ABSTRACT

PUBLIC RELATIONS IN KENYA: AN EXPLORATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS MODELS AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

By Dane Mwirigi Kiambi

There has not been a single study on the practice of public relations in Kenya despite the country attracting multinational corporations that are increasingly using public relations to build relationships with key publics. This pioneer quantitative study explores the public relations models that inform the practice of public relations in Kenya, the cultural values that influence such practice and the correlation between the public relations models and cultural values. Results show that two international models of public relations – personal influence and cultural interpreter – are the most used by practitioners in Kenya, while individualism and femininity are the most experienced cultural values in that order. Results of the correlation between the public relations models and cultural values show a strong positive relationship between the personal influence model and the femininity cultural value. This correlation points to the practitioners’ strong desire for good interpersonal relationships with colleagues, supervisors, clients and key publics.
PUBLIC RELATIONS IN KENYA: AN EXPLORATION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS MODELS AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

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Table of Contents

Chapter One
Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1

Research Questions ................................................................................................. 3

Literature Review (Societal Factors influencing PR in Kenya) ................................. 3

History of the Practice .............................................................................................. 4

Level of National Development ............................................................................... 9

Legal/ Political Context ............................................................................................ 15

Primary Clients ......................................................................................................... 16

Public Relations Models .......................................................................................... 18

Culture and public relations practice ...................................................................... 19

Hofstede’s cultural dimensions ............................................................................... 20

Chapter Two
Methodology ............................................................................................................ 23

Instruments ............................................................................................................... 24

Chapter Three
Results ...................................................................................................................... 30

Chapter Four
Discussion ............................................................................................................... 40

Emerging Public Relations Practices in Kenya ......................................................... 40

Influential work-related cultural values among Kenyan public relations practitioners ......................................................................................................................... 44

Significant influence of the interpersonal relationships .......................................... 45

Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 46

References .............................................................................................................. 50

Appendix 1: (Demographics) .................................................................................. 54

Appendix 2: (Public Relations Models) ................................................................... 55

Appendix 3: (Cultural Dimensions) ........................................................................ 58
List of Tables

Table 1: Average Means of Public Relations Models and Reliabilities............................ 31
Table 2: Average Means of Cultural Dimensions and Reliabilities............................... 35
Table 3: Correlations........................................................................................................ 39
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The demand for public relations services globally has gone a notch higher during the last decade. This has come about primarily due to the increase in competition for foreign markets among multinational corporations. Western based multinational companies such as General Electric, General Motors, IBM, Master Card, Virgin Group, Coca-Cola, GlaxoSmithKline, McDonalds, ExxonMobil and many more are expanding their businesses to hitherto unchartered territories while using public relations to build relationships with their publics.

Likewise, developing nations such as those of Africa are increasingly finding opportunities to do business with the United States courtesy of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a trade agreement signed into law in May 2000 allowing eligible sub-Saharan African nations to export apparel and textile, among other goods, to the U.S. under the AGOA duty-free agreement. By August 2009, there were 41 AGOA eligible African nations. “… AGOA has encouraged substantial new investments, trade, and job creation in Africa… It has also contributed to economic and commercial reforms which make African countries more attractive commercial partners for U.S. companies” (AGOA, 2009).

Most recently, China’s conglomerates especially those in the construction industry have increased trade partnerships with African countries while the latter have also stepped up their pursuit for more export opportunities to China, Europe and other parts of the world. In Kenya, Chinese companies have invested billions of shillings in energy production, mining, telecommunications and infrastructure. “From 44 companies in 2001, the presence of Chinese firms (in Kenya) has increased to more than 200 (in 2010) operating as trading companies, restaurants and clinics” (Okwembah, Daily Nation, Jan. 23, 2010). With such a high presence of Chinese companies in Kenya, business between the two countries has undoubtedly increased.

As a result of the increased trade between nations of the world, practices of public relations are becoming internationalized. Consequently, leading public relations agencies
such as Hill and Knowlton, Oglivy, Edelman, and Burson-Marsteller, among others, have set up offices in various parts of the world in readiness to offer their services. For example, one of the places in Africa where a relatively high number of international public relations firms have established bases is Nairobi, Kenya’s capital city. With Kenya being a relatively politically stable country in a region rocked by endless political and economic turmoil, multinational corporations wishing to expand their businesses in East and Central Africa first look at Kenya as their entry point into the region for business.

The latest American based public relations firm to open offices in Nairobi is Hill and Knowlton. The firm set up offices in the Kenyan capital in May 2009 after first acquiring a locally owned and successful public relations firm, Scanad PR. “On Tuesday (April 14, 2009), the management (of Scanad PR) announced a joint venture deal with Hill & Knowlton as it seeks to improve its public relations business in the region, currently contributing only three per cent of its total business against 71 per cent from advertising and media buying” (Kang’aru, *Daily Nation*, April 16, 2009). The increased global trade and the accompanying opportunities for the growth of international public relations presents the need and urgency with which public relations practitioners and scholars should strive to understand the role of the public relations practice in a global context.

Since the emergence of public relations as an occupation in the United States in the twentieth century, research on public relations has largely been concentrated in North America. As public relations increasingly gets internationalized, very little research has been conducted in other parts of the world where its practice is developing. For example, very little research has been done on public relations in Africa despite the region showing tremendous potential and growth of international public relations. The only few African cultures that have been studied in connection with public relations are South Africa (Holtzhausen, Petersen, & Tindall, 2003), Nigeria, (Molleda & Alhassan, 2006), and Ghana, (Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009).

In spite of the high number of multinational companies operating in Kenya and the growing number of global public relations firms opening offices in Nairobi, there has been no study of public relations in Kenya and the impact that the local culture has on the practice. “Kenya has no public relations professionals with Ph.D.s… The state of
research and publication in public relations by academics is almost zero” (Mbeke, 2009, p. 319). There is, however, some research that has been conducted by PR consultants and corporate organizations which, unfortunately, remains in private custody thus rarely influencing the direction of the practice in Kenya (Mbeke, 2009). Therefore, this thesis project seeks to explore the public relations models that inform the practice of public relations in Kenya, cultural values that influence this practice and finally, the relationship between the public relations models and cultural values.

Research Questions

To provide a context in which public relations functions in Kenya, this project begins with a literature review of the societal factors that influence the practice of public relations in Kenya, based on four factors discussed by Botan (1992) as being common discriminators of national public relations practice in any country. The second part of the literature review will examine the public relations models that will be used to quantitatively analyze the models of public relations that are practiced in Kenya. The third part of the literature review looks at how culture influences public relations and reviews Hofstede’s (1980) six work related cultural dimensions that will be used to examine how culture influences the practice of public relations in Kenya. Research questions that will guide this study include:

RQ1 What models of public relations are practiced in Kenya?
RQ2 What are the Kenyan public relations practitioners’ work-related cultural values?
RQ3 What is the relationship between the work-related cultural values and the public relations models?

Literature Review

Societal factors influencing public relations in Kenya

Botan (1992) recommended a schema that “can be used to critique the common ethnocentric perspective on public relations for its failure to recognize important differences between nations and cultures” (p. 154). The public relations matrix devised by Botan (1992) was derived from a literature review conducted on a project comparing international public relations theories. The literature review suggested as discriminators
of national public relations matrices at least four factors; history of the practice, the level of national development, legal/political context and primary clients (Botan, 1992). In an attempt to understand the societal factors and assumptions that guide the practice public relations in Kenya, this literature review section will apply the four factors discussed by Botan (1992) and review each so as to bring out important aspects that inform the meaning and practice of public relations in Kenya.

**History of the Practice**

The history of the practice, Botan (1992) states, refers to the background out of which public relations developed. “Journalism and the mass media, business, and government are three common backgrounds, although further research may establish that religion can make important contributions in some societies” (Botan, 1992, p. 154). In the United States, Botan (1992) argues, public relations traces much of its practice back to journalism and mass media. Like the United States, many African countries have the media as the primary spawning ground of public relations (Botan, 1992). Despite public relations in the United States and many African countries sharing much of its practice in journalism, there are other historical components that bring out different perspectives on the practice of public relations in different countries.

Considering that most African countries attained independence less that five decades ago, the influence of the colonial administration on the practice of public relations in African countries cannot be ignored. Having attained her independence from Great Britain in 1963, Kenya’s history is replete with several aspects of the colonial administration that to date permeate the traditional and professional aspects of life among its people and organizations. Therefore, a review of how the British colonial government administered the Kenyan colony would offer a unique perspective into the practice of most professions in modern day Kenya, public relations being one of them.

According to L’Etang and Muruli (2004), the emergence of public relations in Kenya was the consequence of the desire of powerful interest groups, among them the British colonial administration, to create and manage public opinion. “… the exercise of colonial power by a few in the ostensible interests of the many required careful management of relationships supported by appropriate rhetorical strategies and tactics”
It is in the early 1920s that British civil servants at both the local and national levels started getting aware of the importance of public relations. They detected the necessity for government to manage public opinion in an emerging democracy partly because of the extensive social and political legislation passed in Britain from the 1830s onward. This legislation forced a profound change in the relationship between government and people both at national and local levels… It can be argued that British government public relations existed in Kenya from the inception of the colony in terms of building and maintaining relationships with key publics but used interpersonal and social relations as the main technique to achieve harmony and acceptance of its goals. (L’Etang & Muruli, 2004, p. 218 – 220).

In order to step up its efforts to pass information to the people, the colonial administration established the Kenyan Information Office (KIO) to handle its information and press functions. “In 1942, the post of principal information officer (PIO) was created to take over the information and press duties from the KIO. Then, in 1944, a specialized post of public relations officer was created within the KIO with greater strategic responsibility for producing and supplying publicity materials” (Blankson, 2009, p. 198 – 199).

Due to the prolonged struggle for independence that pitted Kenya against the colonial administration, it can be argued that most of the information coming from the British administrators was one-way and with one goal – to have Kenyans toe the line of the colonial administration. Indeed, most of information coming from the colonial government has been classified as propaganda. “… as the Kenyan case illustrates, in some cultural contexts it is difficult to separate government political propaganda from public relations practice. This is partly as a result of the colonial heritage because the historical relationship between government propaganda and public relations in Britain is equally unclear” (L’Etang & Muruli, 2004, p. 235-236).

According to Mbeke (2009), the colonial government employed a “top-down” communication model that made use of the chief’s baraza (a public meeting called by the
chief) as the focal point for exchange of communication between the government and the community. When it was not employing the “top-down” communication structure through the chief’s baraza, the colonial administration was involved in “distribution of propaganda messages to the settler and African communities” (Mbeke, 2009, p. 310). In order to defeat the Mau Mau – the civil society movement that led the struggle for Kenya’s independence – the British colonial administrators used propaganda against the pro-independence movement.

The top-down structure of communication and propaganda tactics that were employed during the colonial days in the Kenyan colony are prevalent in present day Kenya. A look at the structure of communication in the present day Kenyan government indicates the existence of a top-down structure of communication, similar to the one that existed during the colonial days. Every government ministry or organization has public information officers whose main responsibility is to communicate to the public decisions that the government wants embraced, irrespective of whether or not public opinion was factored when coming up with such decisions.

The one-way form of communication, defined as press agentry and public information models by Grunig (1992), heightened during the 24-year rule of former President Daniel Moi whose leadership style has been described as dictatorial. “President Moi favors flattering news, like the obsequious televised accounts of his daily activities” (New York Times, 1996, p. 12). Before being forced out of power in 2002, Moi had become a permanent fixture in the offices and sitting rooms of Kenyans who had offices and owned a television. Those found not hanging the president’s portrait in their offices, whether they were private or public offices were liable for prosecution.

Journalists from the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) and Kenya News Agency (KNA), two media organizations that are fully funded by the taxpayer and controlled by the government of the day, would ordinarily relay government communication from ministries and other governmental organizations after those in charge have made decisions. Even after Moi’s exit from power, KBC and KNA have not completely stopped giving prominence to unworthy news events, such as the President attending the Sunday church service.
With each ministry having a fully-fledged public information office, the Kenyan public is usually inundated with one-way generated information about what the President, cabinet minister or chief executive officer of a particular public organization spent the day doing and not more so about what the public expects from the government. Mbeke (2009) note that in present day Kenya, politicians, business people, clergy and development workers still use the *baraza* model as a forum for information dissemination. The one-way form of communication, referred to as public information by Grunig and Hunt (1984), involves revealing accurate information but engaging in no research that would foster a two-way form of communication. However, in some cases, the information passed to the public may not be necessarily accurate as most governments are inclined to engage in propaganda in order to remain politically relevant.

Another common background that has made contribution to the practice of public relations in Kenya is private business. In the private sector, Muruli (2001) states, public relations emerged as a consequence of labor conflicts and the important role that international capital played in the Kenyan post-independence economy. Business such as the East African Breweries, Kenya Shell, Kenya Power and Lighting Company, Unilever, and the East Africa Harbors Corporation became aware of the virtues of publicity in the late 1940s. “Their charge was primarily to develop personal relationships in the Kenyan communities to win friends and influence people, particularly during Kenya’s labor conflicts and Mau Mau emergency” (Blankson, 2009, p. 199). And after independence in 1963, most business organizations and union groups acknowledged the need for planned public relations.

Organizations like the Kenya Power and Lighting Company developed their communication to include areas like internal communication while Kenya Shell developed a wide range of corporate social responsibility programs in areas such as environmental conservation and philanthropy (Blankson, 2009). In present day Kenya, most local private businesses have continued to recognize the need for public relations in order to build lasting relationships with their publics. According to Mbeke (2009), most corporate organizations in Kenya today are recognizing public relations as an indispensable tool in the all-important process of building relationships with their key publics. While public organizations like government agencies maintain internal public
relations personnel, it is private businesses that mostly seek out additional external services from public relations agencies, ostensibly to boost the efforts of their internal public relations team.

Just like in the United States and other developed nations, Kenyan public relations can also be traced to journalism. Consequently, public relations in Kenya has internalized some journalism values, key among them being able to use some of the developed mass media as their primary communication channel. However, the fact that journalism was the spawning ground of public relations in the United States and Kenya does not necessarily lead to a similar matrix in both countries partly because the history of the practice interacts with other components such as the literacy levels. Particularly, there is the question of the traditional communication channels that were and are still used by some Kenyan communities that happen to have high rates of illiteracy. However, illiteracy and literacy levels aside, there are certain communities that are proud of their traditional means of communication and will be inclined to continue using them no matter the progress that the rest of the society has made toward embracing advanced means of mass communication.

Due to the high levels of illiteracy in some Kenyan communities, not everyone is able to decode media messages that are mostly encoded in English or Kiswahili. Indeed, even if the media were to communicate to the locals through their dialects, there is no guarantee that they would completely decipher the complexity of the message itself. Also, since the cost of buying and maintaining a transistor radio is something that still remains out of reach for most rural families in Kenya is itself a challenge for communication professionals wishing to pass a message to certain publics in Kenya’s countryside. Consequently, some communities in Kenya, like the Maasai, have continued to use storytelling, song and dance as channels of conducting public education and communication. Therefore, though Kenya’s public relations could trace some of its values to journalism, there are still some traditional methods of communication that remain relevant to certain group of publics.
Level of National Development

According to Botan (1992), the level of national unity implies not only the level of economic development and market competitiveness, but development of the information infrastructure and level of national unity. “Differences in the level of national development are important because they influence who public relations is called to serve and how… Level of national development also largely determines the amount and kind of media resources available for public relations, literacy rates, and whether there is competitive economy that uses public relations” (Botan, 1992, p. 155). Since the maturity of national politics is correlated with levels of national unity in most countries around the world, this section will review the state of Kenya’s national politics and conclude with a look at the state of the economy, and the development of the country’s information infrastructure.

After gaining independence in 1963, the founding fathers of the nation embarked on implementing the independence constitution which declared war on disease, hunger, illiteracy, and poverty. Progress was made in the construction of hospitals, schools, roads and economic policies that would guarantee prosperity for all Kenyans. However, when the founding President Jomo Kenyatta declared Kenya a de jure one party state in 1969, the move was seen as a big blow to the democratization of Kenya. The one political party system was heavily criticized locally and internationally as stifling freedoms that are correlated with the socio-economic and political prosperity of a nation.

On many occasions, individuals who held and expressed divergent opinions to those of the government of the day were incarcerated without trial. Such a situation ensured that even people and organizations with good ideas that could contribute to better policy in government were silenced. Consequently, many unpopular decisions were made by a few people in government between 1969 and 1990 when Kenya was under the one party rule.

After 1991, the political space opened up and with it came some level of transparency and accountability for those serving in senior government positions. However, since former President Daniel Moi who served between 1978 and 2002 was not accustomed to dissidence, he continued using instruments of the state such as the
judiciary and his enormous executive powers to silence critics of his government and have his way on matters of national importance.

The omnipresent Moi projected his ruling party, KANU, and government as the only doers of good for Kenya and its people. Over the years, Moi crisscrossed the country instilling fear among his real and perceived enemies. His name evoked fear, authority and allegiance in the country as did top officials of his government. Leaders who dared speak against him were destined to political oblivion while regions that showed wavering political support were allocated little or no developmental funds by the central government. “… behind the mask of gentility, say his critics, is a man who has ruled the East African nation with an iron fist - deceptively symbolised by the silver-topped ivory stick, known as 'rungu' in Swahili, which he sports everywhere he goes. From a humble start, Daniel Torotich arap Moi has come to be seen as one of Africa's 'Big Men’” (Phombeah, BBC, Aug. 5, 2002). Moi’s actions created a cult of personality where individuals were idolized at the expense of constitutionally recognized institutions such as the judiciary and parliament. According to many observers, Moi’s 24 years in power represented the good, bad and ugly of African politics.

Before Moi took over power in 1978, the country was under the leadership of the first president, Jomo Kenyatta, who despite all the good things he may have done during his tenure, has also been accused of having institutionalized corruption. Critics say that it is during his tenure that vast chunks of land were allocated to a few politically correct individuals, especially those from his Kikuyu ethnic community. Such unfair allocations led to unequal distribution of land and other national resources, a situation that has been blamed for the never-ending poverty and ethnic animosity that exists between various communities in Kenya today.

Observers say that the unequal distribution of wealth in the country led to the flare-up of post-election violence in the 2007 general election after Raila Odinga, a flamboyant presidential aspirant, alleged that he had been robbed of victory by the incumbent president, Mwai Kibaki. “Fairer distribution of resources, the criminal rich-poor divide and glaring poverty... provide the ills in society that make Kenya a ticking time bomb” (Daily Nation, Dec. 31, 2009). The inequality in the distribution of wealth resources has led to the widening of the gap between the haves and have-nots. Other
observers have pointed out that such inequalities have led to greed, leading to a situation where those in public and private office are guided by the desire to accumulate as much wealth for themselves as possible, irrespective of how they amass the wealth. “Powerful figures have enforced personal monopolies. Resentment has festered, both among groups whose member are excluded from the deals, and among honest Kenyans” (Economist, International, Nov. 30, 1991). The get-rich-quick attitude that comes at the expense of taxpayers’ hard earned money has led to an alarming increase in corruption in the country over the years.

However, Kenya’s chance to realize its untapped potential came in 2002 after voters kicked out the autocratic regime of Daniel Moi and voted in Mwai Kibaki, a dynamic and enterprising politician whose past record showed his willingness for divergent views within government and commitment to the socio-economic and political emancipation of Kenya and its people. Upon taking over office, Kibaki declared his government’s commitment to the rule of law, transparency and accountability, characteristics that were markedly lacking in the previous administration of Daniel Moi. The election of Kibaki as president opened the floodgates for local and foreign investors who had been hounded out of the country by the unfavorable policies of Moi’s successive governments.

To attract more local and foreign direct investment, Kibaki’s administration immediately embarked on a business deregulation program as part of a wider policy of liberalizing the economy and encourage investment. One major component of this deregulation program was the cancellation of numerous bureaucratic licenses that businesses were required to have in order to do business in Kenya. “The Central Government, through the ministries of Finance and Trade, has effected substantive reductions and simplification of trade licences. Between 2004 and this year (2009), 315 out of 1325 trading licences were dropped” (Daily Nation, Oct. 1, 2009). This decision was hailed across the political spectrum in Kenya as a move in the right direction in the sense that it would substantially reduce the amount of time that prospective business people spent looking for permits to do business in the country.

To assure Kenyans and the international community of its commitment to fight endemic corruption, Kibaki’s government enacted the Anti-Corruption and Economic
Crimes Act and Public Officers Ethics Act in May 2003 aimed at heightening the war against graft in public offices. According to Transparency International, Kenya, the Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act, 2003 “is one of the legal framework instruments enacted in early 2003 by the new government to stem up the fight against corruption in Kenya” (Transparency International, Kenya). This legislation provided for, among other things, the creation of an anti-corruption agency whose mandate would be to spearhead the war against graft.

Other institutional reforms initiated by the new Kibaki government in 2003 – the radical reform of the judiciary, streamlining of public procurement and the passing of the Privatization Bill – contributed to the unlocking of donor aid and a renewed hope at economic revival. In 2007, the country recorded an economic growth of 7.2 per cent, up from less than 1 per cent during the days of the Moi regime in 2002. The contested 2007 general election in which over 1,500 people were killed in post election violence and the ripple effects of the 2009 global economic recession were twin issues that conspired to slow down Kenya’s economic growth. For the first time in four years, the country’s economic growth fell from an all time high of 7.2 per cent in 2007 to 3 per cent in 2009. “After the disruption and loss of tourist earnings as a result of the violence, its economy has clawed its way back, with growth of 2% last year and 3% expected in 2010” (Economist, Feb. 2, 2010).

The determination to fight corruption, instill political stability across the country, and expand business opportunities for local and foreign investors has led to an increase in the number of local and international companies and individuals wanting to do business in Kenya. “As expected, China is leading the pack with lucrative infrastructure, telecoms and defence contracts. Nearly all areas of the economy have seen incredible interest from the Asian tigers, rendering the ‘failed state’ discourses a stillborn” (Kabukuru, New African, March, 2010). “Failed state” is a label that Kenya has received from some international organizations following the 2007 post-election violence. Following the increased number of companies wanting to do business in Kenya, the number of public relations firms and professionals interested in offering their services to private and public businesses located in Kenya has in turn increased. As a case in point, Hill and Knowlton, one of America’s fledging public relation firms, acquired shares in a Kenyan public
relations agency in May 2009, becoming the latest global public relations agency to make its entry into Kenya.

However, it has not been a smooth ride for the Kibaki administration as it seeks to make Kenya a society free of corruption and economically stable. There were several false starts which observers have blamed on the negative attitude toward government among Kenyans and the reluctance by the Kenyan worker to change his/her attitude toward work and the accumulation of wealth. As a result, corruption is still rampant within and outside government and it could take a little longer before Kenyans change their attitude toward property and wealth acquisition. The situation is made worse by the fact that everyone wants to get rich because wealthy people are glorified across the country, irrespective of how they amassed their wealth. Due to the glorification of wealth, majority of those elected and appointed to leadership happen to be rich individuals.

In 2008, the Kibaki administration unveiled Vision 2030, an ambitious economic blueprint which has been hailed as having the potential of putting Kenya in the same developmental league as the Asian Economic Tigers if it were implemented in full. “The best solution so far would be for the country (Kenya) to quickly adopt the Vision 2030 project that is supposed to transform Kenya into a newly-industrialised country in 20 years' time” (Ngugi, allAfrica.com, Feb 11, 2010). In addition, Kenya signed in November 2009 the East African Community (EAC) protocol, a major leap toward integrating the economies of the five member states – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and Rwanda. With Kenya being the region’s economic powerhouse, and its capital city, Nairobi, being the primary communication and financial hub for East Africa, Kenya’s status as an investment and business destination could only be said to be quite promising.

In March 2010, a new constitution for Kenya that was drafted by a team of local and international experts after views were collected and collated from Kenyans across the country received a near unanimous support from individual Kenyans, the civil society, political parties and international partners. Some observers of Kenya have pointed out that a new constitution could herald a new brighter beginning for the country in the social, political and economic front. They argue that the independence constitution that is currently in place in Kenya lacks bold measures that would effectively deal with the challenges of a modernizing African nation like Kenya. Among the countries to hail
Kenya for getting closer to adopting a new constitution is the United States. Through its Embassy in Nairobi, the United States said: “No political process and no constitution is perfect – including those of the United States – but the proposed new constitution contains checks and balances which will ensure greater accountability and adherence to the rule of law. The new constitution will, therefore, secure and protect the interests of all communities and regions of the country” (Kariuki, *Daily Nation*, April 7, 2010).

However, other observers disagree with the notion that a new constitution will tackle the triad challenges of corruption, tribalism and impunity in Kenya. Otieno (2009) argues that corruption, impunity and tribalism “effectively pose a serious threat to the stability of the country with or without a new constitution. Clearly, the promise of a new constitution is not a panacea to the country’s existing woes.” Indeed, it will take more than a new constitution for Kenyans to change their attitudes with a view to discarding the deeply embedded inter-ethnic animosity, the near institutionalized corruption and runaway impunity.

The development of a country’s information infrastructure is another crucial factor that goes a long way in determining the amount and kind of media resources available for public relations. The growth of Kenya’s media was greatly hampered during Moi’s 24-year autocratic regime rule. Local and international pressure for the 1992 reintroduction of multiparty politics also led to the licensing of the first independent FM radio station in Kenya in 1996. Since then, a host of radio and TV stations have been licensed while more independent publications have also surfaced. Irrespective of these developments, freedom of the press is not a guarantee in Kenya.

Following the violence that rocked parts of Kenya after the Electoral commission of Kenya (ECK) declared incumbent Mwai Kibaki the winner of the highly contested 2007 general election, the government cracked down on the media, disconnecting broadcast airwaves for all TV and radio stations, and orchestrating a police raid in one of the local media houses, The Standard Group, for allegedly publishing and broadcasting unflattering content against Kibaki and his government. “Kenyans, on March 2, 2006, woke to the shocking news of an attack on the group, during which KTN (a subsidiary of the Standard Group) was put off air, the printing plant disabled, several computers stolen
and thousands of newspapers burnt” (Nation correspondent, *Daily Nation*, March 2, 2010).

With a hostile political environment, some media houses have attempted to please the government of the day by publishing what those in power would want to see get to members of the public. This scenario has greatly compromised the independence of the media and threatened the development of other professions such as public relations that rely on established media houses to reach their target audience. Without many alternatives on the news outlets to use to disseminate their messages, public relations practitioners are usually left with little choice but to work with the available media houses, irrespective of how less independent they are.

However, the emergence of the new media is changing the way public relations professionals get their messages to their key publics. The launch of the undersea fiber optic cable in Kenya in July 2009 heralded the beginning of unprecedented faster and cheap internet connection in the country. As a result, most public relations practitioners and agencies in Kenya are using Facebook, blogs and twitter to get their messages out to their target publics while building new relationships and enhancing existing ones. However, the ability to get the message to as many people as possible is limited by factors such as lack of internet access in the countryside where majority of the people live, and the high rate of illiteracy. Because internet access is available only in big cities and major towns, the dissemination of information to a larger audience is substantially reduced.

**Legal/Political Context**

The legal/political context refers to the level of protection and political role of the practice of public relations. Issues that are subsumed include freedom of speech and expression, freedom of the press, lobbying and political campaigns (Botan, 1992).

“Because of the legal/political component in the U.S. matrix, the press sees itself as a watchdog over government and business and feels responsible to present alternative, even anti-government, sides of any issue. As a result, public relations practitioners have learned to work through the media to attempt to reach or bring pressure on government bodies…” (Botan, 1992, p. 156).
While Kenya’s press also plays a watchdog role over the government and businesses, it also understands that being too critical of the government could sound a death knell to its business. During the autocratic regime of former president Moi, exposing the ills or shortcomings of his government could have led to the closure of a particular media house or denial of the much needed advertisements that boost the bottom line of any media house. With a powerful executive in power, most media houses are aware that the president, cabinet minister or chief executive of a government-run agency are capable of influencing advertisements that are placed with the media houses by public and private business. Thus, Kenya’s media tends to tone down or completely avoid being associated with any anti-government sentiments.

The role of the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK), a legal entity founded in 1971 with the mandate of promoting excellence in the practice of public relations in Kenya, points to the legal framework under which public relations operates in the country. “To promote the highest degree of respect, practitioners are held to a Code of Professional Conduct based on International Public Relations Association’s (IPRA) code of ethics founded on the Universal Declaration on Human Rights” (Blankson, 2009, p. 200). Over the years, PRSK has embraced a host of ethical standards geared toward promoting excellence in public relations practice in Kenya.

Due to the efforts of PRSK to instill excellence in the practice of public relations, Kenyan practitioners have made great progress toward communicating “deeply ingrained principles of the profession to top corporate management” (Blankson, 2009, p. 200). Managers have continued to appreciate the value of public relations on the organization and the role it plays in making the society a better place for everyone.

*Primary Clients*

Primary clients refers to the primary consumers of public relations services, mostly of whom are profit making corporations and government bodies (Botan, 1992). However, since public relations does not serve a single type of client, not for profit organizations and religious bodies also happen to be major clients.

In Kenya, the government has over the years sought the services of public relations professionals to get their message across the target publics. Whether internal or
external, the public relations services have helped the Kenyan government achieve its objectives in urging the populace to go register as voters, take their children for immunization, and volunteer information to the police in order to step up security for all. Most recently, the Kenya government employed the services of Apex Communications, a local public relations agency, to carry out a communication strategy for the 2009 Census with a view to having the citizenry see the need to be counted. In the ongoing efforts for a new constitution, the government has on various occasions used public relations services to convince Kenyans to come out in large numbers and offer their views on what they think should go into the new constitution.

Corporate organizations are also high consumers of public relations services while non-profit organizations like the Kenya Red Cross and civil society movements are also increasingly seeking out public relations services. Gina Din Corporate Communications (GDCC), a leading and award winning public relations agency in Kenya lists among its clients local banks, insurance, manufacturing and telecommunications firms. Also in the list of its clients for public relations services is a non-governmental as well as non-profit organization, Safaricom Foundation, an entity established by local telecommunications giant, Safaricom Ltd, to oversee its corporate social responsibility programs. “GDCC has experience across diverse industry sectors having worked with clients in sectors including banking, finance, insurance, tourism, aviation, energy, telecom, consumer and non-governmental amongst others” (ginadin.com, April, 2010).

Due to the rising number of international business firms doing business in Kenya, the demand for public relations services has gone up. With the Kenya government establishing bold economic and legislative measures to create a favorable business environment for foreign investors, the demand for public relations services is undoubtedly set to rise given the need for foreign business entities to understand the local market. Among the international organizations listed by Gina Din Corporate Communications (GDCC) as part of its clients in the year 2010 is LG Electronics, the Korean televisions and mobile phones manufacturing behemoth. Others are General Motors East Africa limited, a subsidiary of America’s General Motors, GlaxoSmithKline, General Electric and Unilever Kenya limited, among others (ginadin.com, April 2010).
Public Relations Models

Grunig and Hunt (1984) were the first to define four typical ways in which public relations is practiced – four models of public relations. The four – press agentry, public information, two way asymmetrical, and two way symmetrical – describe how public relations is practiced in the United States. Since that time, these four models have been at the center of intense research by public relations scholars. Later on, other models that could be applicable on the international arena were designed. This section will review Grunig and Hunt (1984) four models in addition to two other models that are applicable in international public relations practice – Personal influence model (Sriramesh 1992) and the Cultural interpreter model (Lyra (1991).

The press agentry model has the sole purpose of gaining publicity for the organization and public relations officers are determined to have stories of their clients appear in the media. “The press agentry model applies when a communication program strives for favorable publicity, especially in the mass media” (Grunig, 1992, p. 18).

The purpose of public information model is to disseminate positive information about an organization to the media and public. “A program based on the public information model uses ‘journalists in residence’ to disseminate relatively objective information through the mass media and controlled media such as newsletters, brochures and direct mail” (Grunig, 1992, p. 18).

Press agentry and public information are one-way of public relations whose communication programs are not based on research and strategic planning (Grunig, 1992). Contrary to excellent public relations programs which emphasize on sophisticated and effective models of communication, press agentry and public communication are asymmetrical models that try to make the organization look good either through propaganda or disseminating only favorable information (Grunig, 1992).

In the third model of public relations, the two-way asymmetrical model, public relations practitioners conduct research to identify messages that are likely to persuade the public. Public relations officers practicing this model have the interests of their organization or client at heart and do not put into consideration the views of the public. “The two way asymmetrical is a more sophisticated approach in that it uses research to
develop messages that are most likely to persuade strategic publics to behave as the organization wants” (Grunig, 1992, p. 18).

The fourth model, the two-way symmetrical model, is geared toward building a mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and the public. According to Grunig (1992), the two-way symmetrical is considered the excellence model in public relations. “Two way symmetrical describes a model of public relations that is based on research and that uses communication to manage conflict and improve understanding with strategic publics” (Grunig, 1992, p. 18).

Personal influence model (Sriramesh 1992) describes how practitioners cultivate good relations with key publics, usually government, and journalists. The main purpose of cultivating such interpersonal relations is to secure government approval and positive coverage from journalists. The job of the public relations practitioner is to perform “personal influence relations” (Sriramesh, 1992, p. 207). Socializing is one of the most important activities for a public relations practitioner while the best way to gain influence is to provide freebies such as holiday gifts.

The cultural interpreter model was identified by Lyra (1991) based on public relations practice in Greece. According to Grunig et al., (1995), this model “seems to exist in organizations that do business in another country, where it needs someone who understands the language, culture, customs, and political system of the host country” (p. 182). These six models provide a theoretical framework of how public relations is practiced not only in the United States but internationally.

**Culture and public relations practice**

According to Taylor (2001), the need to study how societal culture influences the practice of international public relations cannot be overemphasized. Wu et al., (2001) pointed out that one of the best ways to examine the relationship between culture and public relations is through the use of Hofstede’s six work-related cultural dimensions. Hofstede collected data from a large multinational organization, IBM, and analyzed data collected from over 50 different countries. The six work-related cultural dimensions that emerged as prevalent in many countries were power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, individualism, femininity and masculinity.
Hofstede defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another. Culture in this sense, includes systems of values; and values are among the building blocks of culture” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 21). Kent & Taylor (1999) pointed out that culture is composed of the assumptions that are brought into an organization through the experiences and attitudes of employees.

It is now widely accepted that the particular economy, location, and history of a nation will influence the practice of public relations and that culture is linked both internally and externally to the practice of public relations. Corporate culture, as an internal organizational variable, has a direct and indirect effect on the public relations practice of an organization. Culture as an external factor also influences communication messages, relationships, and national approaches to public relations. (Kent & Taylor, 1999, p. 19).

There is therefore little doubt that the history of Kenya, politics and economy would influence the practice of public relations in the country. If the culture of a country is transferable by individuals from the larger society to specific organizations, then the practice of public relations in Kenya could be very different from a practice of public relations in any other country.

An analysis of Hofstede’s cultural frameworks – power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, collectivism, femininity and masculinity – and correlating them with characteristics that comprise each of Grunig’s four models to public relations and two other models of international public relations would give an understanding of how culture influences public relations in Kenya and the kind of models that are mostly practiced in the country.

**Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions**

Power distance points to the basic differences of inequality across cultures (Hofstede, 1980). “Power distance is a measure of the interpersonal power or influence between B [boss] and S [subordinate] as perceived by the least powerful of the two” (p.70-71). In high power distance cultures, organizational hierarchy marks daily
operations. In such cultures, subordinates are afraid to air their views. In low power distance cultures, organizations tend to have flat structures and subordinates can air their views freely without the unnecessary fear of being victimized.

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the ability of humans to cope with ambiguity and risk (Hofstede, 1980). Organizational rules and work-related stress are important parts of this cultural dimension. In high uncertainty avoidance organizations, it is important to follow the organization’s rules even if breaking them would save the organization some money or embarrassment. In low uncertainty avoidance places of work, there are fewer written rules and rituals and individual creativity is encouraged.

Individualism “describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity which prevails in a given society” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 148). High individualistic societies tend to care about self-actualization and career progression more than anything else. The fourth work-related cultural dimension, collectivism, defines individuals with values that tend to concern the welfare of the entire organization than their well being as individuals. Those who work in collectivist cultures as opposed to individualistic ones tend to cooperate well with one another for the betterment of the organization.

The fifth dimension, masculinity, defines the gender roles in organizations. In high masculinity organizations, there is glass ceiling for women while in low masculinity cultures, women can get the same opportunities as men. Femininity, the sixth cultural dimension, describes cultures low on masculinity. According to Wu, Taylor & Chen (2001), a nation where both men and women are, for example, pre-school teachers, secretaries, and nurses would be classified as highly feminine while a country where women and men perform different types/ categories of jobs would be labeled as a masculine culture.

Combining Hofstede’s six work-related cultural dimensions with the six models that define the practice of public relations brings a cultural perspective to public relations theory and practice.

As discussed in the literature review section, the need for a quantitative study on the practice of public relations in Kenya could not have come at a more opportune time. With trade barriers between nations of the world coming down each day as a result of
globalization, Kenya has emerged as one place where current and emerging multinationals are seeking to set base. Public relations firms have not been left behind either; they are continuously and vigorously seeking ways to offer their professional services to the expanding multinationals. Regional wise, Kenya has emerged as a key player in the socio-economic and political growth of its East and Central African partners, thus the need to study the practice of public relations in Kenya.

A quantitative study of public relations in Kenya would offer interesting observations on how the reviewed cultural values influence the practice of public relations in Kenya. The proposed study would also offer rare observations into the kind of public relations models that inform the practice of public relations in Kenya.
CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

This study sought to examine the kind of public relations models that are practiced in Kenya, the work-related cultural values among Kenyan public relations practitioners in Kenya, and the relationship between the public relations models and the cultural values. The following research questions were explored:

RQ1 What models of public relations are practiced in Kenya?
RQ2 What are the Kenyan public relations practitioners’ work-related cultural values?
RQ3 What is the relationship between cultural values and the public relations models?

This methodology section explains how this study was operationalized.

Sample

Participants of this study were Kenyan public relations practitioners working with either public relations agencies or communication departments in governmental and non-governmental organizations. According to the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK), there are 47 registered public relations firms operating in Kenya. In terms of individual membership, the society states: “The PRSK has grown to unprecedented levels. (The year) 2008 registered remarkable growth in membership with the entry into the Society of 93 Public Relations & Communication practitioners from Government Ministries and over 130 students from Moi University submitted their application forms” (PRSK, 2009). The number of public relations practitioners in Kenya could be higher because the figures reported by PRSK does not include an estimation of the total number of practitioners working in the 47 public relations agencies operating in the country.

Since there is internet access in virtually every office in Kenya’s capital city, Nairobi, where most businesses are located, online data collection was the most appropriate way to conduct the study among Kenyan public relations practitioners. A link from Checkbox was sent to two research assistants retained to help with the gathering of data. The research assistants distributed the link to practitioners and followed it up with telephone calls. Where possible, the principal researcher sent the link directly to the
Kenyan public relations practitioners he already knows. This data collection ultimately assumed a snowball approach where initial participants shared the survey link with other possible participants.

A contact person at the Public Relations Society of Kenya (PRSK) secretariat was also requested to distribute the survey link to members and urge them to participate. In order to encourage them to participate, there was a reward of five Nano iPods that were won by participants following a computer draw. The initial target number of participants for this study was 50. The survey registered a total of 51 respondents within the two weeks it was active.

**Instruments**

This study used Grunig’s four public relations models plus the personal influence model (Sriramesh, 1992) and the cultural interpreter model (Lyra, 1991), both based on international research projects. To date, a few researchers have tried to quantitatively apply these six models of public relations in a bid to examine the practice of public relations in various nations around the world. Taylor and Vasquez (2000) used Grunig’s four models and combined them with Hofstede’s (1980) four cultural work-related values to conduct a cultural investigation of the practice of public relations in the United States.

Wu, Taylor and Chen (2001) used Grunig’s four models plus the two international models – personal influence and cultural interpreter – to quantitatively investigate the public relations models that are most applicable in Taiwan. And in order to understand the cultural values that influence the practice of public relations in Taiwan, Wu, Taylor and Chen (2001) combined the six public relations models with Hofstede’s (1980) cultural values that he identified as common in most nations.

Knowing the type of model that is practiced in a particular country is not enough. Since culture has significant influence on the practice of public relations, a combination of the six public relations models with Hofstede’s (1980) six cultural dimensions seems to be the logical thing to do if an understanding of the role that culture plays in the practice of public relations in different nations is to be deciphered. The study in Kenya adopted the instruments that Wu, Taylor and Chen (2001) used while investigating the models that are used in Taiwan and the cultural values that influence the practice of public relations in that country.
In addition, the study in Kenya sought to gather information on some demographics; gender (male or female), age bracket (18-24, 25-35, 36-45, 46-55, 55-), level of education (certificate, diploma/associates degree, undergraduate degree, postgraduate diploma/certificate, masters, Ph.D.), type of organization they work with (PR agency, government ministry, government corporation, non-governmental corporation or private consulting), and number of years worked in public relations (see appendix 1).

Permission to use the same scales as in the Taiwan study was sought from Maureen Taylor, one of the researchers, and was granted. The entire quantitative part of this study had 48 questions; the first 24 measured the public relations models practiced in Kenya (see appendix 2) while the other 24 items measured the practitioners’ cultural values (see appendix 3). Seven-point Likert-type scales, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, measured all of the 48 items. SPSS for windows was used for the statistical analysis and a significance level of 0.05 was set.

In the Taiwan study, each of the models had four questions for participants. The reliability for each of the index was as follows: Press agentry; 0.83, Public information; 0.52, two-way asymmetrical; 0.53, two way symmetrical; 0.68, personal influence model; 0.66, and cultural interpreter model; 0.78. On the work-related cultural values section, the reliabilities of the variables that were measured are as follows: power distance; 0.85, uncertainty avoidance; 0.39, femininity; 0.92, masculinity; 0.82, individualism; 0.75 and collectivism; 0.84. According to Fernadez, Carlson, Stepina, and Nicholson, Hofstede’s original measurement of uncertainty avoidance had validity problems because items in this dimension measured three different constructs (Fernadez et al., 1997). This study in Kenya omitted items in the public relations models and work-related cultural values indices that appeared to lower the reliabilities of the constructs. After excluding some items, all the indices registered reliabilities of over 0.60. (The items that were omitted are noted in tables 1 and 2 in the results section).

To operationalize RQ1, each of the six models of public relations had four statements that participants responded to. The questions were reformulated to read “Kenya” where they read “Taiwan” in the Wu, Taylor and Chen (2001) study.
Practitioners using the press agentry model are involved in disseminating information but this information may not be truthful. The press agentry model consisted of four statements: 1) The main purpose of my organization/agency’s public relations is to get publicity about my organization/client; 2) In public relations we mostly attempt to get favorable publicity into the media and to keep unfavorable publicity out; 3) We determine how successful a program is from the number of people who attend an event or use our products and services; 4) In my organization/agency, public relations and publicity mean essential the same thing.

The public information model shows that practitioners rely on truthful but one-way communication to inform the public about a situation or event. The public communication model consisted of the following statements: 1) In public relations, nearly everyone is so busy writing news stories or producing publications that there is no time to do research; 2) In public relations, we disseminate accurate information but do not volunteer unfavorable information; 3) Keeping a clipping file is about the only way we have to determine the success of a program; 4) In my organization/agency, public relations is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for the organization or mediator between management and publics.

Two-way asymmetrical model shows that practitioners involve in research but use information from such research to benefit the organization and not the publics. The model consisted of the following statements: 1) After completing a public relations program, we do research to determine how effective the program has been in changing people’s attitudes; 2) In public relations, our broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organization wants them to behavior; 3) Before starting a public relations program, we look at attitude surveys to make sure we describe the organization in ways our publics would be most likely to accept; 4) Before beginning a program, we do research to determine public attitudes toward the organization and how they might change.

The two-way symmetrical model seeks to create a win-win situation for the organization and its publics. The model consisted of the following statements: 1) The purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organization and publics the organization affects; 2) Before starting a program, we do surveys or informal research to find out how much management and our publics
understand each other; 3) The purpose of public relations is to change the attitudes and behavior of management as much as it is to change the attitudes and behavior of publics; 4) Our organization/agency believes public relations should provide mediation for the organization, to help management and publics negotiate conflicts.

The personal influence model exists in some nations where practitioners cultivate good relationships with journalists and government officials with a view to advancing the interests of the organization. This model consisted of the following statements: 1) Having good interpersonal relationships with other employees in my organization is very important for PR practitioners; 2) Having good interpersonal relationships with people outside my organization is very important for PR practitioners; 3) Socializing is one of the most important activities for a PR practitioner; 4) The best way to being successful at PR is to provide benefits (dinner, gifts) to gain influence with personal contacts.

The cultural interpreter model exists where practitioners act as mediators between their own culture and their international clients (Wu, Taylor and Chen, 2001). The model consisted of the following statement: 1) Understanding a second language is important for a PR practitioner; 2) Providing services to international clients is an important part of my job; 3) Helping my international clients understand the Kenyan business environment is important; 4) Introducing my international clients to important people in Kenya is important.

To establish the public relations model(s) that are mostly practiced in Kenya, means were conducted on each of the model and its accompanying statement. It was postulated that the model whose statements will have the highest means would be indicative of the model that is mostly practiced in Kenya.

To operationalize RQ2 and understand the work-related cultural values among Kenyan public relations practitioners, four statements were used to describe each of the six dimensions of culture.

Power distance, Hofstede (1980) notes, points to the basic differences of inequality across cultures. The power distance dimension consisted of the following statements: 1) In this organization, subordinates are afraid to express disagreement with their superior; 2) My supervisor usually makes decisions on his/her own and then expects the decisions to be carried out loyally and without raising difficulties; 3) My supervisor
usually makes decisions on his/her own but before going ahead explains the reasons for
the decisions and answers any questions; 4) I prefer to work for any type of supervisor
expect for one who asks me for advice and then announces his/her decision and expects
me to loyally implement the decision whether or not it was in accordance with the advice
I gave.

The uncertainty avoidance refers to the ability of human beings to deal with
and work-related stress are important parts of this variable. The uncertainty avoidance
dimension was composed of the following four statements: 1) It is very important to
follow organizational rules even if I think it is in the organization’s best interests if I
break the rules; 2) It is important for me to work in a well-designed job situation where
the responsibilities and requirements are clear; 3) It is very important for me to have long
term security of employment; 4) It is very important for me to have little tension and
stress on the job.

According to Hofstede (1984), masculinity measures the duality of the sexes.
“Masculinity is significantly negatively correlated with the percentage of women in
professional and technical jobs, at least in the wealthier countries, and positively with the
segregation of the sexes in higher education” (Hofstede, 1984, 177). Given the patriarchal
nature of Kenya’s society, this dimension will certainly offer further insight into the
practice of public relations in Kenya. This index consisted of the following four
statements: 1) Having training opportunities to improve or learn new skills is important;
2) Working in a modern, up-to-date company is important; 3) Having an opportunity for
high earning is important; 4) Having an opportunity for advancement to higher level jobs
is important.

According to Taylor and Vasquez (2000), femininity measures the extent to which
members of a particular culture value the qualitative aspects of work, including
environment and good working relationships. “High femininity cultures allow both males
and females to work in the same types of jobs” (Taylor and Vasquez, 2000, p. 440). This
index was composed of the following statements: 1) Having a good working relationship
with my direct supervisor is important; 2) Working with people who cooperate well with
one another is important; 3) Working in a friendly atmosphere is important; 4) Having good physical working conditions is important.

The individualism index, Hofstede (1984) notes, “describes the relationship between the individual and the collectivity which prevails in a given society” (p. 148). Scores from this index will show the extent to which a particular culture values the accomplishments of an individual. The four statements that described this dimension to culture were: 1) Having sufficient time left for my personal or family is important; 2) Having challenging tasks to do, from which I can get a personal sense of accomplishment is important; 3) Fully use of my skills and abilities on the job is important; 4) Working in a large and prestigious organization is important.

Collectivism shows how a culture values the well-being of the collective over the needs of the individual (Taylor and Vasquez, 2000). This dimension was composed of the following statements: 1) Making a real contribution to the success of my organization is important; 2) Serving my country is important; 3) Working in a smaller, but desirable organization is important; 4) Having an opportunity for helping other people is important.

In order to establish the Kenyan public relations practitioner’s work-related cultural values, means were conducted on each dimension and its accompanying statement. It was postulated that the dimension whose statements will have the highest means would be indicative of the work-related cultural values that most prevail among Kenyan public relations practitioners.

To operationalize RQ3, a relationship between the six models of public relations and the dimensions of culture was sought through a correlation analysis. Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted between the six models of public relations and Hofstede’s dimensions of culture. A level of significance of 0.05 was set.

This study was able to indicate the public relations models that are mostly used in Kenya, the Kenyan public relations practitioners’ work-related cultural values and finally, the relationship between the models and cultural values. Demographics of gender, age, level of education and type of organization they work for were also collected.
CHAPTER THREE

Results

The quantitative data examined the practices of public relations in Kenya, the work-related cultural values among Kenyan public relations practitioners, and the relationship between the public relations models and the cultural values. The data for this study are based on 51 respondents working as public relations professionals in various types of organizations in Kenya. Twenty-nine (56.9%) respondents were female and 22 (43.1%) were male. Thirty-one (60.8%) respondents were in the age category of 25-32 years old, 14 (27.5%) respondents were in between the 33-44 age category, 4 (7.8%) respondents were between 18-24 years old and 2 (3.9%) respondents were between 45-55 years old.

In terms of education, 22 (43.1%) respondents had an undergraduate degree, 12 (23.5%) respondents had a master’s degree, 10 (19.6%) had an associate’s degree, 5 (9.8%) had a post-graduate degree and 2 (3.9%) respondents had a doctoral degree. Twenty two (43.1%) respondents worked in a PR agency, 13 (25.5%) respondents did private consulting or independent public relations practice, 8 (15.7%) worked in a non-governmental organization, 5 (9.8%) respondents worked with a government corporation, 2 (3.9%) worked in a not for profit organization and one (2%) respondent in a government ministry. The number of years worked in public relations ranged from less than a year to 20 years.

The quantitative data examined the practices of six public relations models: Grunig’s four models plus two other international models of public relations. Cronbach’s alphas were calculated to establish the reliabilities of the models in the Kenyan setting. The first research question of this study sought to find out which among the six public relations models is mostly practiced in Kenya. The table below shows the six public relations models with the means of each item and average means for each model.
Table 1: Average Means of Public Relations Models and Reliabilities

Press Agency Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The main purpose of my organization/agency’s public relations is to get publicity about my organization/client.</td>
<td>5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In public relations we mostly attempt to get favorable publicity into the media and to keep unfavorable publicity out.</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. We determine how successful a program is from the number of people who attend an event or use our products and services.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In my organization/agency, public relations and publicity mean essential the same thing.</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Mean</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items)</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Public Information Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In public relations, nearly everyone is so busy writing news stories or producing publications that there is no time to do research.</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In public relations, we disseminate accurate information but do not volunteer unfavorable information.</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Keeping a clipping file is about the only way we have to determine the success of a program.</td>
<td>3.61(Omitted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In my organization/agency, public relations is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for the organization or mediator between management and publics.</td>
<td>4.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Mean</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items)</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the three items after omitting item 3)</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Two-Way Asymmetrical Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. After completing a public relations program, we do research to</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determine how effective the program has been in changing people’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attitudes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In public relations, our broad goal is to persuade publics to</td>
<td>4.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behave as the organization wants them to behave.</td>
<td>(Omitted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Before starting a public relations program, we look at attitude</td>
<td>4.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surveys to make sure we describe the organization in ways our</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>publics would be most likely to accept.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Before beginning a program, we do research to determine public</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attitudes toward the organization and how they might change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Mean</td>
<td>4.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items)</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the three items after omitting item 2)</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Two-Way Symmetrical Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding</td>
<td>5.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>between the management of the organization and publics the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>organization affects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Before starting a program, we do surveys or informal research to</td>
<td>5.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>find out how much management and our publics understand each other.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The purpose of public relations is to change the attitudes and</td>
<td>5.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behavior of management as much as it is to change the attitudes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and behavior of publics.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Our organization/agency believes public relations should provide</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mediation for the organization, to help management and publics negotiate conflicts.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Mean</td>
<td>5.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items)</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal Influence Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Having good interpersonal relationships with other employees in my organization is very important for PR practitioners.</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Having good interpersonal relationships with people outside my organization is very important for PR practitioners.</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Socializing is one of the most important activities for a PR practitioner.</td>
<td>5.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The best way to being successful at PR is to provide benefits (dinner, gifts) to gain influence with personal contacts.</td>
<td>3.37(Omitted)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Mean</td>
<td>6.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items)</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the three items after omitting item 4)</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cultural Interpreter Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Understanding a second language is important for a PR practitioner.</td>
<td>5.12(Omitted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Providing services to international clients is an important part of my job.</td>
<td>5.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Helping my international clients understand the Kenyan business environment is important.</td>
<td>5.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Introducing my international clients to important people in Kenya is important.</td>
<td>5.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Mean</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items)</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results show that the personal influence model is the most favored model by public relations practitioners in Kenya (average mean = 6.43). Since the personal influence index had a low reliability of 0.59, this study omitted item four (The best way to being successful at PR is to provide benefits (dinner, gifts) to gain influence with personal contacts; \( M = 3.37 \)) in order to increase the reliability. Item four was excluded because its mean was starkly inconsistent with the means of the other three items in the personal influence index. After the omission of item four, the personal influence model attained a reliability of 0.69. This particular item may have recorded a very low mean compared to the other three because providing dinners and gifts is, by all standards, not the “best” way to being successful in PR. Indeed, such a statement smacks of bribery among Kenyan professionals who are wary of receiving or giving any gifts lest it is misconstrued as bribery.

The cultural interpreter model emerged as the second most favored model of public relations among the Kenyan practitioners (average mean = 5.75). The reliability of the cultural interpreter index with the four items was 0.63. After omitting item one (Understanding a second language is important for a PR practitioner; \( M = 5.12 \)), the model attained a reliability of 0.70. This item one may have recorded a lower mean than the rest because most public relations practitioners, just like most Kenyans, may not view Kiswahili as a second language. A second language to many Kenyans could either be French, German or Arabic. If the question had been framed to read; Understanding a second language like Swahili is important for a PR practitioner, this item would have recorded a higher mean score thus being at par with the other three items in the index. Indeed, those who understand and speak Swahili and other local dialects have proved to be helpful to foreign companies that want their messages to reach the public in other languages apart from English.

The results show that Grunig’s two-way symmetrical model is the third most favored model of public relations among practitioners in Kenya (average mean = 5.41). The reliability score for two-way symmetrical index was 0.71. The fourth most favored
model is press agentry (average mean = 5.03). The press agentry index had a reliability of 0.74.

The two-way asymmetrical model is the fifth used among Kenyan PR practitioners (average mean = 4.90). With its four items, this index had a reliability of 0.67. However, upon excluding the second item which had the lowest mean among the four (In public relations, our broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organization wants them to behave; \( M = 4.59 \)), the reliability increased to 0.79.

The public information model emerged as the least used among public relations practitioners in Kenya (average mean = 4.46). Since the public information index had a reliability of 0.59 with the four items, item three, which had the lowest mean among the four, was omitted (Keeping a clipping file is about the only way we have to determine the success of a program; \( M = 3.61 \)). Had the item read “Keeping a clipping file is one of the ways we have to determine the success of a program,” the means of the four items would probably have been even. After omitting this particular item, the reliability of public information index rose to 0.64. Other previous international studies (e.g. Wu et al., 2001; Holtzhausen et al., 2003; Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009) that used this instrument recorded even lower reliabilities than seen in this Kenyan study.

The second research question examined the work-related cultural values that are experienced by public relations practitioners in Kenya. Table 2 below shows data on each of the work-related cultural values among public relations practitioners in Kenya.

Table 2: Average Means of Cultural Dimensions and Reliabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>( M )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In this organization, subordinates are afraid to express disagreement with their superior.</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My supervisor usually makes decisions on his/her own and then expects the decisions to be carried out loyally and without raising difficulties.</td>
<td>3.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My supervisor usually makes decisions on his/her own but before</td>
<td>3.78(Omitted)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
going ahead explains the reasons for the decisions and answers any questions.

4. I prefer to work for any type of supervisor except for one who asks me for advice and then announces his/her decision and expects me to loyally implement the decision whether or not it was in accordance with the advice I gave.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Mean</th>
<th>4.03</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items)</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the three items after omitting item 3)</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Uncertainty Avoidance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It is very important to follow organizational rules even if I think it is in the organization’s best interests if I break the rules.</td>
<td>4.18(Omitted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is important for me to work in a well-designed job situation where the responsibilities and requirements are clear.</td>
<td>6.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It is very important for me to have long-term security of employment.</td>
<td>5.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It is very important for me to have little tension and stress on the job.</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Mean</td>
<td>5.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items)</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the three items after omitting item 1)</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Femininity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Having a good working relationship with my direct supervisor is important.</td>
<td>6.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Working with people who cooperate well with one another is important.</td>
<td>6.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Working in a friendly atmosphere is important. & 6.51 \\
4. Having good physical working conditions is important. & 6.49 \\

Average Mean & 6.54 \\
Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items) & 0.93 \\

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculinity</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Items</strong></td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Having training opportunities to improve or learn new skills is important. &amp; 6.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Working in a modern, up-to-date company is important. &amp; 6.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Having an opportunity for high earning is important. &amp; 6.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Having an opportunity for advancement to higher level jobs is important. &amp; 6.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Mean &amp; 6.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items) &amp; 0.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Items</strong></td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Having sufficient time left for my personal or family is important. &amp; 6.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Having challenging tasks to do, from which I can get a personal sense of accomplishment is important. &amp; 6.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Fully use of my skills and abilities on the job is important. &amp; 6.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Working in a large and prestigious organization is important. &amp; 4.41(Omitted)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Mean &amp; 6.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items) &amp; 0.60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the three items after omitting item 4) &amp; 0.91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Collectivism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Making a real contribution to the success of my organization is</td>
<td>6.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Serving my country is important.</td>
<td>6.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Working in a smaller, but desirable organization is important.</td>
<td>5.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Having an opportunity for helping other people is important.</td>
<td>6.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Mean</td>
<td>6.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach alpha reliability (for the four items)</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results for the work-related cultural values show that individualism is the most experienced cultural value among public relations practitioners in Kenya (average mean = 6.56). The four items in the individualism index had a reliability of 0.60 and in order to increase the reliability, item four (Working in a large and prestigious organization is important; \( M = 4.41 \)) was excluded. After the exclusion of the item, the reliability of the three remaining items in the individualism index rose to 0.91.

Femininity followed closely as the second most experienced cultural value among public relations practitioners in Kenya (average mean = 6.54). The femininity index recorded a high reliability of 0.93. The third most experienced work-related cultural value was masculinity (average mean = 6.51). The masculinity index had a reliability of 0.78. Collectivism is a moderately experienced work-related cultural value among Kenyan public relations practitioners (average mean = 6.24). Collectivism had a reliability of 0.66.

Uncertainty avoidance was the fifth experienced work-related cultural value among Kenyan public relations practitioners (average mean = 5.75). Since the reliability of the uncertainty avoidance index was 0.59 with the four items, item one (It is very important to follow organizational rules even if I think it is in the organization’s best interests if I break the rules; \( M = 4.18 \)) was excluded. After excluding this item whose mean was at variance with the other three items, the reliability of the uncertainty avoidance index rose to 0.61.
Power distance emerged as the least experienced work related cultural value among Kenyan public relations practitioners (average mean = 4.03). With the four items, the reliability of the power distance index was 0.66 but after eliminating item 3 (My supervisor usually makes decisions on his/her own but before going ahead explains the reasons for the decisions and answers any questions; \( M = 3.78 \)), whose mean was inconsistent with the others, the reliability of this index rose to 0.68.

The third research question sought to examine the relationship between the six public relations models and the six work-related cultural values. In order to establish such a relationship, a correlation analysis was conducted. Table 3 below summarizes the Pearson’s correlations between the six public relations models and the six work-related cultural values.

### Table 3: Correlations
Correlations between public relations models and Hofstede’s work-related cultural values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Press Agentry</th>
<th>Public Information</th>
<th>Two-Way Asymmetrical</th>
<th>Two-Way Symmetrical</th>
<th>Personal Influence</th>
<th>Cultural Interpreter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Femininity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.533**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.311*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * p < 0.05;
** ** p < 0.01

The results of the Pearson’s correlation show that there is a strong positive correlation between femininity and the personal influence public relations model; \( r=0.533, (p < 0.01) \). There is also a positive correlation between the individualism cultural value and the personal influence public relations model; \( r=0.311, (p < 0.5) \).
CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

The quantitative results have examined the public relations models that are mostly practiced in Kenya and the work-related cultural values that Kenyan public relations practitioners identify with. A cultural critique of public relations in Kenya has also been explored with a correlation analysis of the relationship between the public relations models and Hofstede’s work-related cultural values.

Emerging Public Relations Practices in Kenya

According to this study, the first and second most favored public relations models by Kenyan practitioners are the two international models; the personal influence and cultural interpreter models respectively. By identifying personal influence model as their most favored model, the Kenyan public relations practitioners are pointing to the great importance they attach to good interpersonal relations and networking in the course of their work. The practitioners play a pivotal role in helping organizations and clients socialize and build good relations with key publics. The choice of the cultural interpreter model as the second most favored model points not only to the increasing internationalization of Kenyan public relations but the growth of international trade in Kenya.

The results of this quantitative study are similar to the outcome of other studies carried out in Ghana, South Africa and India. In a study using the same instruments as used in this Kenyan study, Wu & Baah-Boakye (2009) found the two international models; the personal influence and cultural interpreter to be the most frequently practiced in Ghana. Though the study in South Africa used a different set of scales, Holtzhausen (2005) found out that the practice of public relations in South Africa was fast moving toward relationship building and networking, two attributes that define the two international models of public relations - personal influence and cultural interpreter. In India, Sriramesh (1992) note that though public relations practitioners still write press releases, they “perform other duties such as hospitality and personal influence relations” (p. 207).
Research outcome showing strong preference for the personal influence and cultural interpreter models internationally is at variance with the results of a similar study done in the United States which showed that American public relations practitioners practice one-way model of communication (Taylor & Vasquez, 1999). It is, however, instructive to note that the Taylor & Vasquez (1999) study did not test whether or not the personal influence and cultural interpreter models were practiced in the United States.

The emergence of the two international models of public relations – the personal influence and cultural interpreter – as the most used in Ghana, India, South Africa and now Kenya, is indicative of how the practice of public relations is making a transition to the erstwhile unexplored areas of relationship building and networking with key publics. These developments have major implications in the practice of public relations not only internationally but in the United States and Europe, two areas that have previously not paid much attention to the development of public relations outside their borders. Sharpe (1992) argued that due to advancements in technology, travel, and increased economic and social dependence, public relations in developing countries is developing at a rate never imaged in the West. He wrote:

The leap in advancements in the development of public relations in other countries, however, frequently astounds a United States visitor. In fact advancements that have taken us nearly a century to achieve have been accomplished in a decade in many countries. Many of the professional accomplishments we are still working toward in education and in our professional organizations have already been achieved in less developed countries (Sharpe, 1992).

Such an observation lends credence to the need for Western nations to pay closer attention to ongoing developments of public relations in even less developed countries in this era of globalization. Particularly, the need for practitioners and scholars to recognize the unique role that culture plays in the practice of public relations cannot be gainsaid.

Another interesting observation in the results from this Kenyan study is that the two-way symmetrical model, considered by Grunig (1992) as the excellence model in public relations, is the most favored by Kenyan practitioners from among the four models discussed by Grunig (1992). The objective of the two-way symmetrical approach in
public relations is to create a mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and its publics (Grunig, 1992). The emergence of two-way symmetrical as a favored public relations model suggests that practitioners in Kenya are paying attention to not only the needs and aspirations of the organizations they work for but the public.

The two-way approach of public relations that Kenyan practitioners have apparently embraced is in stark contrast with the fixation on mostly getting publicity for the client/organization that practitioners in Third World were used to over a decade ago. Van Leuven & Pratt (1996) noted that in Africa, “publicity, in its narrow sense, not public relations, is the emphasis of communications programs. Publicity has often been the benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of Third World public relations” (p. 100). It is instructive to note that it is over a decade ago since the Van Leuven & Pratt (1996) article was published and public relations in Kenya and the rest of Africa has undoubtedly gone through major developmental changes. As the results of this quantitative study show, Kenyan public relations practitioners are recognizing that the public is an integral constituent of any communication initiative and that focusing on publicity alone does not lead to the much needed win-win situation between the organization and its public.

However, the use of research as tool to gauge the needs of the public for effective decision-making process is something that Kenyan public relations practitioners are evidently struggling to embrace. The failure by Kenyan public relations practitioners to incorporate research to measure and understand the needs of the public is evidenced by the low mean score of item two (Before starting a program, we do surveys or informal research to find out how much management and our publics understand each other; 5.10) in the two-way symmetrical index. The other three items in the two-way symmetrical index had considerably higher means than item two which asked about the use of research to gauge how management and public understand each other.

Interestingly, item one (The purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organization and publics the organization affects; 5.92) had the highest mean among the other three. With this item scoring a higher mean than the other three, one could easily argue that Kenyan public relations practitioners know what constitutes an excellent model of public relations but do not
know or agree on whether or not the use of research to gauge how well the organization and its public understand one another is important.

Though Kenyan public relations practitioners have recognized the need for two-way symmetrical approach in their work, they have clearly not shed off their focus on publicity as a key strategy in disseminating messages. The press agentry model, which focuses mostly on gaining publicity for the client/organization at almost every cost, emerged as the fourth most favored model of public relations in Kenya. Among Grunig’s (1992) four models, press agentry is the second most favored model of public relations in Kenya. The emergence of press agentry as the second most favored model among Grunig’s (1992) four models seems to vindicate, albeit partially, Van Leuven & Pratt’s (1996) observation that “publicity has often been the benchmark for evaluating the effectiveness of Third World public relations” (p. 100). As the saying goes, ‘old habits die hard,’ and Kenyan public relations practitioners are seemingly still focused on getting publicity for their organizations/clients. However, the fact that item four in the press agentry index scored the lowest mean (In my organization/agency, public relations and publicity mean essentially the same thing; 3.98) shows that Kenyan public relations practitioners draw a clear line between public relations and publicity. Even more so, the fact that the two-way symmetrical approach was chosen as the favorite model instead of press agentry by Kenyan public relations practitioners shows that Grunig’s excellent model of public relations is taking hold in Kenya.

According to this study, the least favored public relations models among Kenyan practitioners are the two-way asymmetrical model and public information model which took the fifth and sixth positions respectively.

The similarity in the results showing a favor for the personal influence and cultural interpreter models in Kenya, Ghana, South Africa and India indicates that practitioners in the four countries put a lot of emphasis on acquiring and practicing good interpersonal communication skills as well as playing the cultural interpreter’s role in the course of their work.

Though the results showed that the two international models are highly favored in Kenya and Ghana, there were differences in the reliabilities reported in both studies. The study done in Ghana had considerable low reliabilities in the public relations models;
Influen
tial work-related cultural values among Kenyan public relations practitioners

According to the results, Kenyan public relations practitioners identify with individualism, the work-related cultural value that emphasizes achievements of an individual as opposed to that of the collective. People identifying with this cultural value emphasize the need for personal successes and achievements without necessarily considering the needs of the collective. The average mean for individualism in this study is 6.56. The second most experienced work related cultural value is femininity with an average mean of 6.54 while the third work related cultural value among Kenyan practitioners is masculinity with an average mean of 6.51. The femininity index emphasizes good working relations with colleagues while masculinity places emphasize on one’s professional growth and chances for higher pay. As evident with these three work-related cultural values, their average means are at close range which is indicative of the blend of personal objectives, professionals goals and close personal relationships that Kenyan public relations practitioners identify with.

Collectivism, a cultural value that captures an employee’s ability to identify with causes greater than those of his/her personal needs and aspirations comes fourth in the list of work-related values that Kenyan public relations practitioners identify with. The uncertainty avoidance cultural value, which emphasizes the ability of human beings to deal with ambiguity, was second last in the list of work-related values mostly experienced by Kenyan public relations practitioners while power distance, a cultural value that points to the basic differences of inequality in a culture came last in the list.

While the study in Kenya showed that public relations practitioners identified with individualism, femininity and masculinity in that order, the study in Ghana indicated that practitioners in that country identified with uncertainty avoidance, collectivism and power distance. Results of different cultural values among practitioners in Kenya and Ghana point to the fluid nature of culture. Ordinarily, one would have expected Kenyan and Ghanaian public relations practitioners to share certain cultural values given that the
two countries share a common colonial past, in addition to political and socio-economic developments. However, with the outcome of this expectation showing different results, there is need to rethink often generalized propositions about the cultural values that are inherent in certain continents or regions of the world.

Since culture is a fast changing variable in this era of globalization, there is perhaps a need to relook into whether there are cultural values that have emerged in our societies since Hosfede (1980) conducted his study 30 years ago. Hofstede’s (1980) cultural values were used to explore the work-related cultural values that influence the practice of public relations in the studies conducted in Kenya and Ghana. Perhaps, the developments that various societies have recorded following the advent of internet, social media and strides made in democracy might have contributed to the emergence of completely different set of cultural values other than those analyzed and discussed by Hofstede (1980). There is, therefore, need to pay closer attention to culture as a variable that greatly influences the professional decisions that public relations practitioners make in the course of their work.

**Significant influence of the interpersonal relationships**

The results of the Pearson’s correlation analyses show that the personal influence model of public relations, which emerged as the most favored model of public relations among Kenyan practitioners, is significantly correlated with the femininity work-related cultural value; r=0.311, (p < 0.01). The femininity cultural value also emerged as the second highest work-related cultural value that the Kenyan public relations practitioners identified with. The results also show that there is a positive correlation between the personal influence model and the individualism cultural value; r=0.533, (p < 0.5).

The significant correlation between the personal influence model of public relations with the femininity work-related cultural value points to the practitioners’ strong desire for interpersonal relationships with colleagues, supervisors, organizations/clients and publics. Indeed, items one and two in the personal influence index which asked about the need for good interpersonal relationships with employees in the practitioners’ organization and the need for good interpersonal relationships with people outside the
practitioners’ organization scored each a mean of 6.67, which happened to be the highest mean among all the items in the public relations model indices.

This correlation analysis also points to a desire for personal growth and development among practitioners. While practitioners want to work in a workplace that offers a cooperative and friendly environment as seen in the correlation between personal influence model and femininity, they also want to have a chance to work for an organization that offers an environment for personal growth. Item one and two in the individualism index (Having sufficient time left for my personal or family is important; 6.63 and Having challenging tasks to do, from which I can get a personal sense of accomplishment is important; 6.53) had some of the highest means in the study. This points to the strong desire by the practitioners to get a sense of personal accomplishment while in the course of their professional work. The results of this correlation analyses, therefore, shows that there is a blend of personal goals and close interpersonal relationships among practitioners of public relations in Kenya.

The lack of more significant correlations in this study could be indicative of the emergence of different cultural values other than those identified by Hofstede’s (1980). Conversely, it could also be indicative of the prevalence of unconsidered models of public relations that are practiced by Kenyan public relations practitioners. This, therefore, calls for an update of the work-related cultural values as well as continued research on public relations models that may be in use in Kenya among other cultures worldwide.

**Conclusion**

This study sought to examine the public relations models that are practiced in Kenya, the work-related cultural values that practitioners of public relations experience and the relationship between the public relations models and the work-related cultural values. As a pioneer study in public relations in Kenya, this research has produced new knowledge about the practice of public relations in Kenya.

First, through this study, we now know that Kenyan public relations practitioners identify with the two international public relations models; the personal influence and cultural interpreter models more than any of the Grunig’s (1992) models. By choosing
personal influence model as their favorite model, the practitioners point to the importance they attach to good interpersonal relations in the course of their work. And by identifying the cultural interpreter model as the second most favored model, the practitioners point not only to the cultural interpreter’s role they play but also to the internationalization of Kenyan public relations.

Secondly, the consistency seen in the use of these two international models – personal influence and cultural interpreter models – in India, South Africa, Ghana and now Kenya, means that these two models desire more attention from scholars. As Sharpe (1992) notes, less developed countries are making tremendous developments in public relations, progress he notes, is stupefying to American practitioners who previously assumed that public relations practice in less developed countries was stagnant in terms of growth. With such consistency of results coming from these four countries, there is need for scholars and other researchers to test whether these two international models – personal influence and cultural interpreter - are also applicable in the United States and others Western nations. Since the United States is an enormously diverse country in terms of its population, the practice of the personal influence and cultural interpreter models could be something that is highly prevalent among the practitioners of public relations. As different countries and regions of the world continue to seek partnerships for political and socio-economic advancement, the emergence of these two international models as the most practiced in four countries calls for closer attention to them from scholars and practitioners.

Besides the two international models, Kenyan public relations practitioners are increasingly moving toward the two-way symmetrical approach which Grunig (1992) described as the excellent model of public relations. This is the model that the study showed is mostly practiced in Kenya among the Grunig’s (1992) four models. The fourth most practiced model was the press agentry model which shows that though the practitioners are moving toward practicing two-way symmetrical approach, they have not completely shed their fixation with publicity as a key component in public relations.

Thirdly, a cultural critique of the practice of public relations in Kenya shows that interpersonal relationships between practitioners of public relations and their colleagues, supervisors and outside publics are highly valued. In addition to the desire for
interpersonal relations, practitioners also aspire for personal growth and development. With individualism emerging as the most experienced work-related cultural value and with a positive correlation between individualism and the personal influence model of public relations, there is little doubt that the need for a personal sense of accomplishment in one’s work is highly valued by the practitioners.

Fourth, this study adds to our understanding of international public relations and contributes to our understanding of the role of culture on the practice. With this study and the others done in India, South Africa and Ghana showing the personal influence and the cultural interpreter models of public relations as the most favored in these international contexts, a deeper understanding of the role of culture in the study and practice of public relations becomes clearer.

However, there are limitations to this study and generalizations of these results should be approached with care. First, the 51 practitioners sampled through a snowball effect are a small percentage of the rising number of public relations practitioners in Kenya. Future efforts should be made to get a larger sample to establish whether different results will be arrived at.

In order to establish whether public relations practitioners in Kenya practice the models they identified in this study as their favorite, there needs to be a case study of some of the PR campaigns in Kenya. For example, an analysis of a public relations campaign would help establish whether or not practitioners really practice the personal influence and the cultural interpreter models which they identified in this study as two of their favorite models. Such a case study would also reveal the extent to which practitioners employ good relational skills as shown in the correlation analysis between the femininity cultural value and personal influence model of public relations.

Further studies should also try and get more public relations officers working in government offices since their understanding and practice of public relations may be very different from that of practitioners working in agencies. Since there were only two correlations that attained the 0.05 level of significance in this study, a larger random sample might be able to produce more correlations between the public relations models and work-related cultural values. While this study had two correlations, there were a few more that just fell short of reaching the acceptable significance level of 0.05. It is
assumed that a larger sample might enable these correlations reach the acceptable significance level thus adding to our knowledge of the impact that culture has in determining the public relations models that practitioners employ in the course of their work.

The limitations notwithstanding, scholars and practitioners of international public relations can learn a lot from this study. The direction of public relations in Kenya as evidenced by the choice of the two international models of public relations; the personal influence and the cultural interpreter’s models, the emergence of two-way symmetrical approach as a favored model among practitioners and the critical role of culture offer important insights not only to scholars but international organizations wishing to prepare for business in Kenya.

With Kenya being East Africa’s largest economy and a major player in the East African Community (EAC), an entity of five countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi) whose economic integration protocol became a reality on July 1, 2010, this study provides a useful groundbreaking overview of the public relations models that are practiced in Kenya and the cultural values that influence this practice, and sets a base for other future research projects not only within the East African Community but Africa, a region that has a dearth of research on public relations.

As multinationals continue to spread their tentacles for business opportunities in erstwhile unexplored places like Kenya and other African countries, research that tends to explore the role of culture in the practice of public relations can only go a long way in ensuring that public relations practitioners come up with messages that are in tune with the local culture and interests of key publics.
References


Appendix 1: (Demographics)

This study sought to first gather information on some demographics:

a) Gender (male or female)
b) Age bracket (18-24, 25-35, 36-45, 46-55, 55-)
c) Level of education (certificate, diploma/ associates degree, undergraduate degree, postgraduate diploma/ certificate, masters, Ph.D.).
d) Type of organization they work with (PR agency, government ministry, government corporation, non-governmental corporation or private consulting).
e) Number of years worked in public relations.
Appendix 2: (Public Relations Models)

The first 24 set of questions comprised of four questions for each public relations model and read as follows: (NB: The headings listed here, 1. Press agentry, 2. public information etc, did not appear in the actual scale; only the questions appeared). Seven-point Likert-type scales, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, were used to measure all of the 24 items.

1. Press agentry model

1. The main purpose of my organization/agency’s public relations is to get publicity about my organization/client.
2. In public relations we mostly attempt to get favorable publicity into the media and to keep unfavorable publicity out.
3. We determine how successful a program is from the number of people who attend an event or use our products and services.
4. In my organization/agency, public relations and publicity mean essential the same thing.

2. Public information model

1. In public relations, nearly everyone is so busy writing news stories or producing publications that there is no time to do research.
2. In public relations, we disseminate accurate information but do not volunteer unfavorable information.
3. Keeping a clipping file is about the only way we have to determine the success of a program.
4. In my organization/agency, public relations is more of a neutral disseminator of information than an advocate for the organization or mediator between management and publics.
3. Two-way asymmetrical model

1. After completing a public relations program, we do research to determine how effective the program has been in changing people’s attitudes.
2. In public relations, our broad goal is to persuade publics to behave as the organization wants them to behave.
3. Before starting a public relations program, we look at attitude surveys to make sure we describe the organization in ways our publics would be most likely to accept.
4. Before beginning a program, we do research to determine public attitudes toward the organization and how they might change.

4. Two-way symmetrical model

1. The purpose of public relations is to develop mutual understanding between the management of the organization and publics the organization affects.
2. Before starting a program, we do surveys or informal research to find out how much management and our publics understand each other.
3. The purpose of public relations is to change the attitudes and behavior of management as much as it is to change the attitudes and behavior of publics.
4. Our organization/agency believes public relations should provide mediation for the organization, to help management and publics negotiate conflicts.

5. Personal Influence Model

1. Having good interpersonal relationships with other employees in my organization is very important for PR practitioners.
2. Having good interpersonal relationships with people outside my organization is very important for PR practitioners.
3. Socializing is one of the most important activities for a PR practitioner.
4. The best way to being successful at PR is to provide benefits (dinner, gifts) to gain influence with personal contacts.

6. Cultural Interpreter Model

1. Understanding a second language is important for a PR practitioner.
2. Providing services to international clients is an important part of my job.
3. Helping my international clients understand the Kenyan business environment is important.
4. Introducing my international clients to important people in Kenya is important.
Appendix 3: (Cultural Dimensions)

The next set of 24 questions comprised of six work-related cultural values (Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, 1984) that had four questions in each of them. Seven-point Likert-type scales, from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, were used to measure all of the 24 items. They read as follows: (NB: The headings listed here, 1. Power Distance, 2. Uncertainty Avoidance etc, did not appear in the actual scale; only the questions appeared)

1. **Power Distance**

1. In this organization, subordinates are afraid to express disagreement with their superior.
2. My supervisor usually makes decisions on his/her own and then expects the decisions to be carried out loyally and without raising difficulties.
3. My supervisor usually makes decisions on his/her own but before going ahead explains the reasons for the decisions and answers any questions.
4. I prefer to work for any type of supervisor expect for one who asks me for advice and then announces his/her decision and expects me to loyally implement the decision whether or not it was in accordance with the advice I gave.

2. **Uncertainty Avoidance**

1. It is very important to follow organizational rules even if I think it is in the organization’s best interests if I break the rules.
2. It is important for me to work in a well-designed job situation where the responsibilities and requirements are clear.
3. It is very important for me to have long-term security of employment.
4. It is very important for me to have little tension and stress on the job.
3. Femininity

1. Having a good working relationship with my direct supervisor is important.
2. Working with people who cooperate well with one another is important.
3. Working in a friendly atmosphere is important.
4. Having good physical working conditions is important.

4. Masculinity

1. Having training opportunities to improve or learn new skills is important.
2. Working in a modern, up-to-date company is important.
3. Having an opportunity for high earning is important.
4. Having an opportunity for advancement to higher level jobs is important.

5. Individualism

1. Having sufficient time left for my personal or family is important.
2. Having challenging tasks to do, from which I can get a personal sense of accomplishment is important.
3. Fully use my skills and abilities on the job is important.
4. Working in a large and prestigious organization is important.

6. Collectivism

1. Making a real contribution to the success of my organization is important.
2. Serving my country is important.
3. Working in a smaller, but desirable organization is important.
4. Having an opportunity for helping other people is important.