employing innovative tactics to secure Management buy-in of brand journalism. Brand journalism works as expected if there is total management support. Practitioners may also want to consider their customers as consumers of information only the firm can provide. Therefore, hiring personnel with journalism backgrounds, in addition to possessing excellent writing skills, creativity, and excellent work ethic who can give content its due diligence may have to be considered.
Practitioners may also want to consider differentiating content across all execution platforms so as to maintain consumer interest in stories, thus reducing the potential for wastage. Also, as credibility of content is subjective, practitioners may want to consider the different elements as noted in this study, and others, which make content compelling when creating content. This is to enhance the content's ability to start conversation and

build communities, which can be leveraged into building equity for the brand. Finally, to balance out the issue of cost, firms may want to consider using shared and owned media, in addition to paid and earned media, to disseminate brand journalism content.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

No ethical framework exists for brand journalism practice. Future studies could, therefore, focus on developing such a framework to guide brand journalism practice.

Subsequent studies could also focus on measuring the characteristics of brand journalism to gauge the extent of the effectiveness/impact of each characteristic against the other marketing communications elements. Further studies should focus on other Cost characteristics of brand journalism such as size of investment, wastage, cost per contact, absolute cost; and Control characteristics such as Management's ability to adjust the deployment of brand journalism as circumstances change.

An intriguing find was how a firm combined sponsorship with brand journalism. Further studies may want to explore how brand journalism can be blended with other marketing communications elements, indicating nuances and implications across elements. Furthermore, while practitioners indicated they do measure brand journalism, it seemed the same metrics used for some marketing activities is what is applied to brand journalism measurement. Further studies could, therefore, focus on the strengths of these measures, how effective they are, and establish how to effectively measure the effectiveness of brand journalism content.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table 2: Summary of Findings

Themes/Cases	DG	LF	DL
Brand Journalism Dimensions			
Execution Strategy	*	*	*
Form	*	*	*
Actors	*	*	*
Content	*	*	*
Ethics	*	*	*
Brand Journalism Key Characteristics			
Communication	*	*	*
Cost	*	*	
Credibility	*	*	*
Control	*	*	*
Brand Journalism Roles in Marketing Communication			
To Firms			
Drives profitability	*	*	*
Contributes to building brand equity	*	*	*
Serves as reminder of brand promise		*	
Humanizes the brand		*	
Enhances competitive advantage	*	*	
Enhances the PR function	*		
Facilitates positive WOM	*	*	*
To the Customer			
Affirms brand choice	*		*
Stimulates search	*	*	*
Enhances brand awareness for pre-existing customers	*	*	*
Creates desire to purchase		*	
Nurtures customers for later action		*	
Creates brand awareness for new customers		*	

Note: * denotes the presence of a dimension, key characteristics, or role

APPENDIX 2: CASE HISTORIES

DATABANK GROUP (CASE A)

Databank was founded in 1990 with the mission to empower its customers to achieve financial independence by promoting financial literacy and offering a diverse range of investment products (Databank Group, 2017). To achieve this mission, Databank provides a range of services spanning corporate finance, brokerage, fund and asset management and research, and private equity finance (Databank Group, 2017). Databank Group values leadership in setting the pace in its industry, and nurturing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in their people; excellence in the delivery of its services and products; humility in serving its clients, and integrity in their dealings with investors (Databank Group, 2017). Its CMO has worked with the firm since 2014. The year also marks the start of the firm’s adoption of brand journalism.

DIMENSIONS OF BRAND JOURNALISM

EXECUTION STRATEGY

Databank Group employs a host of communication platforms to disseminate their marketing communications messages. These are billboards, banners, flag pole banners, Facebook and Twitter, newspapers, and radio. They are also online, specifically their website, sound cloud where they publish podcasts, and banner advertising on other websites, and personal sellers. They are expanding their communications platforms to videos as well. The only communication platform Databank does not utilize is television, as it is expensive. Out of all these communication platforms, Databank only uses radio (paid and earned), newspapers (paid), and newsletters (owned) to disseminate brand journalism content. Their adoption of brand journalism, however, does not imply a cessation of traditional marketing communications. To them, these have outlived their purpose and brand journalism exists to complement traditional elements of marketing communications. Databank customers studied approved of the choice of television and radio, while others suggested they ramp up their presence online to attract the youth.

FORM

Databank has been practicing brand journalism since 2014 although it does not label it as brand journalism but does consider it as part of marketing communications. Brand journalism in Databank takes the form of newsletters offered at no cost to customers. Hard copies are available at the front desk of the firm's headquarters (where this researcher visited to collect data), with digital copies available for download on their website. The firm also pays for space in newspapers to publish brand journalism content, and its CEO makes frequent appearances on radio where he participates in discussions spanning a wide range of topics from the country's economic outlook to sports.

ACTORS

In Databank, brand journalism is helmed by the marketing unit and sometimes in collaboration with the firm's CEO. The practice takes the form of ether the CEO speaking on issues of national concern on earned media; serving as a social commentator on firm-sponsored sports programmes, textual content in newsletters, and provision of tips on investment through paid media. Regarding textual brand journalism content, Databank Group has in its employ, a copy editor who crafts messages, and a graphic designer responsible for the messages' aesthetic appeal. The copy writer, though having a first degree, is without a journalism background and the quality of the copy writer's work is inconsistent. While the absence of a brand journalism background may explain the copy writer's inconsistency, it is insisted that creativity is a quality any copy writer who works for the firm must possess. A degree may get writer past the interview stage, but brilliant writing skills, high creativity, and excellent work ethic is what is needed to sustain a brand journalism job. Excellent work ethic, however, is challenging to assess at the interview stage. Regarding Databank Group's non-textual brand journalism practice, which is defined by its CEO's appearances on media, it is mostly paid for, and is sometimes initiated by the CEO. Airtime spots are acquired through relationships with the different stations, who sometimes extend the company's time on air in honour of said relationship. At other times too, the marketing team decides to get the CEO on air if it is to mark a celebration such as the New Year.

Management buy-in of brand journalism is limited and in instances where the practice may have to extended, it would have to be done very cautiously, especially in an money-asset management institution.

CONTENT

All Databank Group's marketing communications messages are linked to their various products. Content is, therefore, required only when campaigns for its various products are being run. Databank Group's newsletters feature such brand journalism content as 'Top 5 Things Universities look out for in an Applicant'. The structure of the content does not follow the inverted pyramid structure common to hard news journalism story telling narratives. The firm's CEO also makes regular appearances on radio, where he shares thought leadership and in the process, accrues potential clients who may have been swayed by his comments. Furthermore, frequent name mentions and associations with the firm, by the host of the radio show, adds to the subtleties of brand journalism.

Content is need driven, such as educating potential retirees on preparing properly for retirement, and the retirees employers on pension management. Brand journalism content emanating from Databank is largely product based and planned. And though the firm attempts to differentiate content across its varied communications platforms, it is not adequate. Lack of content differentiation affects audience reception to brand journalism content and was the source of the only instance of wastage in the study, particularly for the firm.

ETHICS

Databank Group has its corporate values that guide everything it does. These values are leadership, excellence, integrity, humility. Beyond that they subscribe to international industry-relevant standards such as transparency and avoidance of misrepresentation of information. The firm also has internal checks to the CEO and Director of Operations of Dalex Finance also engage in a practice that parallels editorials on radio and television.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF BRAND JOURNALISM PRACTICE IN DATABANK GROUP

COMMUNICATION

Key characteristics of brand journalism practice in Databank, with regard to communications, include the ability to deliver a personal message, reach a large audience, and offer an intimate level of interaction. These characteristics are determined by the medium of communication chosen to disseminate brand journalism content; so for instance, since radio and television can reach a large audience, brand journalism content disseminated across radio and television is bound to reach a large audience.

CREDIBILITY

Brand journalism is also perceived as highly credible by the firm's customers who believed content because of the unlikelihood of self-sabotage/perceived reputation of the brand, and perceived competency based on prior experience.

COST

Resource, or its lack thereof, does not only affect the extent to which a firm can practice brand journalism in all its forms, but it also affects the consistency of brand journalism messages. To Databank Group, the lack of financial resource makes it difficult to execute on a number of things, especially big-ticket items like radio and newspaper and even television.

CONTROL

Brand journalism has the ability to target particular audiences. For instance, while Databank targets everyone about the age of 18, they have different products for different groups and different services, such as students, pensioners, and the companies that employ Databank Group to manage their pension funds. Messages are, therefore, created to specifically target these groups.

ROLE OF BRAND JOURALISM

TO THE FIRM

Brand journalism functions as a contributor to building the firm's brand equity. To Databank, brand journalism has contributed to growing the brand's equity, with people hearing and seeing Databank in ways they previously had not. Brand journalism also enhances Databank's competitive advantage. To illustrate, it has helped the brand tap into a whole new audience that they do not have. It also drives profitability for Databank, helping it grow their assets under management since its introduction into the firm's marketing practices. It also enhances Databank's Public Relations Function. To illustrate, the firm used brand journalism, via the CEO's media presence as a social authority on issues pertaining to finance and the economy, to introduce the CEO to the public and turn their minds to the fact that the firm has a new CEO and that Databank is no longer being run by its founders and that it is under new management. Brand journalism also facilitates positive word-of-mouth for the brand, lending it good publicity.

TO THE FIRM'S CUSTOMERS

To Databank Group's customers, brand journalism stimulates search. For instance, a customer narrated that while personal sellers had contacted her, it was not until she heard the firm's CEO on radio discussing pertinent issues related to finance and investment that she decided to go personally to the firm's headquarters to make further inquiries. Brand journalism also affirms brand choice for customers of Databank Group. For instance, a pre-existing customer, upon hearing the CEO on air, grew in confidence, pride and trust for the brand. Brand journalism also enhances brand awareness for pre-existing customers.

LATEX FOAM (CASE B)

Latex Foam Rubber Products Ltd. has been in existence for over 40 years, since its incorporation in 1969 to produce foam products for the furniture and bedding industry. It is the oldest in its industry and aims to continue to lead the country's manufacturers of foam products (Latex Foam Ghana, 2017). It also aims to satisfy its customers by providing them with quality and innovative foam products, as well as cater for the larger society within which it operates (Latex Foam Ghana, 2017). The firm's PRO has been with the firm since 2013. The firm has been practicing brand journalism since 2015.

EXECUTION STRATEGY

Latex Foam utilises a number of communication channels to disseminate marketing communications messages. These are radio and television, bulk SMS messaging, and social media, specifically Facebook. Of these, the only platform the firm utilises to disseminate brand journalism content is Facebook as even though it is considered the ideal platform for reaching the youth, it is possible other kinds of audiences use the platform and may be exposed to brand journalism content as well. Those of their customers studied, who skewed towards the young adults, also approved of the choice of communication platform, indicating Facebook offers intimacy and enables the personalization of messages.

FORM

Latex Foam has been practicing brand journalism for not more than 3 years, and calls its brand journalism practice as part of marketing communications, primarily to avoid the potential for confusion. Their practice of brand journalism is defined by content published sole online, specifically its Facebook page.

ACTORS

Latex Foam outsources its brand journalism practice. This is because they do not want to drift away from their core business. However, the firm's Public Relations unit oversees the third party's work to avoid damages. The firm also insists on the agent having a free hand to be as creative as possible. Management's buy-in of brand journalism is limited in Case B and ensuring their support requires personal relations skills.

CONTENT

Structure of brand journalism content leans towards soft news. Latex Foam's brand journalism content is heavy in images and minimal/poignant/pithy in text or accompanying text. Themes are indirectly related to the firm's core business, such as content on sleep or ergonomics. Such content has been considered compelling by their customers. Content is driven by the firm's caretaker stance and feeling of responsibility to be more caring about their clients. Brand journalism messages are planned and unplanned and product-based. The firm, however, does not differentiate content, which can affect brand journalism effectiveness.

ETHICS

Latex Foam is guided in its brand journalism practice by its given territory, relating more to the culture of the community in which it operates. So what the society considers morally right is what the firm will consider morally right. This is to avoid conflicts to the barest minimum. That notwithstanding, the firm is not oblivious to best practices globally either.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF BRAND JOURNALISM AS PRACTICED IN LATEX FOAM

COMMUNICATION

The key characteristics of brand journalism as practiced in Latex Foam, with regard to communication, are the ability to deliver a personal message, ability to reach a large audience, and the ability to offer an intimate lever of interaction.

CREDIBILITY

Customers perceived brand journalism content to be highly credible. Factors determining credibility for Latex Foam's customers are factuality of content, aesthetic appeal of content, unlikelihood of self-sabotage/perceived reputation of the brand, personal belief in research, and absence of contentious comments by other visitors to the Facebook page.

COST

Cost, or rather a lack of adequate financial resource is a major inhibitor to brand journalism practice. Brand journalism needs huge budgetary allocations to get it running.

CONTROL

Brand journalism has the ability to target particular audiences. Latex Foam uses brand journalism content to engage the young adult and nurture them for later action, when they have the financial means to make purchases.

ROLE OF BRAND JOURNALISM

TO THE FIRM

Brand journalism contributes to building a firm's brand equity. To Latex Foam, it functions as facilitator of brand retention, brand recall, creating awareness, establishing an emotional attachment, facilitating trust and brand salience. It also serves as a reminder of the brand's promise to customers, and humanizing the brand. To illustrate, Latex Foam publishes brand journalism content to show the brand is not inorganic, the brand is alive, produces, breathes, and has life so it tries to personalise as much as possible. Brand journalism also enhances Latex Foam's competitive advantage, drives profitability and facilitates positive word-of-mouth.

ROLE TO THE FIRM'S CUSTOMERS

To customers of Latex Foam, brand journalism stimulates purchase. For instance, a customer narrates that upon exposure to brand journalism content, he disposed of his old mattress and bought a new one. Brand journalism also creates brand awareness for new customers of Latex Foam, creates a desire to purchase and nurtures customers for later action where they lack the financial means to make a purchase immediately.

DALEX FINANCE (CASE C)

Dalex Finance & Leasing Company Ltd. is a non-bank financial institution established in 2006. Its vision is to be the most respected and preferred financial services brand, while its mission is to be the best performing non-bank finance institution in Ghana (Dalex Finance, 2017). Dalex Finance also strives to make a genuine difference in the lives of their stakeholders. Dalex Finance values integrity in terms of openness, honesty, fairness and consistency; teamwork; learning and knowledge sharing; and responsibility with regard to owning their actions despite the outcome (Dalex Finance, 2017). The firm's HM has been with the firm since 2014, and the firm has been practicing brand journalism since 2015.

EXECUTION STRATEGIES

Dalex Finance's marketing communications channels comprise traditional channels such as television, radio, sponsorship, and print; and modern channels such as Facebook and Instagram. For brand journalism, Dalex Finance relies heavily on earned media, specifically radio and television interview spots. This is because market research they conducted indicates their customers are likely to listen in to radio and television for information regarding their investments.

FORM

Dalex Finance, which calls its brand journalism practice 'brand publishing', has been doing so for not more than 3 years. This practice is, however, limited and entails the firm's CEO and Director of Operations speaking to a wide range of issues as panelists on radio and television programmes.

ACTORS

The firm's CEO, to a large extent, and its Director of Operations, carry out the firm's brand journalism practice. The practice takes the form of the CEO and Director of Operations appearing on earned media (radio and television) programmes to act either as resource persons on issues of national concern, or as social commentators. The actors' presence on media is earned. They are invited by producers who consider them (the actors) as social authorities in their area of expertise. The actors honour not less than 4 interviews a week and 16 interviews a month. These interviews may also span an entire working day. Actors are able to fulfil the interviews on earned media because of effective scheduling and although there is an issue of potential stress, the end goal makes it worthwhile. Furthermore, as the practice is helmed by Management, brand journalism is more accepted and considered another method of doing business.

CONTENT

The CEO and Director of Operations of Dalex Finance engage in a practice that parallels editorials on radio and television. For Dalex Finance, their products and aspects relating to the product such as the economy, together with the company's values, drive content selection, and the type of message is mostly about the product and planned. The firm, however, does not differentiate its content across their communication platforms, which can affect brand journalism effectiveness.

ETHICS

Dalex Finance's ethics in practicing brand journalism are company-determined. They do not plagiarize, produce original content, and tell the truth aside subscribing to international best standards.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF BRAND JOURNALISM PRACTICE IN DALEX FINANCE

COMMUNICATION

Key characteristics of brand journalism practice in Dalex Finance, with regard to communication, are the ability to reach a large audience. Because channels of dissemination for brand journalism in Dalex Finance are only radio and television, brand journalism for the firm, did not have the ability to deliver a personal message or provide an intimate level of interaction.

CREDIBILITY

Customers of Dalex Finance considered their firm's brand journalism content very credible because of unlikelihood of self-sabotage/perceived reputation of the brand.

COST

To Dalex Finance, the cost incurred in implementing brand journalism agenda was not an issue, not because it had the financial wherewithal but because it depended solely on earned media. However, there is the possibility of the actors over-exerting themselves as, on average, the firm's actors grant an average of 16 interviews a week. However, it is a risk the firm is willing to take in the interim, while they expand their brand journalism practice and the actors involved.

CONTROL

Dalex Finance also uses brand journalism, in coordination with the medium of communication, to target particular audiences. For instance, their average investment product is about GHC 4,000.00, which, according to the firm's reasoning, indicates customers of that product are more likely to listen to radio and television to keep up with information regarding their investments. Therefore, through these channels, the firm is not only able to target particular audiences in this high net worth bracket, but are also able to feed the information needs of their customers.

ROLE OF BRAND JOURNALISM

TO THE FIRM

To the firm, brand journalism contributes to building brand equity, particularly creating brand awareness. Brand journalism also facilitates positive word-of-mouth for Dalex Finance, and drives profitability. To illustrate, Dalex Finance intends to make profit from the consumer feels, by relating to the consumer and thinking as the consumer, providing before they even think about it, and thus sell money in different form and in different ways.

ROLE TO THE CUSTOMER

Brand journalism enhances brand awareness for pre-existing customers of Dalex Finances and stimulates purchase. To illustrate, a customer narrates that the knowledge and information acquired from the firm's CEO on a television programme led him to consider making an investment and eventually purchased an investment package from the firm. Brand journalism also affirms brand choice in Dalex Finance's customers. For instance, a customer narrates that a lot of CEOs in Ghana do not take sacrifice time to make appearances on television to speak about issues the public cares about. Therefore, he appreciated the CEO's efforts which indicated an element of care on the firm's part in their (customer's) interest.

APPENDIX 3: OVERVIEW OF CUSTOMERS' VIEWS ON KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED

1. DIMENSIONS OF BRAND JOURNALISM

CUST.	**EXECUTION STRATEGIES**
DGC1	If there's a programme on air (radio and television), sometimes they send a message that we should listen
DGC2	So I heard him talk (on TV and radio) about the national issues during election time, so he came to talk about the economy and how the economy was down which relates somehow to his job because he's an investor and also because he's a patriotic citizen
LFC1	Social media has become part of me. I learn a lot from [Facebook]
LFC3	It's also convenient for me to learn about such content through Facebook because of late that's the easiest means to get to your customers
DGC3	Radio is cool for me. It has been a traditional thing so if you really want to get your messages out there and very fast
LFC2	For me, I listen to radio more, in the morning you're forced to listen to radio. If you want to get a lot of information you have to listen to radio
CUST.	**CONTENT-Structure**
LFC3	The information, the message they put out; it's like many people would like to [read] that message being put out or the brand journalism that they're doing.
LFC4	Them showing or putting out there in detail the proper way to sleep, obviously was one of the reasons why

2. KEY CHARACTERISTICS

CUST.	**Communications**	**CUST.**	**Credibility**	**CUST.**	**Cost**
	Ability to Deliver a Personal Message		**Factuality of Content**	**DGC4**	But when they're called upon to explain certain things, and then they have the chance to explain it more, it becomes an add-on or an addition to their company. In that case they don't pay

DGC1	Social media offers intimacy and personalisation	**LFC1**	[Because] it's a fact. What they say is rational		
LFC4	It's intimate. Like I said you can respond instantly.				
	Ability to Reach a Large Audience		**Aesthetic Appeal of Content**		
DGC1	On TV, it looks like a much bigger platform where the masses are huge, you have a lot of people listening and watching	**LFC5**	They had striking pics to [back] up the story. The visual aspect helps		
DFC2	I felt like he was speaking to the whole country (via the television)				
	Level of Interaction		**Unlikelihood of self-sabotage**		
LFC4	Facebook has different emotions. You can express your emotions (interact with the content) by liking it, or disliking it, or by showing what it is and it's very convenient	**LFC4**	I believe also that they wouldn't publish unverified information		
DGC1	I think that the TV would make much impact in terms of listening, watching body language, interview, the guests are there, then you have the journalist there, then the call ins (sic) will also come in	**LFC2**	Because it comes from Latex Foam. You know Latex Foam. You assume that Latex Foam wouldn't put a wrong message there		
		DGC2	He has a reputation too at stake; he has a face and then he has an organisation to protect		
			Personal Belief in Research		
		LFC2	They've done some researches that many of the masses don't know. And I trust research		

			Absence of Contentious Comments		
		LFC2	Probably, other people have crosschecked to make sure other people who have seen it have certified it so…		
		LFC5	Nobody was bashing them on the page so I believed the message to be sincere		
			Perceived Competency based on Prior Experience		
		DGC1	I believe because of past experiences. I believe it because they act on what they say. Because they give me a reason to believe		
		DGC3	I saw them as wise investors who are just not wasting money; they know how to manage the funds. And that's why I believed him		
			Perceived Competency of the CEO		
		DFC3	He seemed to understand the issues he was speaking to		
		DFC1	I thought he was knowledgeable on the issues he spoke to, and that made me think the company has the necessary qualification to offer the services they do		
		DFC2	We all believe simply because we know what is happening in the country, and therefore, he comes out with a tangible solution to it so as a matter of fact, you'll believe it because the thing is happening now		

3. ROLE OF BRAND JOURNALISM

CUST.	**ROLE TO THE FIRM**
	Facilitates Positive Word-Of-Mouth
DGC1	I tell people that if you want to make investments, you can go to Databank
LFC4	I told one of my friends to actually go and purchase those for his guest house
DGC2	If someone wants to invest, and then the person asks which kind of investment do I need, I say I invest with Databank so you could choose it
CUST.	**ROLE TO THE CUSTOMER**
	Stimulates Search
DGC4	Upon hearing about the CEO on air, it made me to become more interested. So this time around I may desire to even repeat research, as in now I may even want to do more and more. It made me go and search more
	Stimulates Purchase
LFC1	I threw away my old mattress which I bought some time ago and bought a new one
	Affirms Brand Choice
DGC1	Yeah, it gives me so much confidence and I feel proud of it
DFC2	Let me say in Ghana here, a lot of CEOs don't do that (appearing as panellists on mass media). So when he sacrifices the time to come on TV like this, you think that the company is a better company to be precise
	Enhances Brand Awareness for Pre-Existing Customers
DGC1	For me I would say I am already aware of their things. So it gave me more information. It enhanced my awareness of the brand. It enhanced my interests
	Creates Desire to Purchase
LFC1	It made me want to purchase the products

LFC3	Yes. It made me desirous to purchase some of the brands products. Yeah. Like some of their orthopedic mattress and all that
	Nurtures Customers for Later Action
LFC3	Yes, it does. When I do have the financial wherewithal to purchase a foam product it will be latex foam
LFC2	It has nurtured me by about] 50%. At least it's better than those people whose content I haven't seen
	Creates Brand Awareness for New Customers
LFC2	I learnt more about the brand; they have a variety of products, not just mattresses. Not everybody knows. And then they make the brand appeal to you more
LFC3	I get to know about their products and what they do and those kind of things

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE: PRACTITIONERS

INTRODUCTION

- How long have you worked for this organisation?
- When was (brand journalism) introduced in the firm?

1. FORMS

- What do you term your practice of combining traditional principles of journalism with marketing communications to create compelling content?
- What reasons informed your adoption of the form of brand journalism currently practiced?
- How have your audience reacted to brand journalism?
- How have you measured audience reaction to the form of brand journalism you practiced?

2. EXECUTION STRATEGIES

- What informed the choice of the execution strategy/strategies?
- How are you utilising the communication tools at your disposal to reach those audiences whom your content dissemination platforms are unable to reach?

3. ACTORS

- Who is responsible for implementing the brand journalism agenda in your firm?

4. **ROLE IN MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS**
    - What do you intend to achieve by practicing brand journalism?
    - What inhibiting factors impede your sustained practice of brand journalism?

5. **ETHICS**
    - What editorial policy guides your practice of brand journalism?
    - What moral standards guide your selection of content?

6. **CONTENT**
    - What elements drive content selection?
    - Differentiating content across dissemination platforms is a key requirement of brand journalism. How do you approach content differentiation?

INTERVIEW GUIDE: CUSTOMERS

1. Do you actively search for content like these or you stumbled upon them?
2. If you do, why?

AIDA

3. Did the content make you aware of the brand, become interested in a brand product/service/create a desire to purchase a product/service/cause you to act on the desire?
4. What drew you to the content?

Credibility

5. Why do you believe the content?
6. What action did the content make you take?
7. Have you purchased a brand product/service after exposure to the content?

Customer Equity

8. Does the content remind you of the brand? How?
9. Has/will the content endear you to purchase the brand's product or services?
10. In what way does the brand have your loyalty? Did the content play a part?
11. Why did you not like/love/share/comment simultaneously?
12. How does the content affect your feelings about the brand?
13. How does the content affect your judgment about the brand?
14. How does the content influence your perception of the performance of the brand's product/services?
15. How does the content make you perceive the brand?

Dimensions

16. Where else have you encountered similar content?
17. What perceptions/judgments did you form about the content?
18. Which platform was most convenient/better/useful for you?