



UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION (UniMAC)

INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

BEYOND THE PRESS RELEASE: RE-IMAGINING PUBLIC RELATIONS
IN THE ERA OF SHORT-VIDEO COMMUNICATION.

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BY

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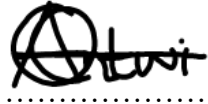
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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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08/12/2025

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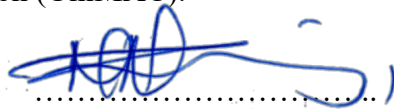
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CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Dissertation/Thesis has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Dissertations laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC).

Dr Noel Nutsugah



8/12/2025

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Signature

Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to myself and all other entities of nature from whom I received inspiration, guidance, and support.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how short-form video content is transforming public relations practices in the digital era. As platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts reshape communication landscapes, traditional PR methods such as press releases and media relations become less effective. This research investigates how PR professionals are adapting to this change, comparing the effectiveness of short-video content with conventional PR tools, analysing how storytelling technologies influence professional practices, and considering the ethical issues associated with algorithm-driven communication strategies. Using a mixed-methods approach, including interviews with 5-10 PR practitioners and content analysis of short-video campaigns across various platforms, the study aims to develop evidence-based frameworks for successful PR in the short-video age. Grounded in Media Richness Theory and supported by Convergence Culture Theory, this research addresses key gaps in existing literature by examining short-video communication from a broad PR perspective rather than solely from a marketing standpoint. The significance of this research spans theoretical development, professional practice, curriculum design, and organisational strategy. Expected outcomes include a deeper understanding of PR effectiveness in digital environments, the creation of best practices for platform-specific storytelling, ethical guidelines for AI-driven tools, and practical insights to bridge theory and practice in contemporary public relations education and professional development.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

As society has evolved over the years, cultural dynamics have become a key focus of technological innovation. Research shows that technology acts as a catalyst for cultural exchange, innovation, and adaptation, facilitating global communication and the sharing of ideas, while technological innovations fundamentally drive the development of human societies (Alsaleh, 2024; Tverskoi et al., 2022). The advancement of information and communication technologies has significantly progressed and resulted in important spillover effects that have profoundly transformed the way people live.

Communication, in its complementary role, evolves alongside a socially aware population. Every entity within a society employs various forms of communication to disseminate information and reach its audience. Often, this information is used to persuade a target audience in order to influence perceptions, change behaviour, create awareness, position a brand, manage crises, and more. Yahya et al. (2024) confirm that communication is never isolated from Public Relations (PR) strategies, as new media platforms offer direct accessibility, thereby enhancing communication through PR.

As PR practices for capturing audience attention decline and digital media consumption increases, traditional PR tactics such as press releases, press conferences, speeches, public appearances, and media relations have become less effective. Research indicates that recent advancements in digital technology have shifted PR research, with the current paradigm evolving into a competing paradigm but not yet fully transforming (Huang et al., 2017). Digital platforms like social media, blogs, and online news outlets have revolutionised public relations by enabling organisations to engage with their audiences in real-time, across vast regions, and in a much more personalised way (An, 2024). In their place, audio-visual communication tools like short-form video content have emerged and are rapidly becoming a dominant form of communication. Short-video content fundamentally redefines public relations (PR), altering how professionals interact with their audiences, with platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts now integral to

PR strategies (Leung, 2024). Studies show that TikTok achieves the highest user engagement among the three platforms, while Instagram Reels generates the most watch time (Southern, 2023), impacting billions of users worldwide. This new wave calls for a complete re-imagining of public relations strategies and practices.

This research proposal aims to explore how PR professionals are adapting to this new paradigm, the challenges they encounter, and how they are reshaping PR practices with a focus on engagement, authenticity, and strategic storytelling. It also examines potential frameworks for effective PR in an era dominated by short-video communication. By analysing both theoretical concepts and practical applications, this study seeks to contribute to the evolving field of digital public relations.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although there is growing awareness of how PR professionals and organisations engage with stakeholders, a substantial gap remains in understanding how they adapt to digital transformation beyond traditional persuasion methods in the era of short-video communication. Therefore, the following gaps require further scholarly investigation.

1.2.1 Theory-Practice Gap

The divide between traditional PR theory and modern digital practice has been documented in numerous studies. Hayes et al. (2023) highlight a notable disconnect between academic research and industry needs, with practitioners voicing concerns about the usefulness and relevance of public relations research to their work. This theory-practice divide presents challenges for PR education, professional development, and strategic application, especially as digital platforms continue to change swiftly.

1.2.2 Methodological Gap

A significant methodological gap exists in PR research concerning short-video communication. Existing findings have heavily relied on content analysis of publicly available videos (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022; Schellewald, 2021). While this method is valuable for identifying content features and industry-wide adoption rates, it offers limited insight into the internal decision-making processes, strategic rationales, and lived experiences of PR professionals. There is a scarcity of in-

depth, qualitative studies that examine the integration of these tools into PR strategy. This research adopts a qualitative, interpretivist approach to address this gap, seeking to understand the complex professional practices and sense-making processes that quantitative methods may overlook (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By prioritising practitioners' voices, the study aims to fill the empirical void in understanding the strategic adaptations occurring within the profession.

1.2.3 Contextual Gap

The literature on digital PR and short-video platforms is mainly shaped by research from Western high-resource contexts with mature digital ecosystems. There is a notable gap concerning how these global trends are adopted, adapted, and limited in unique socio-technical environments such as Ghana and the wider Sub-Saharan Africa. Factors like differing levels of digital literacy, data affordability, device penetration, and distinctive cultural communication norms contribute to a context that remains underrepresented in current research (Allagui & Breslow, 2016).

The study, which focuses on PR professionals in this specific context, aims to generate locally relevant findings and contribute to a global and inclusive understanding of digital PR. It will further illuminate how practitioners navigate organisational hindrances and cultural dynamics; a perspective largely absent from mainstream discourse (Abidin, 2016; Bhandari & Bimo, 2022).

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

1.3.1 Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the relative effectiveness of short-form video content (e.g., TikTok, Instagram Reels) versus traditional PR tools (press releases, media pitches) in achieving measurable outcomes such as audience engagement, brand recall, and message retention.
2. To explore how storytelling technologies impact the work practices, communication strategies, and audience engagement of public relations professionals across various industries, including both in-house and agency roles, emphasising the transformative effects on their professional experiences and outcomes.
3. To evaluate ethical challenges arising from the utilisation of AI-driven storytelling tools, including
 - a. Risks of misinformation amplification and algorithmic bias.

- b. Compliance with accessibility standards (e.g., captions, alternative text) and data privacy regulations.
- c. Strategies for maintaining transparency and public trust

1.3.2 Research Questions

1. How does short-form video content (e.g., TikTok, Instagram Reels) compare to traditional PR tools such as press releases and media pitches in terms of audience engagement, brand recall, and message retention?
2. How do storytelling technologies affect the work practices, communication strategies, and audience engagement outcomes of PR professionals across different industries and roles?
3. What are the ethical challenges linked to using AI-driven storytelling tools in public relations, especially concerning misinformation, algorithmic bias, accessibility compliance, and data privacy?

1.4 Scope of Study

This study is specifically scoped to ensure a targeted and manageable investigation. The research focuses on PR professionals operating in Ghana, including both in-house communicators and those employed by PR consultancies. The leading platforms analysed are TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts.

The study is currently based on practices that have emerged and solidified over the period from 2019 to 2025. This timeframe encompasses the pandemic's pivotal impact and the subsequent mainstreaming of the previously mentioned platforms. The study concentrates on organisational communication directed at external stakeholders and reputational management, excluding purely commercial advertising or personal branding activities.

1.5 Significance of the study

This research holds considerable significance across several dimensions, including theoretical progress, professional practice, organisational strategy, and broader societal influence. Its importance can be highlighted through the following key perspectives:

- The study will shape future research and connect disciplines such as psychology, technology, and media studies.

- It shows PR professionals how to use short videos to connect with audiences, build trust, and protect brand image while adding practical value.
- The research supports revamping PR education to include digital storytelling, content creation, and audience analysis, making a direct impact on already established knowledge.
- It provides a clear guide for transitioning from traditional PR to engaging, data-driven short-video communication with strategic insight for organisations.
- The study emphasises ethical awareness; therefore, there is a need for honest, inclusive, and transparent communication in today's digital media space.

1.6 Organisation of the Study

The study is organised into five logical chapters to present a straightforward narrative from problem identification to conclusion.

Chapter One: Introduction. This chapter presents the research landscape, including the background and problem statement, as well as the identified gap between theory and practice, the methodological gap, and the contextual gap. It also outlines the study's objectives and questions, scope, and significance.

Chapter Two: Literature Review. This chapter defines key terms and explores the theoretical and empirical foundations of the study. It reviews existing literature on the evolution of PR, the influence of digital environments, the specific dynamics of short-video platforms, and the core theories of Media Richness and Convergence Culture. It synthesises this knowledge to identify gaps that this study seeks to address.

Chapter Three: Methodology. This chapter outlines the research design and implementation. It justifies the interpretive qualitative approach, the case study methodology, and the purposive sampling strategy. It elaborates on the data collection methods (semi-structured interviews) and the data analysis technique (thematic analysis), whilst addressing ethical considerations and trustworthiness.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussions. This chapter presents the analysed data, organised around ten key emergent themes. It interprets the findings and thoroughly discusses them in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, explicitly addressing the research questions.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations. The final chapter summarises the key findings, draws overall conclusions about the re-imagining of PR in the era of short-video communication,

discusses the study's limitations, provides practical advice for PR professionals, educators, and organisations, and suggests future research.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter established the foundational context for the research titled *Beyond the Press Release: Re-imagining Public Relations in the Era of Short-Video Communication*. It began by outlining the Background of the Study, highlighting the transformative impact of digital technologies and the rise of short-video platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts on the PR landscape. The statement of the problem identified three critical gaps requiring further investigation: the Theory-Practice gap, where academic research lags behind industry needs; the Methodological gap, due to a scarcity of qualitative studies exploring PR professionals' lived experiences; and the Contextual gap, relating to the underrepresentation of local contexts such as Ghana in existing literature.

The chapter then presented the study's Research Objectives, which focus on evaluating the effectiveness of short-video content, examining the influence of storytelling technologies, and assessing associated ethical challenges. These objectives were translated into three corresponding Research Questions. The Scope of the Study was defined to include PR professionals in Ghana, focusing on the period from 2019 to 2015 and the primary platforms mentioned earlier. The Significance of the Study was articulated across theoretical, practical, educational, strategic, and ethical dimensions, highlighting the research's potential contribution to the evolving field of digital PR. Finally, the Organisation of the Study provided a roadmap with a five-chapter structure, guiding the reader through the subsequent literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This study aims to analyse the influence of internal factors on the traditional press release, a key element of public relations practice since the early twentieth century, in an era where audiences consume content in vertical formats, measured in seconds rather than paragraphs, and where authenticity and entertainment value often take precedence over institutional authority. It also seeks to examine the impact of internal factors in the digital age, with short-form video content emerging as a dominant force reshaping communication strategies and practices. The study provides an in-depth analysis of the theoretical foundations, empirical findings, and current developments that shape the understanding of public relations in the context of short-video communication. Additionally, it synthesises existing scholarship from public relations, digital media studies, and communication theory to develop a comprehensive overview of current knowledge and identify areas requiring further research.

The literature review explores the convergence of public relations practice and short-video communication, examining how digital transformation is changing key aspects of organisational communication, stakeholder engagement, and reputation management. By analysing the theoretical foundations behind media selection, content creation, and audience behaviour in digital environments, this review offers a conceptual framework for understanding how public relations must adapt to stay strategically relevant in the short-video era.

The chapter starts by clarifying key terms to ensure understanding, followed by a structured review of existing literature organised around major thematic topics. It then examines the role of internal factors by applying two theoretical perspectives, the Media Richness Theory and Convergence Culture Theory, to interpret the ongoing transformation of public relations practice. The chapter concludes by emphasising the relevance of these theories to the research focus and synthesising the key insights that advance the broader research discourse.

2.2 Definition of Key Terms

- **Press Release:** A press release is a written message sent to journalists to share information about something interesting or important for the public to know. (Labbé, 2025). Traditionally circulated via wire services, email, or press conferences, the press release has long served as a vital tool through which organisations present their narratives and disseminate information to both journalists and stakeholders.
- **Public Relations (PR):** The Public Relations Society of America (PRSA 2025) provides a modern definition: a strategic communication process that creates mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics. In this study, Public Relations includes the planned and ongoing efforts to build and sustain goodwill and understanding between organisations and their stakeholders through strategic management practices.
- **Digital Public Relations:** Digital Public Relations involves applying public relations strategies, tactics, and tools through digital media platforms and technologies to engage audiences, manage reputation, and facilitate two-way communication in online environments (An, 2024). Also known as "e-PR" or "online PR," digital public relations covers the practice of public relations using internet-based channels and digital technologies, including social media, blogs, podcasts, and other online platforms to engage with stakeholders (Distaso & Denise Sevvick Bortree, 2014). Based on these perspectives, Digital PR, also called e-PR, is the practice of building and maintaining goodwill among stakeholders using digital tools such as content creation, social media engagement, analytics, and online reputation management. This approach is an evolution from traditional PR that emphasises dialogue, transparency, and real-time engagement.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Stakeholder engagement refers to the process by which organisations involve individuals or groups who may be affected by or can influence organisational decisions (Freeman, 1984). In digital contexts, this includes interactive communication (likes, shares, comments) that promotes dialogue, participation, and relationship building between organisations and their various publics.
- **Audience Engagement:** Audience engagement refers to the level of attention, interaction, participation, and emotional connection that audiences demonstrate towards content. It is assessed through various metrics such as likes, shares, comments, watch time, and

behavioural responses. Engagement is a crucial measure for assessing PR effectiveness in digital environments, as it reflects audience reactions.

- **Short-Video Communication:** This term describes video content typically lasting between 15 seconds and three minutes, created for mobile viewing and mainly shared on social media platforms optimised for vertical display (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). Such content is characterised by rapid editing, visually focused storytelling, algorithm-based distribution, and a strong potential for virality and audience engagement through likes, shares, and comments.
- **Short-Form Video Content:** Short-form videos are concise, engaging multimedia pieces typically lasting between 15 and 60 seconds, optimised for mobile viewing and social media sharing (Lindholm, 2023). These videos combine visual, auditory, and textual elements to convey compact narratives that quickly capture audience attention and foster high engagement, especially on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts (Clara, 2024).
- **Media Convergence:** According to Jenkins (2006), media convergence is the merging of old and new media, creating a fluid environment where content flows seamlessly across multiple platforms. It also involves collaborative relationships between media industries and encourages audiences to explore various platforms to find their preferred content and entertainment experiences.
- **Algorithmic Optimisation:** This concept describes the process where computational procedures that solve problems through mathematical calculations mediate, filter, and distribute content to users based on predicted preferences, engagement patterns, and platform objectives (Bucher, 2018). It involves aligning content creation and dissemination strategies with platform-specific algorithms that determine visibility, reach, and engagement outcomes (Widener et al., 2025). On short-video platforms, algorithmic optimisation plays a defining role in shaping how public relations messages capture audience attention, using artificial intelligence and machine learning systems to match content with relevant audiences based on their behaviour, preferences, and interaction patterns.

2.3 Review of Related Literature

2.3.1 Evolution of Public Relations Theory and Practice

The foundational theories of public relations originated in the early twentieth century, establishing frameworks that still influence contemporary practice. Grunig and Hunt's (1984) influential model outlined four main types of public relations. These include press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical, which have served as a basis for understanding PR functions across different organisational contexts. However, L'Etang (2013) argues that public relations theory must continually evolve to reflect changing communication technologies and shifting social and cultural dynamics. She also notes that the field remains in constant transformation, evidenced by ongoing debates over its theoretical foundations, professional identity, and societal purpose. This suggests that frameworks developed in pre-digital times may not adequately address the interactive, networked, and algorithmically mediated nature of modern communication.

Building on this perspective, Macnamara (2016) advances the idea of an “architecture of listening” as central to contemporary public relations, suggesting that digital environments demand a shift from one-way information dissemination to authentic engagement that emphasises listening, dialogue, and organisational responsiveness. This framework recognises that effective PR in digital settings requires organisations to actively monitor, analyse, and respond to public discourse rather than simply broadcasting messages.

2.3.2 The Evolution of Public Relations in Digital Environments

The development of public relations in response to digital technologies has been well documented over the past twenty years. Widener et al. (2025) conducted long-term studies showing that social media has fundamentally changed practitioner behaviour, with more professionals incorporating blogs, social networks, and video-sharing platforms into their communication strategies. Their findings indicated that as early as 2009, over 80% of practitioners believed social media had transformed how organisations communicate with stakeholders, a trend that has only intensified with subsequent technological innovations.

Kent and Taylor (1998) were among the first to examine dialogic communication in digital spaces, proposing five key principles for fostering dialogic relationships through organisational websites. These are the dialogic loop, the usefulness of information, the generation of return visits, the ease of interface, and the conservation of visitors. Their model provided a vital foundation for understanding how digital platforms could facilitate two-way interaction between organisations and publics, moving beyond the one-directional approach traditionally associated with press releases.

Subsequent work by Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) has extended these principles to social media contexts by exploring how platforms with commenting, sharing, and direct messaging capabilities enable more authentic stakeholder dialogue. Macnamara (2016) contributed significantly to understanding digital public relations through his concept of "the quadrivium of online public relations," which identified four fundamental changes: from mass media to personal media, from one-way communication to dialogue, from monologue to conversation, and from closed to open communication. This conceptualisation highlighted how digital transformation necessitates fundamental shifts in practitioner mindsets, organisational cultures, and communication strategies. Macnamara's work emphasised that effective digital PR requires organisations to relinquish some control over messaging and embrace the participatory nature of online communication.

2.3.3 Short-Video Platforms and Communication Practices

The rapid rise of TikTok, a platform launched in 2016 that now exceeds 1.5 billion users worldwide, has marked a significant moment in the evolution of digital communication. Clara (2024) reports a decline in average attention span, from 12 seconds in 2000 to 8 seconds by 2021. Similarly, Lindholm (2023) emphasises that the dominant short-form video content on social media platforms typically lasts around 15 seconds, rarely extending beyond one minute. Kumar (2025) further notes that a decade ago, the average time spent on online video content barely exceeded 15 minutes per day; today, users spend approximately 84 minutes daily, a figure that continues to increase. This highlights the strategic importance of video marketing, not only in boosting brand visibility and website engagement but also in driving lead generation and revenue growth. In fact, 87% of marketers recognise video content as a direct factor in improving sales performance.

Despite this growth, Allagui and Breslow (2016) highlight a significant lag between digital media innovation and the adoption of new tools and strategies by public relations professionals. This widening gap has driven scholarly efforts to understand the unique communication dynamics and affordances of emerging short-video platforms. Bhandari and Bimo (2022) analyse TikTok's algorithmic design, explaining how the "For You Page" curates personalised content feeds based on engagement metrics rather than follower counts, allowing even lesser-known creators to gain visibility and reach broad audiences. Similarly, Zulli and Zulli (2020) examine TikTok through the lens of folk culture and participatory media, suggesting that the platform's emphasis on remixing and collaborative content creation mirrors long-standing traditions of storytelling and collective participation in the digital age. Their work emphasises that effective communication on such platforms requires an understanding of the cultural norms, aesthetic conventions, and participatory expectations that distinguish short-video spaces from traditional broadcasting and earlier social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

Schellewald's (2021) study of communicative strategies on TikTok identifies several key features of successful content: spontaneity and authenticity, participation in trending challenges and hashtags, use of popular sounds, fast-paced editing, and direct contact that promotes personal connection. These findings pose a notable challenge for public relations practitioners, whose reliance on carefully scripted, multilayered approval processes can lead to messages that are perceived as overly polished or inauthentic in short-video environments.

The vertical video format has attracted academic interest as a change from traditional cinematography standards. Coppola (2018) suggests that vertical video offers distinctive aesthetic and storytelling opportunities, creating a more personal, immersive, and mobile-like mode of storytelling compared to horizontal framing. For public relations, this implies that simply repurposing horizontal footage for short-video platforms misses chances to employ format-specific creative strategies that boost emotional impact and viewer engagement.

Industry analyses further document the growing organisational use of short-video platforms. According to the 2023 Social Media Marketing Industry Report by the Social Media Examiner, 42% of marketers were actively creating short-video content, with 80% of that group reporting increased audience engagement as a result (Stelzner, 2025). However, the report also found that

only 29% of marketers felt confident in their short-video strategies, revealing a clear gap in knowledge, expertise, and adaptability within this rapidly changing domain.

2.3.4 Authenticity and Trust in Digital Communication

Authenticity has become a key issue in digital public relations research, as audiences increasingly question the credibility of corporate communication and become more sensitive to signs of insincerity. Gilpin (2010) explores the idea of organisational transparency in digital contexts, arguing that the internet's open information structure has created new expectations for accountability and authenticity. When organisations fail to meet these expectations, they risk damaging their reputation, especially given the rapid spread of negative information, which can heighten confusion and distrust.

Kelleher and Miller's (2006) study on conversational voice in organisational blogs shows that a perceived human voice, characterised by informal tone, personal storytelling, and acknowledgement of multiple perspectives, positively affects public views of organisational relationships. This suggests that the formal, institutional language typical of press releases may be less effective in digital spaces where audiences value relatability, sincerity, and human connection.

Sweetser and Metzgar (2007) further explored how perceptions of a blog's credibility impact organisational trust, discovering that trustworthy blogs foster higher audience confidence. However, their study also showed that audiences are very aware of bias and commercial motives; overly promotional or brand-focused content can damage trust and cause viewers to disengage. These findings are especially relevant in short-video communication, where audiences expect authenticity, entertainment, and creativity rather than blatant advertising or corporate self-promotion.

The rise of micro-celebrity and influencer marketing has also transformed how organisations communicate with stakeholders. Abidin (2016) explores how influencers build intimacy with their followers by sharing behind-the-scenes content, personal stories, and conversational exchanges, creating a sense of familiarity and authenticity that resembles genuine social relationships. For organisations looking to engage effectively on short-video platforms, adopting similar methods, such as employing employee advocates, creators, or brand ambassadors, can humanise the brand

and enhance trustful relationships. This signifies a shift away from traditional top-down communication towards a more participatory and personality-driven approach that reflects the values of digital culture.

2.3.5 Challenges and Opportunities in Transitioning from Traditional PR

Several scholars have explored the tensions and challenges organisations encounter when shifting from traditional to digital communication methods. Kate (2009) noted that public relations practitioners see “media catching” as a significant challenge, requiring them to constantly adapt to new and evolving media platforms while remaining aligned with their core communication goals. This challenge has grown more acute with the rapid growth of new platforms and format demands, creating resource and skill requirements that many PR departments find difficult to meet.

Linke and Zerfass (2013) examined organisational capabilities for using social media. They identified several barriers to effective implementation, including limited management support, insufficient resources, concerns about control and reputational risks, regulatory restrictions, and cultural resistance to open, two-way communication. Their research indicated that technological adoption alone is not enough; successful digital transformation requires changes to organisational structures, processes, and cultures.

The issue of measurement and evaluation presents particular challenges in short-video contexts. Waters and Jamal (2011) examined how nonprofit organisations use social media to engage stakeholders, revealing that although many have established profiles on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, few successfully utilise their interactive features to foster genuine community engagement. This pattern of mere presence without meaningful engagement persists on short-video platforms, where organisations often create accounts but struggle to produce content that aligns with platform norms and audience interests.

2.3.6 Content Strategy and Storytelling in Digital Formats

Scholars are increasingly exploring how narrative and storytelling principles function within digital and social media environments. Mandung (2024) examined storytelling as a strategic communication method in digital marketing, arguing that narratives evoke both emotional and cognitive engagement more effectively than purely informational messages. The short-video

format, in particular, presents distinct challenges and opportunities, demanding concise yet impactful storytelling that captures audience attention within seconds while conveying substantial meaning.

Research on attention economics and information overload provides a valuable context for understanding the rise of short-video formats. Davenport and Beck (2001) conceptualised attention as a limited resource in an information-saturated world, where organisations compete for scarce audience focus across numerous content streams. Short-video platforms meet this challenge by offering brief, engaging, and easily digestible content, optimised for mobile users during fleeting moments of attention.

Pulizzi (2012) introduced content marketing as a strategic framework emphasising the creation of valuable and relevant content to attract and retain audiences rather than explicitly promoting products or services. This approach closely aligns with the culture of short-video platforms, where users prioritise entertainment, education, and authenticity over overt advertising. For public relations, this requires a paradigm shift from promoting institutional priorities to focusing communication strategies on audience interests and needs.

2.3.7 The Role of Employee Advocacy and User-Generated Content

Emerging research recognises employees and stakeholders as crucial communication agents in the digital age. Papeman (2023) investigated employee advocacy on social media, revealing that employee messages often achieve greater reach and credibility than those distributed through official organisational channels. This insight is particularly relevant to short-video communication, where content from individual creators tends to outperform branded material in both algorithmic visibility and audience engagement.

Research on user-generated content (UGC) emphasises how organisations can harness stakeholder creativity and participation. Christodoulides et al. (2012) found that UGC campaigns enhance brand engagement and foster co-creation of meaning between organisations and their audiences. Short-video platforms characterised by remix culture and participatory challenges provide fertile ground for such initiatives. However, organisations must carefully balance encouraging creativity with maintaining message coherence and brand consistency.

Jenkins et al. (2013) introduced the concept of “spreadable media,” offering a framework for understanding how content circulates in networked environments. Unlike viral metaphors that imply passive transmission, spreadability highlights active audience agency in sharing content perceived as valuable, relatable, or entertaining. For public relations, this suggests that the success of short-video communication depends less on production quality or top-down message control and more on creating content that audiences are motivated to share organically within their social networks.

2.3.8 Crisis Communication in the Age of Social Media

The speed and amplification of crises through social media have transformed organisational communication strategies. Coombs and Holladay (2014) examined the impact of social media on Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), highlighting how digital platforms accelerate crisis escalation, facilitate real-time stakeholder engagement, and intensify public scrutiny of organisational responses. The viral potential of short-video content, often reaching millions within hours, further enhances these dynamics.

Liu et al. (2011) demonstrated that the interactive nature of social media influences crisis management outcomes, with organisations engaging in two-way dialogue generally viewed more positively than those using one-way communication. Short-video platforms, while beneficial for visually communicating corrective actions and transparency, also carry risks, as emotionally charged or harmful content can spread more quickly and widely than textual information.

Freberg (2012) expanded this discussion by identifying new categories of “social media-origin crises,” including incidents caused by employee misconduct online or unauthorised recordings of organisational activities going viral. The widespread use of smartphones and short-video platforms has heightened the risk of such events, requiring proactive reputation management strategies, employee training, and vigilant social listening to reduce potential harm.

2.3.9 Ethical Considerations in Digital PR

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics into public relations presents complex ethical challenges that require careful thought. Although ethics is not often a primary focus in most public relations literature, it is frequently explored within the broader context of

digital communication studies. Widener et al. (2025) emphasise that practitioners must address ethical dilemmas related to misinformation, algorithmic bias, inclusivity, and data privacy.

The growing reach and virality of short-video platforms increase the risk of misinformation. Content can spread widely before verification, potentially damaging organisational reputations and altering public discourse. In such situations, PR professionals have an ethical duty to ensure accuracy, transparency, and honesty in all communications, even when operating within highly condensed and entertainment-focused formats.

Accessibility is another vital ethical aspect. Short-video platforms must support users with disabilities by providing features like captions, audio descriptions, and alternative text. PR practitioners dedicated to inclusive communication should prioritise these accessibility features to ensure their content is socially responsible and widely accessible. Therefore, ethical communication goes beyond accuracy to include inclusivity and fairness in representation.

Data privacy concerns further complicate digital PR practices, especially given the sophisticated audience targeting and performance analytics characteristic of short-video environments. Practitioners must balance the strategic benefits of data-driven insights with respect for user autonomy and compliance with data protection frameworks like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Ethical digital practice thus requires a careful balance between personalisation, accountability, and user trust.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily based on Media Richness Theory (MRT) and draws on key insights from Convergence Culture Theory. Together, these frameworks offer perspectives on how short-video formats transform PR practice and why they are particularly effective for specific communication objectives.

2.4.1 Media Richness Theory

Media Richness Theory (MRT), developed by Daft and Lengel (1986), explains the varying capacities of communication media to convey information and facilitate mutual understanding. Initially arising from studies in organisational communication, the theory suggests that individuals

choose communication channels based on the level of ambiguity and complexity in a given situation. Daft et al. (1987) describe “richness” as a medium’s ability to deliver multiple cues, enable immediate feedback, use natural language, and foster a personal connection.

Although MRT was developed before digital communication tools existed, later scholars have expanded its use to modern technologies like email, instant messaging, social media, and video-sharing platforms. Dennis and Kinney (1998) built on the theory through Media Synchronicity Theory, suggesting that media effectiveness should also be judged by its ability to support both conveyance (information sharing) and convergence (mutual understanding). This update recognises that communication tasks differ in their requirement for richness and synchronicity.

MRT typically ranks face-to-face communication as the most enriching, citing its ability to incorporate verbal, vocal, and visual cues, along with immediate feedback and personal engagement. In contrast, short-video platforms operate asynchronously, relying on delayed interactions such as comments, likes, and shares. Rice (1992) found that perceptions of media richness are often subjective, shaped by user experience and contextual factors, suggesting that as familiarity with short-video platforms increases, perceptions of their communicative richness may also develop. Walther (1996) further contended that computer-mediated communication can effectively support relational growth, challenging earlier assumptions that mediated environments lack interpersonal depth.

Within public relations, MRT indicates that the relative effectiveness of short-video communication compared to traditional press releases relies on the specific communication goal. Press releases, positioned at the lower end of the richness spectrum, are mainly suited for one-way information distribution, emphasising factual accuracy and organisational formality. Short videos, on the other hand, offer greater richness through their audiovisual elements, enabling organisations to “show rather than tell,” express brand personality, and humanise corporate narratives. These features make short videos especially effective for emotionally charged, complex, and relational communication contexts such as crisis management or brand storytelling.

Nevertheless, MRT also reveals the limitations of short-video formats. The brevity of platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels limits message depth, making them less suitable for topics that

require detailed explanation. Furthermore, their entertainment-focused aesthetics may weaken the perceived authority needed for formal or institutional communication. Vrontis et al. (2021) describe successful short videos as “information-dense micro-narratives” (p. 89), emphasising that their communicative depth comes not from duration but from the strategic use of multimodal elements. This updated understanding of media richness acknowledges that short videos can effectively communicate complex messages when crafted with precision and purpose.

Some scholars, however, criticise MRT for its limited scope in addressing the diverse communication goals pursued by modern organisations. Markus (1994) introduced the Social Influence Model, which postulates that media choice is influenced not only by technical attributes but also by social norms, organisational politics, and symbolic meanings. From this perspective, the adoption of short-video communication in public relations is shaped as much by considerations of legitimacy, professional identity, and cultural alignment as by assessments of informational richness.

2.4.2 Convergence Culture Theory

Convergence Culture Theory, developed by Jenkins (2006), offers a framework for understanding today's media environment, in which content moves freely across platforms, industries, and audiences. Jenkins sees convergence not just as a technological merging of media forms but also as a cultural shift that alters how media is created, shared, and consumed. The theory is based on three connected ideas: media convergence (the unification of content across different technological platforms), participatory culture (the active engagement of audiences in creating and sharing media), and collective intelligence (the joint development of knowledge within communities that share media interests).

At the core of Convergence Culture Theory is the understanding that modern audiences are no longer passive consumers but active participants who seek out information, compare multiple media sources, and collaborate with others to form shared interpretations. Jenkins describes this development as a shift from broadcasting logic to network logic, in which content flows through user-driven networks rather than controlled institutional channels. This shift has significant implications for public relations, a field that has traditionally relied on managing information through gatekeepers such as journalists and editors.

A key aspect of convergence is “spreadability,” defined by Jenkins et al. (2013) as the technological and cultural means by which audiences share content within their networks. Unlike the “viral” metaphor, which suggests passive spread, spreadability emphasises audience agency, meaning that content circulates because individuals choose to share, adapt, or remix it. For public relations practitioners, this underscores the importance of creating messages that align with audiences’ motivations and offer value beyond organisational self-promotion, thereby fostering organic sharing.

The theory also emphasises the merging of boundaries between producers and consumers, where audiences increasingly act as both and are called “prosumers”, as coined by Toffler (1980). Short-video platforms exemplify this merging, as users not only view but also create and remix content, often taking part in collaborative challenges. For organisations, this means that stakeholders serve simultaneously as message recipients and content creators, whose user-generated material can reinforce, reinterpret, or challenge official narratives.

Within this framework, transmedia storytelling becomes a strategic tool for communication. Jenkins (2006) defines it as the intentional distribution of a narrative across different media platforms, with each channel contributing uniquely to the overall story. Applied to public relations, this suggests that short-video content should not merely replicate press release material but rather offer distinct, platform-specific narratives that connect to a broader strategic communication plan. Empirical support for the theory comes from Burgess and Green (2009), who analysed YouTube as a site of cultural negotiation where commercial, amateur, and hybrid forms of content coexist. They discovered that professional media organisations, independent creators, and casual users interact within the same ecosystem, each exerting different levels of cultural influence. This dynamic has become even more evident on emerging short-video platforms, where algorithms can elevate amateur creators to large audiences, while corporate accounts often struggle to achieve comparable engagement.

The participatory culture fostered by convergence has also transformed organisational control over messaging and reputation. Bruns (2008) introduced the concept of “produsage” to describe collaborative content creation in networked environments, in which user communities collectively shape culture and meaning. For public relations, this means that organisational reputation is

increasingly co-created through distributed stakeholder conversations rather than dictated through centralised communication. Managing reputation, therefore, involves active engagement in these dialogues rather than attempts at unilateral control.

Finally, Convergence Culture Theory examines the power relations present within media ecosystems. While the rhetoric of convergence often promotes democratisation, Jenkins recognises the coexistence of top-down corporate control and bottom-up audience involvement. Corporations maintain structural advantages in production capacity, resources, and platform ownership, even as audiences gain influence in content creation and distribution. This tension is obvious on short-video platforms, where algorithmic systems affect visibility, platform policies influence expression, and commercial interests increasingly dominate spaces that were once purely participatory.

The theory's emphasis on collective intelligence and knowledge communities is especially pertinent for understanding modern audience engagement. Instead of interpreting messages in isolation, audiences now collaborate in shared online spaces to discuss, verify, and reinterpret organisational communication. Hashtags, comment sections, and collaborative challenges serve as platforms for collective meaning-making. Public relations practitioners must therefore consider these interactive interpretive processes, recognising that meaning is negotiated within networked publics rather than solely determined by the communicator's intent.

2.5 Relevance of Theory

The theoretical frameworks of Media Richness Theory and Convergence Culture Theory, although developed under different intellectual paradigms and for distinct aspects of communication, together offer complementary perspectives on how public relations is being redefined in the age of short-video communication.

Media Richness Theory explains why and under which conditions practitioners might prefer short-video formats over traditional press releases, depending on the communication task at hand. The theory states that richer media, meaning those that offer multiple cues, immediate feedback, and personal focus, are more effective for tasks requiring relational connection, authenticity, and emotional engagement rather than simple information exchange. In this sense, short videos are

likely to be chosen when communication goals involve humanising organisations, expressing culture, or fostering trust, as these demand more nuanced and expressive channels. MRT thus provides a framework for analysing how practitioners make strategic choices about channels and content adaptation across various communication contexts.

However, the MRT alone does not provide sufficient understanding of the broader transformation of public relations in digital environments. The theory was developed to explain rational channel selection by organisation managers under the relatively stable conditions of media features and clearly defined communication goals. It does not adequately describe how platform algorithms influence content distribution, how audience participatory practices shape message interpretation, or how cultural expectations around authenticity and engagement impact communicative success beyond simply transferring information.

This is where Convergence Culture Theory offers essential complementary insights. While MRT focuses on the characteristics of the channel and the efficiency of information transmission, Convergence Culture Theory sheds light on the cultural, participatory, and media-rich aspects of communication today. It explains why short-video platforms have been adopted so rapidly and gained cultural prominence; not simply because video is a rich medium, but because these platforms facilitate participatory practices, spreadable content, and convergence across previously separate domains of professional and amateur media production.

Together, these theories highlight the inherent tensions between traditional and digital approaches to public relations. MRT emphasises organisational control, such as selecting channels, crafting messages, and managing dissemination, while CCT focuses on audience agency and collaborative interpretation. Press releases exemplify the former: they are structured, controlled, and distributed through gatekeepers like journalists. In contrast, short-video communication operates within convergence culture, where algorithms rather than editors determine visibility, and audiences can amplify, reinterpret, or challenge organisational narratives.

In practice, the two theories guide empirical investigation in distinct yet interconnected ways. MRT offers a lens to explore which communication goals practitioners believe are best achieved through short videos and how perceived media richness influences their adoption. CCT, on the other hand,

directs attention to how practitioners design content for spreadability, engage participatory audiences, and negotiate the balance between organisational control and audience co-creation.

Both theories also highlight areas where practitioners face challenges. MRT indicates that professionals trained in traditional, text-based communication may lack the skills to utilise the expressive capabilities of video. CCT emphasises deeper cultural tensions within organisations that prioritise control and consistency, as these traits often conflict with the authenticity, spontaneity, and user participation that short-video platforms encourage. These insights help identify barriers to effective short-video integration and guide strategies for professional development.

Finally, the intersection of both theories prompts reflection on the changing identity of public relations. Historically, PR focused on managing communication through controlled channels to specific audiences. In today's participatory media landscape, practitioners need to engage within decentralised, conversational ecosystems. Whether this shift signifies an evolution of PR practice or a fundamental challenge to its core assumptions remains open for investigation, but MRT and CCT together provide essential tools for examining this transformation both theoretically and empirically.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the theoretical and empirical literature on how public relations practice is developing in the era of short-video communication. It started by establishing clear operational definitions for key concepts, including press releases, digital public relations, short-video communication, stakeholder engagement, and algorithmic optimisation, to maintain conceptual clarity throughout the research.

The review highlighted the evolution of public relations from its early theoretical roots to its current digital transformation. Classical frameworks, such as Grunig and Hunt's four models of PR, laid an important foundation for understanding communication processes. However, modern scholarship emphasises that these pre-digital theories require substantial adaptation to fit the interactive, algorithmic, and participatory nature of today's media. The field has gradually shifted from one-way message dissemination towards two-way engagement, emphasising dialogue,

organisational listening, and stakeholder responsiveness; advancements that digital platforms both support and demand.

The literature emphasises that short-video platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels represent a significant shift from traditional PR communication models. These platforms focus on brevity, authenticity, visual storytelling, and participatory engagement rather than the formal authority of traditional press releases. Studies indicate that effective short-video communication relies on understanding platform-specific cultures, algorithmic distribution systems, and audience expectations that favour entertainment and authenticity over overt promotion. However, even though many organisations have established a presence on these platforms, mere participation does not ensure strategic success. Many still struggle to create content that aligns with platform norms or fosters genuine audience engagement.

Several key themes emerged from the literature. Foremost among them is the importance of authenticity and trust in digital communication, as audiences increasingly recognise and reject insincere or overly promotional messaging. The conversational and human tone that resonates on short-video platforms contrasts sharply with the formal institutional voice of traditional press releases. The review also notes that employee advocacy and user-generated content often achieve greater credibility and reach than official organisational channels. This emphasises the need for organisations to adopt decentralised communication models rather than relying solely on top-down message control.

The theoretical framework combines Media Richness Theory (MRT) and Convergence Culture Theory (CCT) to offer complementary insights. MRT helps clarify why short-video formats are often more effective than press releases for communication aims centred on emotional connection, cultural expression, and relationship building, because they convey multiple cues through audiovisual means. However, MRT alone cannot fully explain the cultural and participatory aspects that define digital communication today.

Convergence Culture Theory expands this understanding by emphasising the fluid circulation of content across platforms and the active participation of audiences in creating and interpreting meaning. It highlights how the boundaries between producers and consumers have blurred, with organisational content now being remixed, shared, and discussed within distributed networks

rather than passively received. Its core ideas (spreadability, participatory culture, and collective intelligence) explain why some short-video content resonates widely, while traditional corporate messaging often fails to engage.

Together, these theories expose the core tensions in the shift from traditional to digital PR practice. Practitioners must balance maintaining message consistency with embracing audience participation, institutional authority with authentic human expression, and centralised strategies with distributed communication ecosystems.

The review further suggests that adopting short-video formats requires more than just using new tools; it calls for a rethinking of organisational communication philosophy, practitioner skills, and evaluation criteria. Although there is increasing attention to digital media, limited empirical research remains on how PR professionals incorporate short-video formats into their strategies, the challenges they face, and how success is measured beyond superficial engagement metrics. The gap between academic discussion and professional practice seems especially wide in this area, as scholarly inquiry has fallen behind the rate of industry innovation and platform development.

Ethical considerations also emerged as a vital yet insufficiently explored area. Issues such as misinformation, algorithmic bias, accessibility for users with disabilities, and data privacy in targeted communication highlight the ethical complexity practitioners encounter when utilising algorithm-driven short-video strategies.

In summary, the chapter demonstrates that short-video communication is not merely another PR tool, but signifies a more profound shift in how organisations engage, form relationships, and shape public discourse. The shift from press releases to short-video formats indicates a move from broadcasting to participation, from institutional monologue to networked dialogue, and from controlled messaging to collaborative meaning-making. Viewing this through both Media Richness Theory and Convergence Culture Theory provides a solid conceptual basis for analysing how organisational structures and cultures impact the strategic use and effectiveness of short-video communication in modern public relations practice.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used to investigate how public relations practitioners are redefining their strategies in response to the growth of short-video platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts. The study examines the evolution of PR practices beyond traditional press releases, focusing on how practitioners conceptualise, produce, and assess short-video content for organisational communication (Macnamara, 2014). The chapter offers a clear rationale for the research paradigm, philosophical foundations, research design, and analytical methods employed to meet the study's aims.

It begins by outlining the interpretive research paradigm that underpins the study, followed by a discussion of its philosophical assumptions. The research approach, design, sampling technique, and data collection methods are then described in detail. The chapter concludes with an examination of ethical considerations, trustworthiness criteria, and data analysis procedures that ensure the methodological rigour and credibility of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.2 Research Paradigm

This study is based on an interpretive research paradigm, which is well-suited for exploring the subjective experiences, meanings, and sense-making processes of PR practitioners navigating the short-video communication landscape (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The interpretive paradigm acknowledges that reality is socially constructed through interaction and interpretation, making it an appropriate perspective for understanding how PR professionals rethink their roles and practices in digital contexts (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Unlike positivist paradigms that seek universal laws and objective truths, the interpretive paradigm recognises multiple realities shaped by individual experience, organisational culture, and broader social contexts (Lincoln et al., 2011). This enables a deeper, more contextualised understanding of how practitioners make sense of short-video platforms, negotiate professional identity, and adapt traditional communication principles to new digital environments (Sandberg, 2005). The interpretive stance aligns with modern PR scholarship that emphasises the relational, dialogic, and contextual nature of contemporary public relations practice (Kent & Taylor, 2021).

3.3 Philosophical Assumptions

Re-imagining public relations in the era of short-video formats cannot be measured by figures; instead, it develops through everyday practices and changing interpretations. This supports the adoption of interpretivism, a philosophy that emphasises understanding how people create meaning within their lived experiences (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). As a result, this study rejects a positivist, quantitative approach that seeks to reduce PR behaviour to variables and instead adopts a qualitative interpretivist perspective that focuses on meaning, context, and experience.

3.3.1 Ontological Assumptions

Ontologically, this study adopts a relativist perspective, asserting that multiple, equally valid realities exist and are constructed through individual and collective experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this research, it is assumed that PR practitioners develop different understandings of effective short-video communication depending on their organisational contexts, target audiences, industry sectors, and personal familiarity with digital tools (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

This perspective recognises that concepts such as “public relations” and “effective communication” are fluid and continually redefined as practitioners engage with emerging technologies, audience behaviours, and platform algorithms (Bucher & Helmond, 2018). The researcher, therefore, acknowledges that no single objective definition of effective short-video communication exists; instead, multiple interpretations coexist, reflecting the diverse professional realities and cultural contexts in which practitioners operate (Schwandt, 2000).

3.3.2 Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemologically, this research adopts a constructivist approach, which holds that knowledge is co-created through the interaction between researcher and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Knowledge about PR practices in short-video communication emerges through dialogue, interpretation, and mutual understanding rather than through detached observation of objective phenomena (Crotty, 1998).

The researcher recognises their active role in constructing knowledge, understanding that findings are not simply discovered but rather produced through interpretive processes shaped by both participant experiences and researcher perspectives (Charmaz, 2014). This epistemological stance

demands reflexivity, where the researcher continuously explores how their own background, assumptions, and biases influence data collection and analysis (Finlay, 2002). Practically, this means that insights into how PR practitioners reimagine their work are gained through in-depth conversations that enable them to express their experiences. At the same time, the researcher interprets these accounts within wider theoretical and contextual frameworks (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

3.3.3 Axiological Assumptions

Axiologically, this research recognises that values are inherent in the research process and that the researcher's perspectives inevitably influence the inquiry (Heron & Reason, 1997). Instead of aiming for value-neutrality, the researcher explicitly acknowledges their interest in understanding how digital transformation impacts PR practice and their commitment to amplifying practitioner voices in academic discourse (Lincoln et al., 2011).

The researcher values both traditional PR principles (such as transparency, strategic communication, and relationship-building) and the democratising potential of short-video platforms that challenge established hierarchies (Duffy & Pooley, 2019). These values guide the development of research questions, participant interactions, and interpretation of findings. By explicitly articulating these commitments, the research maintains transparency about the value positions informing its methodological and analytical choices (Schwandt, 2007).

3.3.4 Methodological Assumptions

Methodologically, the study assumes that naturalistic inquiry and flexible design are well-suited to exploring complex, evolving practices, such as the transformation of PR in digital contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The research prioritises in-depth, qualitative approaches capable of capturing the depth and nuance of practitioner experiences over standardised quantitative tools (Patton, 2015).

The design facilitates adaptation throughout the research process, recognising that understanding develops iteratively rather than through a fixed sequence (Maxwell, 2012). This approach assumes that valuable insights arise from close engagement with practitioners' lived experiences, detailed contextual exploration, and interpretive analysis rather than from statistical generalisation (Tracy,

2010). The aim is to generate transferable insights that deepen understanding of PR transformation rather than produce quantifiable data (Stake, 1995).

3.4 Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative, exploratory research design to investigate how public relations (PR) practices are adapting to short-video communication (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The qualitative approach is suitable because it focuses on understanding the how and why of PR transformation, capturing meanings, processes, and contextual nuances that quantitative methods might miss (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The study uses Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to examine how PR practitioners interpret and understand their experiences with short-video platforms and the meanings they attach to changes in their professional practice (Smith et al., 2009). Although it does not apply IPA in its entirety, the research adopts its focus on detailed accounts of individual experiences, idiographic depth, and an appreciation of participants' lived realities (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

The exploratory approach acknowledges that research on PR practices in short-video contexts remains limited. Therefore, this study adopts an open-ended method focused on gaining insights rather than testing predetermined theories (Stebbins, 2001). Such a method enables the identification of new patterns, unexpected themes, and theoretical frameworks based on practitioners' experiences rather than being restricted by existing academic models (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

3.5 Research Design

The study uses a qualitative case study approach with multiple embedded units of analysis to investigate PR practices across different organisational and industry contexts. As Stake (1995) notes, the case study method is especially suitable for exploring contemporary issues in real-world settings, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined.

Each PR practitioner is a unique case, allowing for both examination of individual experiences and comparison to detect broader patterns and differences (Baxter & Jack, 2010). This structure fosters

a rich and contextual understanding while enabling analytical generalisation to theoretical propositions about digital PR transformation (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

The study defines its case boundaries through three main criteria:

- (a) Temporal boundaries focusing on practices that have emerged since the mainstream adoption of short-video platforms (2019-2025).
- (b) Professional boundaries, which include only practising PR professionals with direct responsibility for short-video content.
- (c) Platform boundaries emphasising TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts as the main contexts of analysis (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

3.6 Sampling Strategy

The research employs purposive sampling, specifically criterion and maximum variation sampling, to select information-rich individuals who directly address the study objectives. This method aligns with qualitative inquiry, which emphasises depth of understanding rather than statistical generalisation (Nikolopoulou, 2022; Palinkas et al., 2015).

Inclusion criteria for participants include:

- Current employment in a PR or communication role responsible for organisational short-video content.
- At least one year of experience in creating or managing short-video content for PR purposes.
- Work across various organisational types, including corporate, agency, nonprofit, or government sectors.
- Willingness to explore professional experiences thoroughly.

Maximum variation sampling ensures diversity across organisational size, industry type, audience demographics, and geographic location. This diversity allows the study to identify both common trends and contextual distinctions (Coyne, 1997). The target sample size of 15-20 participants follows the principle of data saturation, achieved when additional interviews contribute little new information (Guest et al., 2006).

Participant recruitment will occur through:

- Professional networks.
- PR industry groups.
- LinkedIn connections.
- Snowball sampling, where initial participants recommend other qualified professionals

The recruitment method uses different strategies to attract a diverse group of professionals and relies on existing relationships to build trust and promote active engagement.

3.7 Data Collection Technique

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the primary method of data collection. This approach allows for thorough discussion while keeping the focus on key research themes. The interviews blend pre-identified topics aligned with the research questions, leaving room for participants to introduce new viewpoints (Rubin & Rubin, 2025).

The interview guide will include open-ended questions grouped under six main themes:

- i. Practitioners' transition to short-video content creation and adoption processes.
- ii. Conceptualisations of how short videos differ from traditional PR methods.
- iii. Specific practices, strategies, and workflows tailored for short-video content.
- iv. Challenges, tensions, and dilemmas faced.
- v. Evaluation criteria and success measures.
- vi. Reflections on the future of PR within digital environments.

Interviews will be conducted in person. Alternative options include via video conferencing platforms (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or any other platform available to the participant) to support geographic diversity and accommodate participants' schedules, while maintaining visual connection to foster rapport.

All interviews will be audio-recorded with informed consent and professionally transcribed verbatim to ensure analytical accuracy (Oliver et al., 2005). Supplementary materials such as content briefs, strategy documents, or sample short-video outputs shared by participants will serve as secondary data. These data provide contextual depth and complement interview insights by illustrating actual practitioner practices (Bowen, 2009).

3.8 Data Collection Process

The data collection process will follow a systematic yet flexible protocol designed to maximise data quality and participant comfort. Upon recruitment, participants will receive an information sheet explaining research objectives, procedures, confidentiality measures, and principles of voluntary participation (Arifin, 2018). Participants will complete informed consent forms before interviews begin, explicitly consenting to audio recording and data usage parameters.

Interviews will start with rapport-building through informal conversation about participants' professional backgrounds, creating a relaxed environment conducive to open sharing (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The researcher will use active listening techniques, including attentive silence, encouraging prompts, and reflective paraphrasing to enable detailed participant narratives (Roulston, 2010).

Probing questions will be used carefully to clarify ambiguous statements, explore interesting points more thoroughly, and encourage concrete examples that illustrate abstract concepts (Patton, 2015). The researcher will keep a reflexive journal throughout data collection, recording emerging insights, methodological decisions, and personal reactions that inform subsequent interviews and analysis (Janesick, 2011).

Data collection will proceed iteratively, with initial analysis of early interviews guiding refinements to interview focus and probing techniques in subsequent interviews—a process aligned with qualitative research's emergent nature (Charmaz, 2014). The collection will continue until theoretical saturation is reached, as demonstrated by redundancy in themes and concepts across interviews (Saunders et al., 2018).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

This research adheres to rigorous ethical standards guided by institutional research ethics principles and also complies with Ghana's Data Protection Act (Act 843, 2012). This will ensure participants' privacy and rights are protected under national legal standards. Key ethical considerations include:

3.9.1 Informed Consent: Participants will receive detailed information about the research and data handling practices in written form. Consent forms will emphasise voluntary participation and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

3.9.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity: Participant identities and organisational details will be protected using pseudonyms. Digital data will be stored on password-protected, encrypted devices with access restricted to the researcher. The limits of confidentiality will be explained, especially regarding legally mandated disclosures of harm.

3.9.3 Minimising Harm: The researcher will monitor for signs of distress and offer participants the option to skip questions or pause interviews, thereby posing minimal risk to the participant.

3.9.4 Data Protection: All data will be handled in line with institutional data protection policies, ensuring secure storage, limited retention periods, and controlled access.

3.10 Data Analysis Techniques

With the study's data, identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within the qualitative inquiry gathered will rely on a thematic approach to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' shared accounts. Creswell and Creswell (2018) state that qualitative data analysis employs a systematic process to organise data, using coding and interpreting themes to generate a fluid understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The process typically begins with familiarisation, in which interview transcripts are repeatedly read to gather insights and guide data analysis. Next, systematic coding is performed using Tauguette online software to organise and manage codes efficiently, helping to identify potential themes through pattern recognition and clustering related codes. While the interpretation remains researcher-driven through ongoing data comparisons, the study produced vivid data extracts that are rich in context and reflect participants' lived experiences, aligning with the research questions.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the methodological framework used to examine the transformation of public relations practice in the age of short-video communication. Rooted in an interpretive paradigm supported by a relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology, the study employs a qualitative

design, primarily using semi-structured interviews for data collection. Purposive sampling was used to select participants with relevant experience from different organisational contexts, ensuring valuable and insightful data. At the same time, strict ethical protocols were followed to protect participants' well-being and confidentiality.

The use of reflexive thematic analysis provided a structured yet flexible approach to identifying key patterns and developing interpretations grounded in practitioners' experiences. Overall, this methodological approach offers a deep, contextual understanding of how PR professionals are redefining their work beyond traditional press release models, making valuable contributions to both academic discourse and professional practice in digital communication. The next chapter presents the findings that arise from this methodological process.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Chapter Introduction

The chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews with ten (10) public relations practitioners, comprising four (4) from advertising agencies, five (5) from corporate institutions, and one (1) from a government organisation. These practitioners held various roles such as Executive/Senior Marketing and Communications Officer, Head of Public Relations, or Media/Communications Manager/Lead within their respective organisations. For confidentiality reasons, each participant will remain anonymous; therefore, their names will not be disclosed and will be replaced with Respondent(s) for data analysis. The findings are structured around ten emergent thematic codes, which together offer a detailed understanding of how PR is being re-envisioned in the age of short-video communication. Each theme is first analysed and interpreted based on the Respondent data, then linked to the relevant literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

4.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.2.1 Digital Evolution

The data overwhelmingly shows that adopting short-video communication was not just a strategic decision but an essential development driven by external forces. A key factor mentioned by several Respondents (seven in total) was the COVID-19 pandemic, which acted as a "mobility multiplier" or a forcing function. One Respondent remarked that the lockdowns made it "critical for us to assess our audience and also their media consumption habits," leading to the realisation that "video content actually was one of the main things that people were consuming." This change was further reinforced by the observed decline in attention spans and the superior performance of video content in engagement and analytics. Another Respondent noted that they "get more people more impressions on social media" than on their website, while another mentioned, "the video content always worked well."

- **Literature Analysis**

This finding directly supports the literature on the digital evolution of PR. Macnamara's (2016) concept of the shift from mass media to personal media is clear here. The pandemic accelerated

the trend described by Widener et al. (2025), in which social media fundamentally changes practitioner behaviour. Additionally, the data backs the idea of a "competing paradigm" (Huang et al., 2017), as practitioners had to adopt new tools alongside, or sometimes instead of, traditional methods.

4.2.2 Professional Identity Transformation

The rise of short-video content is fundamentally transforming the professional identity of PR practitioners. The data shows a shift from being mainly strategic writers and media-relations specialists to becoming content creators, creative producers, and versatile communicators. One respondent mentioned the need to "appreciate what video content is all about," while another explicitly stated that PR professionals must now become "creative producers." This broadening of role boundaries is challenging. A different respondent, despite creating videos, maintained a distinction: "I do not consider myself a professional creator. I think I am still a communications manager." This underscores an ongoing negotiation of professional identity, where new skills are needed but the core strategic role is preserved and expanded.

- **Literature Analysis**

This transformation echoes L'Etang's (2013) assertion that PR theory and identity must evolve alongside technological changes. The findings also reflect the idea of "produsage" (Bruns, 2008), where practitioners are no longer merely managing communication but are actively engaged in the collaborative creation of content. The tension between traditional identity and new demands mirrors the organisational challenges identified by Linke and Zerfass (2013), such as cultural resistance and skills gaps.

4.2.3 Technical Proficiency Imperative

A recurring theme is the urgent need for PR professionals to gain new technical skills. Respondents stressed the importance of abilities in mobile videography, video editing (using tools such as CapCut and the Adobe Suite), sound design, and platform-specific optimisation. One respondent described this as a "conscious effort to develop the necessary skill sets," while another identified "technical know-how" as their biggest challenge, highlighting a gap in their formal PR education. This extends beyond production to include data literacy—the ability to analyse video performance metrics (views, watch time, engagement) to demonstrate ROI to clients, as others emphasise.

- **Literature Analysis**

This imperative aligns with industry analyses, such as the Social Media Examiner report (Stelzner, 2025), which found that only 29% of marketers felt confident in their short-video strategies. The need for technical proficiency is a practical manifestation of the skills gap between traditional PR education and modern digital practices, a key part of the theory-practice gap documented by Hayes et al. (2023).

4.2.4 Augmentation Not Replacement Philosophy

Despite the enthusiasm for short-form video, a strong pragmatic consensus emerged that it enhances, rather than replaces, traditional PR tools. One respondent argued that short videos are "not a game changer" and should "complement the existing channel mix," citing factors like data costs and diverse audience preferences in Ghana. Another asserted, "I do not think short-form video is a complete transformation to the PR practice, no. It is just another channel." Another strong view expressed by a respondent is that; "short-video changes tactics, thus faster content cycles, different success metrics" and further alluding that; "the core of PR: credibility, clear messaging, audience understanding still matters as short-video deepens PR's audience focus and agility, not replacing traditional principles", but rather amplifies them for current, fast visual platforms. Others also described the shift as an "evolution" or "transition," not a complete transformation. The press release was consistently framed as evolving—becoming more concise and visual—but not obsolete.

- **Literature Analysis**

This pragmatic view offers a nuanced perspective that moderates some of the more revolutionary claims in the literature. While scholars like Leung (2024) argue that short-video platforms are now "essential to PR strategies," practitioners tend to align more with a media richness perspective (Daft & Lengel, 1986). They make strategic channel choices depending on the communication task and audience, recognising that the low-richness press release still plays a role for formal, information-dense communication, while short videos excel at emotional and relational tasks.

4.2.5 Contextual Pragmatism

Practitioners displayed a highly pragmatic approach, carefully choosing tools based on a clear assessment of context, audience, and objectives. A respondent explained how the decision between using a smartphone or a 4K camera depends on whether the output is for social media or television, recognising different quality standards and audience expectations. Another highlighted that short videos are not an "everyday go-to" but a tactic used for specific campaigns, especially events. This pragmatism also involves tailoring the message; the former mentioned debates over whether to write press releases in pidgin English to appear more relatable.

- **Literature Analysis**

This theme strongly endorses the principles of Media Richness Theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory, which advocate matching the medium to the message and context. The practitioners' behaviour reflects an intuitive application of these theories, selecting channels and content styles based on the complexity of the message, the target audience's media habits, and the specific goals of the campaign, as suggested by Kent and Taylor (1998) on dialogic communication.

4.2.6 Core Value Persistence

Amidst technological upheaval, respondents consistently affirmed that the fundamental ethical values of public relations stay the same. Truth, authenticity, transparency, and credibility were repeatedly highlighted as non-negotiable. One respondent declared, "PR is essentially about truth for me... this should not change." Another said, "I still hold my credibility," and another emphasised that trust comes from the source, not just the format. The ethical issues raised by AI and digital platforms were seen not as reasons to abandon these values, but as reasons to strengthen them further.

- **Literature Analysis**

This finding directly relates to the scholarship on authenticity and trust in digital communication (Gilpin, 2010; Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). The practitioners' focus on core values affirms that, although the tools and tactics of PR evolve, its fundamental ethical principles remain unchanged. This addresses the ethical considerations raised by Widener et al.

(2025) and demonstrates that practitioners recognise their responsibility to uphold honesty and transparency, even in fast-paced, entertainment-driven formats.

4.2.7 Democratised Production

The data shows a significant democratisation of content production. High-quality short videos are no longer solely the domain of professional production companies. Respondents reported using smartphones, consumer-grade editing apps (CapCut), and in-house staff to produce content. One respondent detailed using two camera teams simultaneously: one with professional cameras for high-end output and one with phones for quick social media content. This also involves leveraging user-generated content (UGC), nano-influencers, and employees as genuine content creators, a strategy mentioned by three other respondents.

- **Literature Analysis**

This theme clearly embodies Convergence Culture Theory (Jenkins, 2006). The merging of roles between producers and consumers, known as "prosumers", is apparent. The utilisation of UGC and employee advocates supports research by Papeman (2023) and Christodoulides et al. (2012), which found that such content often reaches a broader audience and gains more credibility than official corporate messages. The simplicity of content creation also illustrates the idea of "spreadable media" (Jenkins et al., 2013), whereby content is designed for easy sharing and adaptation.

4.2.8 Enhanced Accountability Regime

Short-video platforms have introduced a regime of heightened accountability and data-driven assessment. Practitioners now face pressure to demonstrate ROI using real-time, measurable metrics. One respondent mentioned the importance of being "data literate" and able to show clients "watch times, shares, comments." Engagement, especially comments, is highly valued as direct feedback (three other respondents). This creates a more transparent feedback loop but also increases pressure. Another respondent described the time pressure as "the most frustrating part," and yet another highlighted the strategic challenge of proving that a short video contributed to broader business objectives.

- **Literature Analysis**

This shift addresses the measurement and evaluation challenges highlighted by Waters and Jamal (2011). The move towards data-driven accountability signifies the maturing of digital PR, advancing beyond mere presence on platforms to emphasising meaningful engagement and measurable results. It also reflects the interactive nature of social media that Liu et al. (2011) identified as vital for positive perceptions in crisis management.

4.2.9 Organisational and Professional Context Restructuring

The integration of short-video communication is driving structural changes within organisations and the PR industry. Respondents reported the growth of in-house digital and multimedia teams, the creation of sister digital agencies, and the hiring of staff with specific skills in mobile videography (two Respondents). The very definition of a PR agency is expanding to become a "360 interconnected communications and entertainment company," as described by one other. This restructuring is a direct response to client demand and the need for specialised skills that traditional PR roles did not require.

- **Literature Analysis**

This finding supports the research by Linke and Zerfass (2013), who stated that successful digital transformation requires changes to organisational structures and processes, not just technological adoption. The emergence of new roles such as "social media manager" and "content creator," as observed by a respondent, demonstrates how the field is evolving to meet new demands, reinforcing L'Etang's (2013) perspective on the ongoing transformation of the field.

4.2.10 Future Perspectives and Anticipatory Challenges

Practitioners anticipate a future dominated by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and increasingly immersive technologies. AI is expected to revolutionise video editing, personalisation, and idea generation (four Respondents stated). However, this excitement is tempered by significant concerns about deepfakes, misinformation, and the erosion of authenticity. A Respondent foresaw challenges in distinguishing "what really is an authentic story from a brand as against something AI-generated." One other cited that the future should "expect audiences demand for more authenticity and interactive formats like polls and live Questions and Answers (Q&A)" and added that "platforms may emphasise creator monetisation and stricter disclosure rules." Others also

anticipated challenges, including information overload and the need for continuous learning. The future PR professional, as summarised by a Respondent, will be a "creator, a communicator, and also an entertainer."

- **Literature Analysis**

These expectations align closely with the ethical considerations discussed in the literature on AI and data analytics (Widener et al., 2025). Concerns about deepfakes and misinformation mark a new frontier for crisis communication, as initially examined by Freberg (2012) in the context of "social media-origin crises." The emphasis on future authenticity also ties back to the ongoing importance of trust and credibility highlighted by Gilpin (2010) and Sweetser and Metzgar (2007).

4.3 Analysed Data for the Research Questions

4.3.1 RQ1: How does short-form video content compare to traditional PR tools in terms of audience engagement, brand recall, and message retention?

The data provides a clear, comparative answer. In terms of audience engagement, short-form video is perceived as vastly superior. Respondents reported higher "likes," "comments," "shares," and "impressions" compared to text-based press releases or website content. The audiovisual, emotional nature of video captures attention more effectively in a cluttered media environment. As a Respondent noted, short videos can capture "emotions... people laughing... like a raw content," which fosters a stronger connection.

For message retention and brand recall, the findings are nuanced. Short-videos excel at conveying emotional, brand-humanising messages and concise educational tips. Their strength lies in creating a memorable feeling or a single, powerful takeaway. However, for complex, information-dense messages, the traditional press release, with its structured detail, was still seen as necessary. The key differentiator is the communication goal. This directly supports Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986); practitioners intuitively use richer media (video) for ambiguous, relational tasks and leaner media (press releases) for unequivocal, information-dissemination tasks.

4.3.2 RQ2: How do storytelling technologies influence the work practices, communication strategies, and audience engagement outcomes of PR professionals?

The influence is profound and multifaceted:

- **Work Practices:** Technologies have transformed PR work from writing and pitching to a democratised production process involving scripting, shooting, and editing. Tools like CapCut, Canva, and AI (e.g., for generating ideas or music) are now integral to the daily workflow. This has expanded the PR role, creating a professional identity transformation towards that of a content creator.
- **Communication Strategies:** Strategies are now built around platform-specific storytelling. This involves understanding algorithmic optimisation, using trending sounds, and crafting narratives designed for "spreadability". The strategy has shifted from "promoting institutional priorities" (as noted in the literature) to "centring communication strategies around audience interests and needs," often through educational or entertaining content (Pulizzi, 2012).
- **Audience Engagement Outcomes:** The outcome is an enhanced accountability regime. Engagement is no longer abstract; it is measured in real-time through analytics. This data directly informs strategy, creating a feedback loop that allows practitioners to refine their storytelling for maximum impact. The interactive nature of the platforms facilitates a two-way dialogue, moving practice closer to the two-way symmetrical model ideal (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) and Macnamara's (2016) "architecture of listening."

4.3.3 RQ3: What are the ethical challenges associated with the use of AI-driven storytelling tools in public relations?

The data identifies several critical ethical challenges:

- **Misinformation and Authenticity:** The foremost concern is the rise of deepfakes and AI-generated content that can undermine truth and authenticity. Respondents expressed concern about the difficulty of distinguishing real from AI-generated stories, which could severely damage organisational credibility (two Respondents cited). This echoes the literature's concerns about the risk of misinformation amplification (Widener et al., 2025).
- **Algorithmic Bias and Brand Safety:** Practitioners are aware that platform algorithms favour certain types of content (often entertaining or controversial), which may not align

with PR objectives or brand values. One Respondent noted that "the algorithm wants people to stick to their platform," which can push brands towards content that sacrifices message integrity for visibility.

- **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** While not a primary focus for all respondents, the need for ethical production was implied. The use of copyrighted music was a noted challenge (two Respondents alluded to), raising legal and ethical compliance issues. The broader imperative for inclusive communication (e.g., captions) aligns with the ethical dimension of accessibility highlighted in the literature.
- **Data Privacy:** The use of AI for targeting and analytics raises questions about data privacy. Practitioners acknowledged the need to balance data-driven insights with respect for user autonomy, a tension explicitly identified by Widener et al. (2025).

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews with nine PR practitioners in Ghana. The findings were organised around ten emergent themes that collectively illustrate the re-imagination of PR in the short-video era. The analysis revealed that the adaptation of short videos was a necessary Digital Evolution, accelerated by external forces such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This has led to a significant Professional Identity Transformation, expanding the PR role from strategic writer to content creator. A Technical Proficiency Imperative emerged, highlighting the urgent need for new skills in videography, editing, and data analytics.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as the culmination of the study. It provides a concise summary of the key findings derived from the analysis of qualitative data in Chapter Four. Based on these findings, the chapter draws predominant conclusions about the transformation of public relations practice. It then presents practical recommendations for PR professionals, educators, and organisations, and concludes by suggesting productive avenues for future scholarly research to build upon this study's contributions.

5.2 Key Findings

The investigation yielded several critical findings that characterise the contemporary PR landscape in Ghana:

Necessary Evolution and Identity Shift: The adoption of short-video communication is driven by external market and audience forces, necessitating an evolution in PR practice. This has fundamentally transformed the professional identity of practitioners from media relations experts to multi-skilled content creators and creative producers.

Strategic Augmentation, Not Replacement: Short-form video is widely viewed as a powerful tool that augments the PR toolkit, guided by a pragmatic approach (Contextual Pragmatism), in which channel selection is strategically aligned with specific communication goals, audience preferences, and message complexity.

Enduring Ethical Core: Despite technological dominance, the core ethical values of PR-truth, authenticity, transparency, and credibility-remain paramount and non-negotiable for practitioners.

Democratisation and Accountability: The production of PR content has been democratised through accessible technology (smartphones, consumer-grade apps), while also creating a regime of extreme accountability in which real-time, quantifiable engagement metrics measure success.

Structural Adaptation and Future Challenges: The integration of short-video is prompting organisational restructuring, including the creation of in-house digital teams and new specialised

roles. Practitioners anticipate a future dominated by AI, bringing both opportunities for efficiency and significant ethical challenges related to deepfakes and misinformation.

5.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study affirms that PR in Ghana is undergoing a profound re-imagining in the era of short-video communication. This transformation is not merely a tactical shift in profession. Grounded in the complementary lenses of Media Richness Theory and Convergence Culture Theory, the findings demonstrate that PR is moving from a model of controlled, one-way information dissemination to a participatory, dialogic, and co-creative engagement with stakeholders.

While the evolving press release is no longer the central artefact of PR, it has been complemented by dynamic, audio-visual content designed for spreadability and emotional connection. Today's PR professional and the future practitioner must therefore be a hybrid expert: a strategic communicator, a data-literate analyst, a technically proficient creator, and an unwavering ethical guardian. While the tools and tactics continue to evolve, the ultimate goal of building mutually beneficial relationships remains the enduring heart of the public relations discipline.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

While the research provides valuable insights, its findings must be considered in light of several limitations—primarily, the qualitative methodology and relatively small sample size (10 participants). Though ideal for achieving deep, contextual understanding, it does not prevent the statistical generalisation of the results. The findings are specific and contextual to participant PR professionals in Ghana and are intended for analytical rather than broader generalisation.

Secondly, the geographic and cultural focus on Ghana limits the direct transferability of its conclusions to other regions with different and sophisticated technological infrastructures, media landscapes, and cultural values.

Finally, the subject's constantly evolving nature poses a temporal limitation due to the platform's algorithm and user behaviour associated with short-video communication. Moreover, the strategies

and challenges identified in the study represent a snapshot in time and may evolve in the aftermath of this study.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

5.5.1 Public Relations Professionals

Embrace Continuous Learning: Proactively develop technical skills in mobile videography, video editing, and data analytics to remain competent and competitive.

Adopt a Strategic, Augmented Approach: Integrate short videos into a broader channel mix, using them strategically as emotional tools for information-dense communication.

Champion Ethical Practice: Vigilantly uphold core values of truth and transparency, especially when using AI-driven tools. Develop internal guidelines to mitigate risks associated with deepfakes, algorithmic bias, and misinformation.

Leverage Democratised Creation: Empower employees as advocates and curate user-generated content to foster authenticity and broaden reach, in line with convergence culture.

5.5.2 Educators

Revamping PR Curricula: Integrate practical models on digital storytelling, short-video content creation, platform analytics, and the ethical use of AI in communication into public relations and marketing degree programmes.

Bridge the Theory-Practice Gap: Foster stronger links with industry through guest lecturers, workshops, and live case studies to ensure academic instruction remains relevant to the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Focus on Core values: While teaching new technologies, place equal emphasis on reinforcing the foundational ethical principles of public relations to prepare responsible future practitioners.

5.5.3 Organisations

Invest in structural Capacity: Support the professional development of PR teams and consider restructuring to include dedicated roles for content creation and digital strategy (in-house digital units).

Allocate Adequate Resources: Provide adequate budget for technology, software, and training to enable the production of high-quality, platform-specific short-video content.

Foster a Culture of Authenticity: Encourage an organisational culture that values authentic, humanised communication and is comfortable with the measured loss of message control inherent in participatory digital platforms.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Studies

To build upon the findings of this research, future studies should consider the following:

Longitudinal Research: Conduct a longitudinal study to track the long-term impact and sustainability of short-video strategies on brand reputation and stakeholder relationships.

Quantitative Validation: Employ quantitative methods to statistically measure and compare the ROI of short-video content against traditional PR tools on a larger scale.

Cross-Cultural Comparative Studies: Undertake comparative research between Ghana and other countries (both within and outside Africa) to explore the influence of cultural, economic and technological contexts on the adoption of short-video PR strategies.

In-depth AI Ethics Inquiry: Focus specifically on the ethical dimensions of AI in PR, investigating practitioner preparedness, developing ethical frameworks for AI use, and exploring audience perceptions of AI-generated content.

Specialised Crisis Communication: Investigate the specific application and effectiveness of short-video platforms in crisis communication with the Sub-Saharan African context.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1.0 (Interview Guide)

BEYOND THE PRESS RELEASE: RE-IMAGINING PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE ERA OF SHORT-VIDEO COMMUNICATION

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

SECTION A: Introduction and Building Rapport (5-7 minutes)

1. To begin, could you tell me a bit about your current role and how your typical day at work looks like?

Further enquiry: What are your main responsibilities and how does content creation fit into your work?

2. What story do you have to share about how you first got involved in public relations and communications?

Further enquiry: How long have you been with the organisation? What attracted you to the profession, and has your role evolved over time?

SECTION B: Entry into Short-Video Communication (10-12 minutes)

1. Can you walk me through how your organisation first started using short-video platforms like TikTok, Instagram Reels, or YouTube Shorts for PR purposes?

2. What was your personal reaction when you were first asked to create or manage short-video content?

3. Describe your learning journey with short-video platforms. How did you develop the skills and knowledge needed?

4. Were there any particular short-video campaigns or content creators that inspired or influenced your approach?

SECTION C: Conceptualising Short-Video PR (15-18 minutes)

1. In your opinion, how do traditional PR approaches like press releases, media pitches, or annual report and publication content differ from short-video communication?

2. There is a notion that short-video represents a complete transformation of PR practice, while others see it as just another channel. Where do you stand on this?

3. What does good short-video content look like in your professional context?
4. The research topic mentions moving *beyond the press release*. What does this phrase mean to you personally in your work?
5. Do you think that traditional PR values like credibility, relationship-building, transparency, translate into short-video contexts? How or why not?

SECTION D: Practices, Strategies, and Workflows (18-20 minutes)

1. Walk me through your typical process for creating a short-video piece from initial concept to publication.

Further enquiry:

- What tools or technologies do you use (cues on AI practices)?

2. What's your decision-making process? Can you give me an example of content that worked well and content that didn't?

3. Tell me about how you develop the creative concept or approach for short-video content. Where do ideas come from?

Further enquiry:

- How do you balance organisational messaging needs with platform trends or audience preferences?
- Do you use trending sounds, challenges, or formats?

4. One distinctive feature of short-video is its emphasis on authenticity and "realness." How do you navigate this expectation while representing an organisation?

5. Who appears in your short-video content? How do you make decisions about on-screen talent or voices?

Further enquiry:

- Do you use employees, influencers, executives, professional actors?
- How do you prepare people who aren't communication professionals to appear on camera?
- What challenges have you encountered with on-screen representation?

6. How do you handle the production aspects; filming, editing, sound, captions, etc.?

7. Short-video platforms are algorithm-driven. How does this influence your content strategy or creative decisions?

Further enquiry:

- Do you optimise for algorithmic visibility? How?
- Have you experienced tensions between algorithmic demands and PR objectives?

8. How do you approach audience engagement and community management on these platforms?

SECTION E: Challenges, Tensions, and Dilemmas (12-15 minutes)

1. What have been the biggest challenges you have faced in doing PR work through short-video platforms?

Further enquiry:

- Technical challenges?
- Organisational or cultural challenges?
- Strategic or conceptual challenges?
- Resource or capacity challenges?

2. Have you encountered resistance; either from leadership, colleagues, or other stakeholders to using short-video for PR purposes? Tell me about that.

3. Short-video platforms move quickly, with constantly evolving trends and features. How do you keep up with these changes?

4. Have you faced any ethical dilemmas or uncomfortable situations related to short-video PR?

5. What resources, support, or capabilities do you wish you had for short-video work that you currently do not have?

6. Thinking about your professional identity, has working with short-video changed how you see yourself as a PR practitioner?

Further enquiry:

- Do you feel like a communicator, creator, entertainer, or something else?

SECTION F: Evaluation and Measurement (10-12 minutes)

1. How do you evaluate whether your short-video content is achieving its PR objectives?

2. Platform analytics provide lots of data such as views, likes, shares, completion rates, etc. Which of this matter most to you and why?

3. How do you connect short-video performance to broader organisational goals or communication outcomes?

5. Do you conduct any audience research or testing related to short-video content?

SECTION G: Organisational and Professional Context (8-10 minutes)

1. How does short-video fit into your organisation's broader communication and PR strategy?

2. How do you collaborate with other departments like marketing, social media, corporate communications, etc. around short-video content?

3. Has short-video work changed organisational structures, roles, or workflows in your organisation?

Further enquiry:

- Have new positions been created?
- Have responsibilities shifted?

4. If you work with external partners; agencies/creators/influencers, how do you manage these relationships?

Further enquiry:

- What challenges exist in these partnerships?

5. How does your organisation's industry, culture, or brand identity influence your approach to short-video PR?

Further enquiry:

- Can you give examples of how context shapes what you can or should do?

SECTION H: Future Perspectives and Reflections (8-10 minutes)

1. Looking ahead, how do you see short-video communication evolving? What trends or changes do you anticipate?

Further enquiry:

- Platform changes?
- Audience expectations?
- Professional practices?

2. What implications do you think short-video has for the future of the PR profession more broadly?

Further enquiry:

- What skills will be essential?
- How might PR education need to change?
- What aspects of traditional PR might become less relevant?

3. If you were advising a PR professional just starting to work with short-video platforms, what would you tell them?

4. Can complex or serious topics be effectively communicated through short-video? Give examples.

5. Reflecting on your experience, what aspects of short-video PR work are most satisfying or rewarding for you? What's most frustrating?

6. Is there anything about your experience with short-video PR that we have not discussed but you think is important for understanding this phenomenon?

SECTION I: ARTIFACT SHARING (5 minutes)

I1. Would you be willing to share any documents, strategies, content briefs, or examples of short-video content that might help illustrate what we've discussed today?

I2. Are there specific pieces of content you're particularly proud of or that represent important learning moments?

CLOSING (3-5 minutes)

2. Is there anyone else you think I should speak with for this research—colleagues or other PR professionals working with short-video?