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Exploration of the Reputation of the Nightclub Industry in Ireland

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Exploration of the Reputation of the Nightclub Industry in Ireland

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April 2013

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of

Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

The thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution.

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ABSTRACT

Anthony Friel - Exploration of the Reputation of the Nightclub Industry in Ireland

The purpose of the exploration was to research the reputation and public relations practised within the nightclub industry. This is achieved through exploring the public relations practices of the Irish Nightclub Industry Association (INIA) and individual nightclubs. The specific areas examined are public relations as a management function, communications, relationship management, an understanding of publics, issue management and crisis management. Reputation and the reputation management process are also assessed. These areas of practice combined give an understanding of how the nightclub industry's reputation can be explored.

Publics affected by the nightclub industry give their opinion on these practices by the industry. Best practices in public relations including Grunig and Grunig's twelve hallmarks of excellence in public relations are recalled in the literature review. The qualitative paradigm is used in the methodology and includes assessment of best practices, analysis of documents and reports, both internal and external to the industry, and interviews with affiliate and non-affiliates of the nightclub industry.

The findings of the exploration show that using symmetrical communication and adhering to most of the hallmarks of excellence in public relations are the most effective way to improve the reputation of the nightclub industry.

The findings also show that nightclubs do not practise public relations correctly, nor do they communicate with many of their publics. Nightclubs rarely use the symmetrical model of communication. The INIA are more proficient in their practice of public relations; however, they practice public relations circumstantially and not on an on-going basis. The INIA also demonstrate better communication practices with their publics; however, their communication is more aligned with asymmetrical practice.

The exploration shows the reputation of the nightclub industry has improved over the last ten years, but it was improving from a very low standard. The nightclub industry believes improved public relations and communications are essential to improve the industry's reputation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

DIGI – Drinks Industry Group Ireland

**ESIA – Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Proposed Regulations of
the Nightclub Industry in Ireland**

IABC – International Association of Business Communicators

INIA – Irish Nightclub Industry Association

LFCV – Licence Fees and Commercial Viability in the Nightclub Industry

MEAS – Mature Enjoyment of Alcohol in Society

NCC – National Crime Council

OPL – Ordinary Publican Licence

PR – Public Relations

PSA – Private Security Authority

RAG – Raise And Give

RSA – Responsible Serving of Alcohol

SNPAAP – Scottish National Plan for Action on Alcohol Problems

SEO – Special Exemption Order

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The nightclub industry has faced multiple changes over the years in Ireland. These changes have included legislative, social and economic issues. Over that time the industry has had to find methods to adapt to these changes. These changes have also had an impact on the reputation of the nightclub industry in Ireland. It is now an industry that has to deal with the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, prevention of public nuisance, drugs crime, fire and emergency procedures, security, crowd control policy, incidents and claims, noise control and government legislation.

The headlines below, from newspapers around Ireland in the last four years, are typical of a quick search for 'nightclub' on a *Nexis* media-monitoring tool.

'Judge Warns Nightclubs on Cheap Drink Promotions' (Britton and Doherty 2012a:3)

'Investigation of Teenage Girl's Alleged Rape in Nightclub Likely to be Lengthy' (Lally 2011:8)

'Late Night Revelers Upsetting Residents' (Hayden 2010:4)

'Students Complain of Crush at Door of Dublin Nightclub' (Holland 2009:6)

These headlines are a sample of some of the problems the industry has to deal with. Currently, as the price of drink in the off-trade decreases, competition within the on-trade sector increases. Off-trade refers to off-licences, supermarkets and petrol stations. On-trade refers to nightclubs, pubs and restaurants.

The challenges for a public relations manager in this industry are enormous. Public relations can proactively shape the nightclub industry's future; it can improve its reputation and that of the industry. Additionally, one of the challenges of public relations is to turn this increasing trend of poor media coverage around.

One view of public relations describes the craft as the projection of the personality of the organisation. As it is doubtful that any person could build a reputation without personality, so it is with an organisation. The corporate personality is what the organisation is, reflects what it believes in and determines where it is heading. But above all, the personality agreed by the management, is the central factor in the building of the corporate reputation...and perhaps, the most satisfactory practical definition of public relations is that it is the management of corporate reputation (Haywood 1991:4).

This research applies reputational practices to the nightclub industry in Ireland. It will assess the nightclub industry's practice of public relations and seek to find what reputation exists. Haywood states above that public relations is the craft of projecting the personality of the organisation. This research will aim to determine the personality of the nightclub industry and how it is projected.

Before discussing any reputational practices, an understanding of the nightclub industry must first be acquired. In addition, my own personal experience with nightclubs and the nightclub industry should be stated.

1.2 Background

Despite what you believe, despite your late-night experiences, or even despite where you work—the legal reality is that there are no nightclubs in Ireland. The reason is this, existing licensing legislation does not recognise the term nightclub. Rather nightclubs as we know them are licensed under the Public Dance Halls Act of 1935 – an antiquated Act that has little resonance in 2009 society (Tynan 2009:11).

The Irish Government enacted the Public Dance Halls Act in 1935. The act was introduced to outlaw dance houses. Both Government and Church believed that people were acting immorally and making fortunes out of dance houses and dance tournaments. 'Anyone holding a dance house after this were brought to court and fined...the clergy started to build parochial halls and the Government collected 25 per cent of the ticket tax' (Crehan 1977:72). This was the first instance of Government regulation in the industry.

From the 1940s onward, the dance hall evolved, moving into hotel ballrooms, dance halls and marquees. The primary entertainment in dance halls from 1940-1980 was big bands or show bands. 'By the late 1950s the showband era had taken hold' (Byrne 2008:249).

The 1970s heralded a new era of dance called discotheque or disco. Musically, by the 1980s, dance halls or discos had moved away from traditional show bands and moved more towards dance or disco music. Additionally, they moved away from live bands to records or vinyls played by a disc jockey.

The 14th February 1981 is a significant date in the history of the nightclub industry in Ireland, a date when the nightclub industry's reputation was severely damaged. Forty-eight people died and 215 were injured as a fire broke out in the *Stardust* nightclub attended by 850 people in Artane, Dublin. A tribunal of inquiry under Mr. Justice Ronan Keane concluded in November 1981. It showed that the nightclub owners had padlocked or chained the emergency exit doors. The tribunal showed that the owners had acted with reckless disregard for the safety of their customers (Department of

Environment 1982:343). The nightclub owners were awarded £580,000 in costs for damages to their business as the tribunal ruled that arson was tenuous but the most likely cause (Department of Environment 1982:276). The *Stardust* tragedy reshaped the reputation of the nightclub industry in Ireland. The nightclub industry was seen to be irresponsible, careless and greedy.

The early 1990s introduced 'raving' and 'clubbing' to Ireland as terms to describe a new music and dance scene from the United Kingdom. This new electronic music brought a new dynamic to nightclubs. Dance halls evolved from parochial halls into nightclubs comprising of huge buildings with multiple dance floors, laser lighting technology and high specification sound systems.

Raving and clubbing also introduced Ireland's nightclub industry to a new drug culture. Newspaper headlines included, 'Twelve Dublin Nightclubs Have Been Stung by Gardaí Buying Illegal Drugs' (Cleary 1998:8), 'Owner of Nightclub Denies Drug Charges' (Coulter 1998:5) and 'Judge says "POD" Nightclub Should be Called "Place of Drugs"' (Weitz 1999:4). This drug perception added to the already damaged reputation of the industry.

On the 29th March 2004, the Government implemented a ban on smoking in the work place. This had a notable impact on the nightclub industry. The nightclubs had to facilitate outdoor smoking areas or face losing their customers to competition.

On the 20th March 2006, the Competition (Amendment) Act 2006 was enacted, abolishing the previous Groceries Order Act 1987. The nightclub industry suffered as a

consequence of this 2006 act. Alcohol prices have decreased in the off-trade, particularly in off-licenses and supermarkets.

This section shows that the recent increase in the number of supermarkets, convenience stores and petrol stations with off-licences – and the corresponding decrease in the number of pubs, clubs and hotels – is part of a general shift in alcohol consumption away from bars to the home...Changing social patterns, such as technological advancements in home entertainment and an increased preference for wine, changing demographics, changing property values, and a change in attitude to drink driving are also all likely contributory factors to this phenomenon (Government Alcohol Advisory Group 2008:3-4).

The abolishing of the Groceries Order Act introduced the concept of pre-loading to the nightclub industry in Ireland. Pre-loading refers to the term used to describe people that drink at home before going out to a club or bar. As a result of the 2006 act, it is generally accepted that customers of the nightclub industry now pre-load more before going out. The general manager of *The Foundry* nightclub, Carlow, states, ‘We refuse more customers now, they are drinking at home and we feel they are, more and more, coming to our doors too drunk. Our income from admissions is falling...sales at our bars have fallen, again I believe this is due to customers drinking more at home before coming out’ (interview with Eugene McGovern, 10 December 2011). Niall Byrne, general manager of *Scraggs Alley* pub, Carlow (interview with Niall Byrne, 11 January 2012) explained that he, as a pub manager, is now in competition with nightclubs. He states that his pub has had to extend their opening hours to compete with nightclubs. He attributes the loss of trading hours to pre-loading as the reason for extending his opening hours.

As a direct result of the abolishing of the Groceries Order Act 1987, nightclubs now refuse more customers for being too drunk. Additionally nightclubs face increased

direct competition from pubs as the pubs try to regain lost trading hours to pre-loading by extending their operating times in competition with nightclubs. Both these issues have had a knock on effect on the reputation of the industry.

The Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008 had a double economic impact on the nightclub industry. It repealed the Theatre Licence that allowed nightclubs to operate until 3.30am. The act brought closing time back to 2.30am. Nightclubs operate for four to five hours a night. For an average nightclub operating four times a week this reduced its operating and sales time by four hours, 20 per cent of its trading hours.

In addition the act increased the Special Exemption Order (SEO) costs by over 50 per cent, rising from €270 up to €410. SEO refers to the costs applied to nightclubs every night it opens. There includes a €300 court fee and €110 in excise duty. It does not include legal representation fees. This act impacted the economic viability of nightclubs and the industry (Foley 2011:3).

The Irish Nightclub Industry Association (INIA) is the national representative body for nightclub owners and operators in Ireland. They operate with an executive committee, comprising of a Chairman and executive members that represents each county in Ireland. In 2008 the INIA appointed their first ever Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Barry O'Sullivan. This was a landmark move for the industry and put down a marker for improving many facets of the industry (www.inia.ie 2012). The INIA indicated their goals included a reduction in the cost of SEOs, the extension of operating hours and the introduction of a nightclub permit (www.inia.ie 2012). The nightclub permit seeks to

define nightclub in law by incorporating specific conditions of standards of trading. The Nightclub Permit will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

Currently the nightclub industry of Ireland has 300 venues nationwide. It employs 2,400 full-time employees and 14,000 part-time employees. It entertains 500,000 people on average every week (www.inia.ie 2012).

Since Barry O’Sullivan was appointed CEO, the INIA have commissioned two reports ‘*Licence Fees and Commercial Viability in the Nightclub Industry*’ and ‘*Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Proposed Regulation of the Nightclub Industry in Ireland*’. Anthony Foley and Dr Constantin Gurdgiev wrote the reports respectively. The INIA have also launched Nightsafe. Nightsafe refers to a social responsibility and best-practice initiative for the nightclub industry (www.inia.ie 2012).

The appointment of a CEO has been a positive development for the industry and the INIA. It appears to have brought focus to the organisation that is described throughout the research as a ‘fractious group’ in the past. That said the INIA still only has twenty five per cent paid up memberships. It may not have the full support of all nightclubs across the country and this is something they are trying to develop. This development should aid the industry in many areas including reputation and this is discussed in the research.

For clarity purposes, hereafter the INIA refers to the organisation that represents the nightclubs. Nightclubs refer to individual nightclubs. Organisation is the term used to

describe either or both group depending on the context of the discussion and this will be stated.

This background section of the industry identifies a number of occurrences that have affected its evolution. In this exploration we will look at these events throughout and how they affected the reputation of the industry. Also the exploration will assess how the industry contributed and responded to these events.

1.3 Personal Experience

My own experience in the nightclub industry started in 1993 at the age of fourteen in Donegal. In the next twenty years I would spend fifteen of these years involved directly or indirectly with the nightclub industry. The personal experience would contribute significantly to this exploration and this relevance will be discussed throughout the research. A background of my own personal experience is offered now to demonstrate the development of the exploration.

I was employed by *The Milford Inn* to work in *The Inn* nightclub as a glass lifter. I worked with *The Inn* nightclub for five years until 1998. The job introduced me to the culture of a nightclub at a young age. The job entailed continually collecting dirty glasses and bringing them back to the bar to be cleaned. My duties also included helping to clean the venue at the end of each night.

In my time with *The Inn* nightclub, I believe I gained an understanding of the many reasons why nightclubs are popular and unpopular and how this contributes to its overall reputation. These reasons are discussed throughout the research but two of the earliest examples of popular and unpopular instances that I witnessed are mating rituals and violence.

The mating ritual was one of the basic reasons for nightclubs popularity among customers as I discovered during romantic songs or ‘slow sets’ that were played twice nightly at the nightclub to facilitate couples and the mating ritual. I am not sure if this mating ritual element enhanced or hindered the reputation as this ritual could have added sexual or salacious connotations to the industry.

At the end of every work night, I would clear the foyer area of the nightclub, along with other staff members, and almost every night, I viewed multiple fights occurring outside the nightclub demonstrating violence as the first reason of unpopularity for nightclubs that I would witness. Both of these issues contribute to the reputation of the industry.

The owners and operators of *The Inn* nightclub were hard working and honest. They treated me well and my experience working with them is a factor in this research.

From 1998 until 2003 I experienced the nightclub industry as a customer. The experiences as employee and customer varied greatly. During this period I attended nightclubs all over the country and abroad. As a customer, I assessed the customer relations and communications of the industry. I witnessed heavy handedness from security. This was a damaging reputational factor for the industry in the 2000s,

‘Bouncers to be “Tagged” at Co. Cork Nightclub’ (Burke 2003:6). This headline in the *Sunday Tribune* refers to Gardaí introducing a tagging system to security following difficulties in prosecuting security staff accused of assaulting customers.

From 2003-2005, I worked in partnership with *The Foundry* and *Nexus* nightclubs in Carlow as a student representative. The local nightclubs made a contribution to the Students’ Union for each night we opened together. During one application for a Special Exemption Order (SEO) for a date in RAG week, Judge Mary Martin refused the nightclubs. RAG week refers to Raise And Give week, a student week of fundraising on and off campus. The week has been condemned on several occasions as a result of drunk and disorderly students. ‘Local Residents Slam RAG Week at DKIT’ (Rodgers 2010:17). The nightclubs and the Students’ Union were refused SEOs on the grounds that RAG week contributed too much to public disorder. The nightclubs took the case to the Circuit Court and challenged the ruling to deny the SEOs. The nightclubs, helped by the Students’ Union, were successful in overturning the decision. The main body of evidence was based on public order cases during the week in previous years and how much had been previously raised and contributed to charity due to RAG weeks. This instance was my first experience of politics, law and their impact on the industry.

I worked for the Dinn Rí Group as Public Relations and Marketing Manager from 2005-2011. The Dinn Rí Group comprises a number of venues including nightclubs, bars, restaurants and hotels. This allowed me to get first-hand experience of the inner workings of the nightclub industry. The work included various marketing and public relations initiatives for the nightclubs. During this employment I also completed a BA

in Public Relations and Communications. I applied much of my academic studies to the nightclub industry and vice versa. I completed a final year dissertation titled ‘The Emergence of Public Relations in the Nightclub Industry in Carlow over three years’ in 2008. This research looked at public relations practices and their emergence in three nightclubs in Carlow. My time with the Dinn Rí Group confirmed to me the probability that the nightclub industry was struggling with its reputation.

Since leaving the Dinn Rí Group I have set up my own business, Friel Marketing Solutions, which offers marketing, communications and public relations solutions for the hospitality sector including nightclubs.

1.4 Objectives

Clubs can be seen by some as a place from where virtually all nocturnal public order problems emanate—which is a rather unfair assumption. It’s just that we’re the last people in the chain customers get to on a night out. We want to change this perception and be recognised for the important role that we play in providing a safe, quality entertainment package to visitor and local alike (Farrell 2007:5).

Farrell refers to perception and recognition in his article. When I first read this article I empathized with the industry and its difficulties. Why, I thought, is the industry perceived and recognised in this manner? It has made mistakes, and received many bad headlines, but what is the nightclub industry doing about this?

Why in the story ‘Judge Warns Nightclubs on Cheap Drink Promotions’ (Britton and Doherty 2012a:3) is the nightclub industry not highlighting that supermarkets and off-licences can sell drink at whatever price they want and freely carry out cheap drink

promotions? The Competition Act 2006 allows below cost selling of alcohol. Supermarkets sell alcohol at significantly reduced rates. Nightclubs are frowned upon for lowering the price of alcohol and face SEOs being denied as a result.

This is only an example, where there appears to be an inequity between alcohol prices in supermarkets and nightclubs. I have wondered why the community and the Judge perceive promotions by nightclubs as concerning and this same concern is not applied to promotions run by supermarkets or off-licences. Which contributes more to public order offences, cheap drink in the off-trade or cheap drink in the on-trade? This will be explored to deduce why and what the nightclub industry is doing about it and how it effects their reputation.

The main objective of this research, inspired by Farrell's statement above, is to determine why the industry is perceived and recognised in the manner it is. What contributes to their reputation and how can they address this? What is the nightclub industry doing to counteract the problems that we have seen so far?

To achieve this, I will ask questions of the nightclub industry and their publics. I will assess their practices and compare them to industry best-practices. This research will provide an understanding of reputation management, public relations, communication, publics, issue and crisis management to provide an understanding of the nightclub industry's practices and reputation in Ireland.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this literature review I will be exploring the practices of public relations and how it lends to examining the reputation of an industry. Haywood (1991:4) states, ‘And perhaps, the most satisfactory practical definition of public relations is that it is the management of corporate reputation.’

‘Public relations is quite malleable and interdisciplinary’ (Sriramesh 2012:20). I will look at several public relations practices and disciplines. These include reputation management, auditing a reputation, public relations as a management function, communications, the two-way symmetrical model of communication, relationship management, publics, public linkages to organisations, issue management and crisis management. These practices are all interlinked in exploring reputations and are discussed as such throughout.

Public relations is interdisciplinary. For this research I will draw upon other disciplines including areas of management and relationships to fully explore the reputation of the nightclub industry. The research now looks at reputation and reputation management and the role it plays in an industry.

2.2 Reputation

Just as an individual builds a reputation by behaviour consistent with society's standards, so an industry achieves a reputation, by its ethical behaviour.

Ethical behaviour must be managed. Unlike individuals, who argue only with their conscience when faced with an ethical dilemma, institutions must resolve the differences of opinion within a management team holding a wide range of ethical convictions. It quite often falls to the public relations manager to be a social conscience and defender of the organisations reputation (Kendall 1996:330).

The nightclub industry of Ireland faces many ethical dilemmas conflicted with their interests. The most current example is the promotion of cheap alcohol by nightclubs in Donegal (Britton and Doherty 2012a:3). This example shows the ethical decisions the nightclub management must consider. It must consider promotion of cheap alcohol and the problems associated with it, versus the nightclub's survival. An industry is judged by its behaviour and also has a responsibility to the community in which it operates.

They initiate policies that reflect their core values; that consider the joint welfare of investors, customers and employees; that invoke concern for the development of local communities; and that ensure the quality and environmental soundness of their technologies, products, and services (Fombrun 1996:9).

Moffitt claims 'An understanding of how an industry creates and delivers its reputation to relevant publics is of the utmost importance to the public relations professional' (Moffitt 2001:9). Reputation can be delivered through careful communications to correct publics with a public relation strategy. The creation and maintenance of a reputation can be achieved through reputation management.

2.3 Reputation Management

To achieve prestige requires a long-term outlook toward building a competitive advantage. Companies develop winning reputations by both creating and projecting a set of skills that their publics recognise as unique. They not only do things right—they do the right things. In so doing, they operate as good citizens (Fombrun 1996:8).

To establish a positive reputation an industry has to create positive relationships with its publics. ‘Relationships underscore the practice of public relations, from issues management to crisis communication. Maintaining positive perceptions in the minds of publics is the mission of public relations’ (Plowman, Briggs and Huang 2001:309).

A reputation is powerful. It helps to determine how a public will behave towards an industry. How the industry is perceived will influence the public’s disposition towards the industry.

Industry behaviour wins both the interest of the media in disseminating accounts of the deeds and the interest of the public in perceiving the beneficial implications of the deeds, especially when the deeds are ethically sound in the sense of acting in society’s best interests (Kendall 1996:330).

This research will look at the importance of relationship management to an industries reputation and how the nightclub industry manages its relationships with its publics through communication and public relations.

According to Genasi (2002:xi), ‘Being well thought of, having a good reputation and being admired are all important in society.’ Having a good reputation in society has always been important. Genasi (2002:xi) states, ‘A natural desire to be well considered has now been developed into a management process called public relations or reputation

management.’ Even more important in reputation management is the element of transparent and honest practice as Wakefield and Walton point out:

In the most recent Edelman Trust Barometer “transparent and honest practices” was listed by respondents worldwide as the most important factor in organisational reputation...Furthermore, two-thirds of the respondents indicated that an organisation needs to communicate information to them at least three to six times before they will “believe that the information is likely true” (Wakefield and Walton 2010:5).

Given the importance of communication to reputation, industry communication, designed to affect the reputation management of a company or industry must first employ research. ‘If reputation is an impression perceived by the mind of a target respondent then the only way a company can also perceive it is when it is developed on the sensitised paper of a research report’ (Bernstein 1991:205). Bernstein states there are two tasks for research:

1. Exploring the nature of the industry’s reputation and how it may have to be corrected
2. Measuring the success of the communications in strengthening the reputation (Bernstein 1991:205).

The above paragraph is very important to this exploration. I want to identify the reputation of the nightclub industry and how it may be corrected and I want to assess the practices of communication employed by the industry. As Bernstein states above, I must develop and explore the reputation of the nightclub industry before I can perceive it as the public do.

Reputation is intangible, research also helps bring hard edges by determining what the industry or nightclub wants to achieve in its reputation management. The key to good public relations and reputation planning is to start by understanding the overall goals of the industry or nightclub.

An overall goal of the nightclub industry as stated by the then Chairman of the Irish Nightclub Industry Association, Farrell (2007:5) is to improve the reputation to a solid reputation of, 'Safe entertainment and enjoyment for the future'.

Another reputation management factor is the overall mission and vision of the industry. 'The goals of the business provide you with the direction. The mission and vision provide you with the personality' (Genasi 2002:54).

The mission and vision of the nightclub industry is to achieve these goals by doing the right things. In some industries individual company reputations are significantly affected by attitudes generic to the industry, and it is essential to understand them as such. A single nightclub's behaviour can influence the public's disposition towards the nightclub industry. Vice versa, a public's attitude of the nightclub industry can affect their disposition towards a single nightclub.

For other companies, research can point out areas of operations which are well regarded, but in which the company has failed to project its involvement—or conversely, poorly regarded sectors with which the company is disproportionately, and damagingly associated (Bernstein 1991:214).

This is evident in the nightclub industry where a single nightclubs action can influence how the industry's reputation is perceived and this is demonstrated in the *Findings* chapters.

Given that research is the first step we take in analysing reputation, as well as missions and visions, we look at the other measures that an industry needs to address in its reputational management. Genasi (2002:56) describes a reputational audit in the analogy of building a house.

His blueprint suggests 5 stages. These are:

1. Surveying the terrain
2. Sketching the finished building
3. Safe foundations
4. Structural strength
5. Ongoing maintenance

Surveying the terrain can be described as researching and analysing your current reputation and involves self-awareness of the industry. The nightclub industry surveys its terrain and is honest in its admission of its current state. It involves looking deep into the industry and building a confidence of knowledge of itself.

Sketching the building refers to your vision or desired reputation. The nightclub industry has to 'sketch' its vision, mission and goals. It will also 'sketch' how to build these missions and goals. Safe foundations are based upon protecting the reputation and

removing all the ‘skeletons’. To move forward the nightclub industry will have to build its missions and goals on a structurally sound basis.

The structural strength is designed to promote reputation with creativity. When the industry is happy with its plans and foundations it can start building on its reputation using the public relation tools to achieve this. Ongoing maintenance is referred to as reputation management, making changes that get noticed. In the nightclub industry, this is the continual maintenance of the reputation that you have created, proactively improving and enhancing the reputation.

Genasi’s description of how to address reputation from scratch to finish is a little limited. There are a number of issues alluded to. The analogy of building a reputation fails to discuss communication and how you would communicate or project the reputation. It does not discuss the public and how an industry will link with the public or external environment to improve its reputation.

Like any industry would carry out a financial audit to assess its financial situation, the same should be expected with a reputational audit. According to Fombrun (1996:206-7) there are three principal components of a fully executed reputational audit:

- Stage 1: A diagnostic review of the company’s current identity, images, and reputation.
- Stage 2: A strategic analysis of trends, plans, and competitive positioning that defines the company’s desired future state.

- Stage 3: A review of the company's plans for managing the transition toward the future state (Fombrun 1996:206).

To successfully manage a reputation, an industry must establish the programmes necessary for actively relating to publics. In turn, the industry must regularly audit its reputational profile. This exploration will assess the current reputation of the nightclub industry in a similar fashion to Fombrun's recommendations. I will define the industry's desired future state and a review of managing the transition to the desired future state.

Fombrun (1996:202), also states the following questions should be addressed systematically in a reputational audit:

- What are we doing to maintain healthy relationships with all of our constituents?
- How well do we monitor our images with each of our different audiences?
- Could we improve our reputation by developing better, more consistent images?
- What kinds of activities should we engage in to sustain our reputation?
- Do our employees understand and appreciate the importance of our reputation?
Do our customers, suppliers, and rivals? The local government and community?
The public at large?
- How much money should we give to charity? Through a foundation or direct giving? How much publicity do we want from corporate giving?
- How can we obtain favourable reviews and ratings in the media?
- How can we generate more favourable appraisals by financial analysts?
- How can we improve our relationships with those organisations which monitor social responsiveness?

I will explore these questions while carrying out my methodology. Public relations programmes can execute the answers to these questions. Do nightclubs and the nightclub industry execute public relations programmes to manage their reputation?

Industry reputations are perceptions held by people inside and outside a company. For each of us, our reputation is one of our most precious qualities. The same applies with nightclubs and other industries.

If you manage an organisation, then you must manage your corporate reputation. It is your main responsibility. Ultimately everything – particularly sales and, therefore, profit – is dependent on how you are regarded. Your corporate reputation may well be your most valuable asset (Haywood 2002:9).

Can a nationally driven campaign by the nightclub industry, where the campaign was based on the safety of customers and patrons after a night-out improve the overall image and reputation of the nightclub industry?

The nightclub industry of Ireland has to look into their core beliefs and identify whether or not they practice reputation management. Could they improve community relationships with ethically sound campaigns based on ‘doing the right things’? Can they become ‘good citizens’?

As discussed, a successful reputation is dependent on establishing programmes and delivering them to publics. These programmes can be created and delivered through public relations.

2.4 Public Relations

To establish a more embracing rationale for public relations, we draw on the rhetorical heritage, which in western thought reaches back to the golden age of Greece and the Roman Empire to draw on works of Plato, Aristotle, and other thinkers who followed their leadership. These rhetorical theorists pondered on how being a good and articulate spokesperson is essential to society—the community (Heath 2001:4).

Theoretically, public relations and reputation have always existed. It was only in the 19th century that it was given the guise of public relations. Throughout this exploration we will look at public relations, its development today and the functional management role that it will play in the industry of nightclubs in Ireland. And in turn, on the advice of Heath and many other commentators, the role the nightclub industry of Ireland can play in the wider social community.

One of the best definitions for today's modern practice is offered by Professors Lawrence W. Long and Vincent Hazelton, who describe public relations as, 'A communication function of management through which the organisations adopt to alter, or maintain their environment for the purpose of achieving organisational goals' (cited in Wilcox et al 2003:6). This approach serves the more modern theory that public relations is more than persuasion.

'It should also foster open, two-way communication and mutual understanding with the idea that an organisation also changes its attitudes and behaviours in the process-not just the target audience' (Wilcox et al 2003:4). Wilcox statement on public relations is more embracing than other definitions on public relations 'The task for certain public relations practitioners is to ensure that certain ideas and practices become established

and understood and thereby attempt to gain hegemonic advantage for their client' (Weaver, Motion and Roper 2006:18). Here Weaver and her colleagues discuss the issue of public relations as a practice to legitimise policy for the powerful. This perspective of power and persuasion is investigated further in this chapter. For now we will look at how public relations works at creating and maintaining relationships between an organisation and its publics.

James E. Grunig emphasises the management function in *Managing Public Relations*. He states that public relations is 'The management of communication between an organisation and its publics' (Grunig 1992a:609).

In this sense, public relations is a professional practice that helps industry managers and publics to understand each other's interests. 'Once these interests are understood, efforts can be made to blend them or at least reduce the conflict by helping the publics and the organisation to be less antagonistic towards each other' (Heath et al 2009:4).

This exploration will strive to identify if the nightclub industry and its publics understand each other's interests. Can they benefit each other's interests? To achieve this, an understanding of public relations as a management function is required.

2.5 Public Relations as a Management Function

Broom et al states that 'Public relations is a management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its publics, on whom its success or failure depends' (Broom et al 2001a:5). Grunig and Hunt defined it

more simply as, 'The management of communication between an organisation and its publics' (Grunig and Hunt 1984:6).

Public relations is concerned with the management of an industry's reputation. 'It identifies the perceptions which are held of the organisation and works to inform all relevant audiences about organisation performance. It is concerned with developing a deserved reputation for an organisation, one that is based on performance' (Oliver 1997:120).

Public relations cannot achieve all its objectives in the short term; building up and improving relationships, changing attitudes, means a continuous, sustained effort rather than a short, sharp campaign. It goes beyond the techniques of communications to carry a message, but advises what the message should be, and reinforces it to the correct publics.

Public relations management must balance an industry's behaviour with its publics' perception of it. Mutual understanding and mutual benefit are the end goals of successful public relations.

Many organisations seem to have no specific public for their communication programmes. They develop programmes for a general public or a mass audience. Yet Broom (1986) pointed out that there is an historical reason for communication programmes that have become entrenched in organisational structure. At some point, for example, the organisation probably got unfavourable media coverage. Thus, the general public or mass audience developed as convenient terms for people who use the mass media. For that organisation, public relations means no more than media relations (Grunig 1992a:118).

An early example of an organisation practicing media relations was the coal industry in the United States of America. In 1906 Ivy Ledbetter Lee was appointed as press officer, in a time when the industry was attracting a huge amount of bad publicity.

Ledbetter Lee used this opportunity for more than just 'media relations'. He issued a declaration of principles that demanded public relation managers: Deal only with the most senior level of management in the company; Must be told all of the facts; Must have the power to decide which facts were to be issued to the public and finally, they could not ignore any public (Gunning 2003:3).

This declaration was revolutionary for the time. He put respect for the public on the agenda and demanded management consultation. 'No one before had ever insisted that they would deal only with top management' (Gunning 2003:3).

For best-practice public relations in an industry, the management adopt a top down approach. Public relations begin at the top level of management and filters down through the organisation. For this research, the question remains as to whether it has been well established as a management function in nightclubs and within the nightclub industry. 'Public relations scholars have suggested that the discipline can contribute to strategy formulation at the corporate and functional levels of the strategic management process' (Repper 1992:98).

Public relations is said to be most effective at a functional level when a public relation strategy is developed. That strategy addresses the industry's strategic goals and the public's issues that are identified in the industry's management processes (Repper

1992:96). ‘Most textbooks dealing with the topic suggest a four-phase process—research, action, communication and evaluation’ (Smith 2005:9). 1. Research and analysis of aims, objectives, strategies and tactics; Planning and budgeting for the implementation process; Carrying out the approved programme and 4. Monitoring and evaluating the overall programme

The four phases are self-explanatory and are not only relevant to public relation practices but equally important for other aspects of management. If the nightclub industry is to deal with the topic of noise pollution it would adopt this four-phase approach. Before trying to modify attitudes of both the community and itself, it would research into the current state, correct levels of acceptable noise and areas where this noise is a problem.

The planning stage would establish priorities and time scales. Action plans are drawn up. Timing can be particularly important and may make the difference between success and failure. Carrying out the approved programme would include dealing with any existing complaints and communicating its message with its intended public.

The final stage is often overlooked in a rush to proceed with the next challenge. Careful evaluation and monitoring of the campaign can save money, time and resources for future campaigns.

Developing a public relations plan involves making decisions about public relations’ goals and objectives and identifying key publics, which in turn will determine the

selection of strategies and tactics and later will provide a benchmark to evaluate the programme's effectiveness (Grunig and Hunt 1984:201).

This exploration will strive to apply the four-phase management process model template above to the nightclub industry as a means to compare its practice and management of public relations.

Public relations practices can also be culturally specific. In recent years, further theories on public relations have been developed. These theories and more postmodern approaches are examined in the following section. An understanding of Grunig and Hunts, system theory in communication and *The Excellence Study*, should be examined first, before a comparison to postmodern theories can be achieved.

With public relations management emphasising the importance of strategic management on publics, communication theories are equally important in executing the act of public relations.

2.6 Communication Strategy

There are various communication theories available and applicable to this research. 'The definition of a strategic function is that it contributes to the overall organisational mission and goals' (Wilson 2001a:215).

What practitioners might have difficulty doing is (a) devising an organisational strategic plan that responds to and incorporates information from research and (b) creating tactics that actually succeed in accomplishing what the plan

identifies needs to be done to support the organisation's mission and goals (Wilson 2001a:216).

This leads to three questions. Do the nightclubs and nightclub industry of Ireland have a communication strategy? Do they use the correct tactics to implement the strategy? Do their communication strategies support industry missions and goals?

For this research I will look at individual nightclubs and the nightclub industry as a whole and how they practice models of communication. To answer the above questions, communication models and strategies need to be understood. The four models of communication in system theory identified by Grunig and Hunt in 1984 explains how an organisation or industry communicates today. These four-models of communication in system theory consist of press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communication.

The first of these models 'press agentry/publicity model' was used to gain media space. The second model in historic ascendancy is the 'public information' model. Both these models were one directional with a sender sending a message to the receiver.

The myth of communication suggests that sending a message is the same as communicating a message. In essence, dissemination is confused with communication. This confusion is apparent in public relations when practitioners offer media placements as evidence that communication has occurred (Broom et al 2001b:251).

The third model is two-way asymmetrical communication, a two-way dialogue with the emphasis on the sender's persuasiveness. 'With the two-way asymmetrical model, practitioners conduct scientific research to determine how to persuade publics to behave in the way their client organisation wish' (Grunig 2001:12).

The fourth model, 'two-way symmetrical' communication focuses on dialogue, understanding and compromise between sender and receiver. 'With the two-way symmetrical model, practitioners use research and dialogue to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes and behaviours of both their organisation and publics' (Grunig 2001:12). Two-way symmetrical communication insists on mutual understanding. The sender discusses the message with its receiver until understanding is reached. And upon understanding, the sender and receiver discuss the message until ideally a consensus is reached on the message.

Grunig advocates two-way symmetrical communication as the most effective public relations model. 'Grunig goes even further to postulate that the ideal public relations model is two-way symmetrical communication. That is, communication is balanced between the sender and the receiver' (Wilcox et al 2003:168). Heath (2005:869) states, 'There is one thing unique to the two-way symmetrical model: It is the only one of the four models that is actually a dialogue—which also makes it the most ethical'. Shen and Kim (2012:1) state, 'Public relations research has shown a positive correlation between two-way symmetrical communication strategies and the quality of organisation-public relationships'. Finding out if nightclubs and the industry engage in two-way symmetrical communication with their publics is essential to exploring their overall practice of public relations.

The view that the two-way symmetrical model is not perfect can be found in critiques such as those of, 'Kunczik (1994), L'Etang (1995), and Pieczka (1995), all of whom argued that the two-way symmetrical model is overly idealistic and is based on assumptions that seldom exist in reality' (Heath 2001:17). Leitch and Neilsen

(2001:129) discussed this reality in more detail and cite examples explaining, ‘The primary reason why J. Grunig and L. Grunig were unable to find much evidence of symmetrical public relations in practice was that the model itself is flawed in several key aspects’. They draw on the power imbalance between powerful organisations and their publics as a reason for why symmetrical public relations is an unachievable ideology:

It is simply absurd to suggest that an interaction between, for example, a transnational corporation and a public consisting of unskilled workers in a developing country can be symmetrical just because the interaction is symmetrical in form...in cases where access to resources is so unequal, attempting to practice symmetrical public relations might constitute a self-destructive discourse strategy for the least powerful participant (Leitch & Neilsen 2001:129).

These criticisms of the symmetrical model hold weight, in that, power imbalances can exist and two-way symmetrical communication can favour the more dominant organisation, making it in fact asymmetrical communication. Huang-Horowitz (2012:14) states, ‘The research on symmetrical theory has a bias toward powerful and, presumably, large organisations’.

Broom, Cutlip and Center (2001a:392) had their own take on effective communication models and argued dissemination versus communication. They agreed that the elements of communication contribute to the communication process. The communication process components involve the sender, the message, the medium or channel, the receiver, the context of the relationship and the social environment. And in each of these components lies a potential for message distortion or dissemination. Their arguments are quite correct in that all components harbor the possibility of mistranslation or misinterpretation between two elements.

Kazoleas and Wright (2001:472) insisted on the importance of internal communication. They looked at developing and implementing internal communications via audits. They considered two principle factors in the ideal organisational communication programme.

A critical function of the communication professional often is persuading “management” that a focus on building effective communication is a top priority that warrants time, staffing and funding. To examine the value of good communication, the issue needs to be discussed in two contexts: the impact of communication on the organisation and the impact on the employee as an individual (Kazoleas and Wright 2001:472).

Tourish and Hargie (2000:15) state, ‘There is a direct correlation between the willingness of organisations to address their external customer relations on the one hand, and their management of internal communication issues on the other’. Kazoleas and Wright state the importance of a good internal communication audit of the organisation. Tourish and Hargie demonstrate the correlation between internal communication and customer relations. The research will explore this link between the industry’s internal communication and their customer relations and how this impacts their reputation or if a correlation exists.

Grunig’s four models of communication in systems theory has its critics but it is widely accepted as the most advanced communications theory-based model available in modern day studies. This exploration will use the theory-based models in defining how nightclubs communicate with their publics. However, we must first also look at where the theory-based models sit in *The Excellence Study*.

The pursuit of excellence in public relations and communication, ‘reaches back to the golden age of Greece and the Roman Empire’ (Heath 2001:4). In 1984 the Research

Foundation of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) set out to answer two main questions: How does public relations contribute to organisational effectiveness? What is that contribution worth? To complete the focus of the research, a third question was proposed: What are the characteristics of an excellent communication department?

James E. Grunig and his team were tasked with the project to determine the answer to these three fundamental questions of public relations. This task later became known as *The Excellence Study*. *The Excellence Study* identified how industries and organisations practiced public relations and what constituted an excellent communications department. The results today are the template applied to an industry or organisation as best practice in public relations.

The theory helped explain the practice of public relations at that time and significantly, it pointed towards a development of the field that should enhance its integrity, its professionalism, and its effectiveness (Grunig 1997:256).

It can be noted that *The Excellence Study* is not necessarily a ‘fits-all-template’ or can be applied to every study of excellence in public relations, as Huang-Horowitz (2012:15) states, ‘The issue with the excellence theory here is that it is inherently a model for large businesses because it requires several characteristics that are absent in small businesses’. This issue must be considered, as most individual nightclubs are small to medium businesses, yet the Irish Nightclub Industry Association (INIA) is a large organisation that represents the industry and the reputation of both are to be explored. The excellence study in this research is used as a guideline to explore the practices of both the nightclub industry and individual businesses with respect to best practices in public relations.

Larissa Grunig summarised the study by saying that excellence in public relations can be conceptualised in these broad areas: expertise, mutual expectations between the dominant coalition and the public relations department and a participative organisational structure. Larissa Grunig (1997:289-99) determined that there were twelve hallmarks of excellent public relations:

Table 1.1 – Twelve Hallmarks of Excellent Public Relations

1. Strategic management of public relations.
2. Separation from marketing.
3. Direct reporting relationship to senior management.
4. Within an organisation, public relations is a single integrated department.
5. Two-way symmetrical public relations is practised in philosophy.
6. The senior public relation executive plays a managerial role.
7. The potential for public relations lies in:
 - a. Knowledge
 - b. Education
 - c. Professionalism
8. Public relation practitioners and top management share a schema of symmetrical public relations.
9. Equal opportunities exist for women's advancement in public relations.
10. Activism and a complex turbulent environment enhance the value top management places on public relations.
11. Top management support.
12. Supportive organisational context-participation.

Source: The Handbook of Strategic Public Relations & Integrated Communications.
Grunig, L., (1997:289-99)

Using the twelve hallmarks of excellent public relations, which apply and are appropriate to both the INIA and individual nightclubs, this exploration will analyse the public relations practiced by the nightclub industry of Ireland and measure it accordingly against the hallmarks of excellent public relations. Are the characteristics of an excellent communications department evident in Irish nightclubs and the Irish nightclub industry?

There were critics of *The Excellence Study*. Magda Pieczka stated:

Although there is a clear insistence that not every decision has to be worked out in a mathematical model, the requirement that it has to be empirically measurable does imply that public relations should aspire to using quantitative methods of research as the final proof of its effectiveness (Pieczka 2006:351).

Pieczka implied that the study was restrictive and criticised its structure and system base. Pieczka's assessment is not necessarily wrong; quantitative methods of research may add further evidence of effective communications. Indeed for this research, which will employ qualitative research, there is an element of the quantitative, in that comparisons are made against specific models such as the two-way symmetrical model and *The Excellence Study*. This particular issue is discussed in more detail in the *Methodology* section.

Pieczka is not alone in her criticism of Grunig's work on *The Excellence Study*. Shin has commented that:

One of the main criticisms centers on the array of public relations into idealism of two-way symmetry where both organisations and its public are ready to change by balancing one's interest with the other (Shin 2005:193).

Shin introduces provocative ideas. Similar to Huang-Horowitz argument on symmetrical communication, Shin argues that *The Excellence Study* ultimately favours the dominant or powerful organisation in fulfilling their organisational goals over the interests of serving their publics interests. Toth takes this even further by stating, 'Public relations is the invisible hand in organisational behaviour, powerless publics, and irreconcilable differences between organisations and publics' (Toth 2009:52-3).

Scholar's state that public relations is inevitably linked to the interests it serves. Postmodernist public relations challenges the base of theory on public relations. Modernist theories are accused of attempting to create a single explanation, where postmodernists believe in the multiplicity of voices and views of reality that exist in society.

A postmodern approach to public relations, can therefore accommodate differences in culture, gender and ethnicity...Postmodernists would argue that the overall explanations that characterise research, are misguided because they can only ever approximate reality and cannot help practitioners in situations that do not conform to their parameters or expected frameworks (Edwards 2006:176).

To this extent, postmodernists argue that two-way symmetric communication is a myth. Holtshausen reformulates the role of the public relations practitioner in the role of an organisation activist and presents three types of activism:

- Community activist – where the activist integrates alternative views from the organisation's publics into communication strategies.

- Organisational activist – where the activist changes the status quo from within.
- Public relations activities themselves as a form of activism – where strategies are designed to instigate change in societal norms or dominant policies (cited in Edwards 2006:177).

Postmodernist theory offers alternative approaches to public relation practices and offers a different perspective in analysing public relations. *The Excellence Study* and Grunig and Hunt's four models of communication in system theory have their critics. However, they are widely accepted as the most commonly used means of explaining excellent public relations and communications. Postmodern theories do not offer the same structures or development of solutions as Grunig's theory. This exploration uses Grunig and Hunt's models of system theory and *The Excellence Study*.

'The receiver, not the transmitter, decides the language of communication. If the recipients of the message do not understand it or misinterpret it, then that is not communication, as that requires two-way understanding' (Haywood 1991:19). Haywood discusses the importance of mutual understanding in communication with the receiver. The receiver of the message is a public. The research now looks at how a public is formed.

2.7 Publics

A "general public" is a logical impossibility. Publics are always specific; they always have some common problem...Today one community public may exist; tomorrow it may be replaced by another...For the publics of an organisation, the common problem that creates and identifies a public will usually be some consequence that an organisation has on a public or that a public has on an organisation (Grunig and Hunt 1984:138).

Grunig states that publics can come and go but the creation of a public is through a consequence or action of the industry or public. 'Publics appear to come into existence only when an organisation identifies them as a public' (Leitch and Neilson 2001:128).

Communication practices and public relations management functions are redundant if they are not conveyed to their correct publics in the correct manner. The essence of public relations is that it is successful for communicating messages, with each industry having its own special publics with whom it communicates to, externally and internally.

The nightclub industry has many publics. These publics need to be identified. Using Grunig's concept of linkages, we will be able to identify and categorise these publics with respect to the nightclub industry.

2.8 Publics and Linkages

Grunig's concept of linkages and how publics can be better defined in respect of their industry helps us understand the link between an industry and its public.

Organisations are "linked" to other systems through consequences – either when the organisation has consequences on another system, or when another system has consequences on the organisation. Grunig has developed the theories of Esman, Parson and Evans to identify four main linkages (Grunig and Hunt 1984:140).

Four Key Linkages:

1. Enabling Linkages – These are linkages with organisations and social groups that provide the authority and control the resources that enable the industry to exist.

2. Functional Linkages – These are the linkages with industries or publics that provide inputs and take outputs. Thus functional linkages can be further divided into:

- a. Input Linkages... (employees, unions, suppliers)
- b. Output Linkages... (consumers, users of services)

The most common public relations programme to serve these linkages is called consumer relations.

3. Normative Linkages – These linkages are with industries that face similar problems or share similar values. Associations exist to facilitate communication between member industries so that the member industries can jointly attack common problems.

4. Diffused Linkages – Esman described diffused linkages as linkages with ‘Elements in society which cannot clearly be identified by membership in formal organisations’ (cited in Blase 1973:273). Thus, he seemed to have in mind publics that arise when the industry has consequences on people outside the industry.

In relation to the nightclub industry, if a new nightclub was to open in a town or city in the morning, it would have to take all of these linkages into account. The linkages are then used to identify publics. Each linkage has different communication strategies.

‘In addition, organisations have media relations programmes because the media inform diffused publics about consequences the organisation has on them and thus help to bring those diffused publics into existence in the first place’ (Grunig and Hunt 1984:142). Here Grunig and Hunt discuss the media’s role in informing publics. The media is also a public of the nightclub industry and may be included as a functional linkage.

Examples of linkages within the nightclub industry:

- Enabling Linkages – Legislative Body, Licensing Body, Health and Safety Authority
- Functional Linkages – Input: Employees, Suppliers; Output: Customers
- Normative Linkages – Vintners Federation of Ireland share similar problems with the nightclub industry
- Diffused Linkages – Publics who suffer common problems as a result of the nightclub industry

Grunig's theory on linkages strives to help an industry identify and categorise its publics.

2.9 Identifying and Understanding Publics

Haywood states, 'It should be relatively simple for any organisation to decide which groups of people are important to its success. This analysis can pay enormous dividends by concentrating the communications effort on groups that matter' (Haywood 1991:31).

Effective programmes communicate and build relationships with specifically defined "target publics". Without such specific definitions and detailed information about intended audiences or messages, how do programme planners measure public opinion, establish programme objectives, develop meaningful message and action strategies, select media to deliver messages selectively and effectively, and determine whether the programme worked? (Broom, Cutlip and Center 2001b:268).

Broom, Cutlip and Center imply that you must segment your public into relevant categories in order to maximise the effects of an intended public relations programme.

‘John Dewey in the 1900s defined a public as an active social unit consisting of all those affected by an issue and recognise a common problem for which they can seek common solutions’ (Broom, Cutlip and Center 2001b:268). The definition of Dewey begins by stating that members of a public recognise that a problem or an issue exists. He states that members of a public discuss the issue and organise to do something about it (Grunig and Hunt 1984:142).

An industry can make decisions, which have consequences for people outside the industry. Some people will recognise the consequence. Some people will identify this as a problem. This group becomes members of a public and this public can create a public relations problem for the industry.

Grunig and Hunt (1984:145) evolved Dewey’s definition to identify four types of publics:

Latent Public – Do not recognise problem, but have the potential to

Aware Public – Do recognise problem

Active Public – Meet to react to problem

Non-Public – A group for whom none of these conditions apply

We can use noise pollution from a nightclub as an example that describes a public’s action. A latent public may not recognise the problem as they have double glazing windows. The aware public recognises the problem and is affected by the problem, yet they do not do anything about it. The active public becomes active when the aware

public meets to react to the problem. The non-public is not affected by the noise pollution and is not relevant to them, therefore they are a non-public for this problem.

There are critics of Grunig and Hunt's definition of latent, aware, active and non-publics.

This strategic approach that dominates the field portrays publics as consumers of targeted organisational messages. The dialogic approaches portray publics as active and equal participants in a dialogue with the organisation. Both approaches emphasise the organisational perspective. Both focus on the nature of the relations that organisations have or should have with their publics rather than on the publics themselves (Leitch and Neilson 2001:128).

Leitch and Neilson are implying that the approach by Grunig and Hunt lends to targeting and controlling the public, rather than mutual understanding and agreement.

'Many studies have focused on public relations as a commercial management function—a means of influencing consumer value and behaviour, of cultivating markets, of corporate image control, and of issue management' (Vasquez and Taylor 2001:139). Further critical perspectives will be discussed after an understanding of Situational Theory and Active Publics is achieved.

2.10 Situational Theory and Active Publics

Grunig attempted to explain when and how people communicate and when organisational communications are most likely to be effective. Grunig identified three causes, which move latent publics to active publics.

The first of these causes is *problem recognition* where people recognise that something needs to be done to improve a situation.

The second cause is *constraint recognition*, which represents the extent to which the public believes they can do something about the problem. A high level of *constraint recognition* reduces the probability that the community, public or person will seek information about an industry consequence. Additionally, a low level of constraint recognition will increase the probability that the public will seek information about an industry consequence.

The third and final cause identified by Grunig is the *level of involvement*. A person's *level of involvement* represents the scope in which they connect themselves with the situation. When a person sees himself as involved in a situation, the probability will be higher to seek information actively. The more connected they feel the more likely they are to act.

We can then use the level of involvement and constraint recognition of the public to define if they are active, aware, latent or a non-public.

Table 1.2 – Table of Public Behaviour and Involvement

<u>Behaviour Type</u>	<u>Type of Public</u>
HIPF – High Involvement Problem Facing	Active
LIPF – Low Involvement Problem Facing	Aware/Active
HICB – High Involvement Constrained Behaviour	Aware/Active

LICB – Low Involvement Constrained Behaviour	Latent/Aware
HIRB – High Involvement Routine Behaviour	Active (Reinforcing)
LIRB – Low Involvement Routine Behaviour	Non/Latent
HIFB – High Involvement Fatalistic Behaviour	Latent
LIFB – Low Involvement Fatalistic Behaviour	Non

Source: Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management. Grunig, J, E., 1992:171-6

We can summarise the individual effects of each variable by saying that high problem recognition, low constraint recognition, and high level of involvement increase information seeking. High problem recognition and low constraint recognition also increase information processing. Level of involvement, however, has a limited effect on information processing (Grunig and Hunt 1984:153).

‘In essence, situational theory offers a mechanism for classifying individuals in relation to the awareness and level of concern about a particular problem’ (Springston and Keyton 2001:124). Situational theory aims to understand why publics are most likely to communicate. However, Hunag-Horowitz (2012:17) raises concerns on the theory stating, ‘Situational theory should be reconceptualised in a way that takes into consideration the diverse nature of today’s organisations’. Grunigs theories primarily deal with active publics or publics who are affected by an issue or consequence of the organisation. Jahansoozi (2006:65) states issues with Grunigs theories where, ‘the term publics is preoccupied with “active publics” who are directly interested in the organisation’. Huang-Horowitz and Jahansoozi identify the problem associated with not acknowledging the importance of inactive publics in influencing organisation’s decision-making process. Hallahan (2000:499) states:

By focusing on activism and its consequences, recent public relations theory has largely ignored *inactive* publics, that is, stakeholder groups that demonstrate low levels of knowledge and involvement in the organisation...but are important to the organisation.

Hallahan argues Grunig and Hunts symmetrical model of public relation and situational theory on the basis that the theory assumes publics are actively engaged. Hallahan offers a different theory where it is based upon activity-passivity (Hallahan 2000:501). Hallahan (2000:501) offers the definition of a public as ‘a group with which an organisation wishes to establish and maintain a relationship’. Hallahan also states that publics can demonstrate varying degrees of activity-passivity.

Hallahan proposes a reconceptualised theory to Grunig where publics are typed into aware, active, inactive, aroused and non-publics. The *inactive* public possesses low levels of knowledge and involvement with the organisation. *Aroused* publics are similar to *inactive* publics but are aware a potential problem exists. *Aware* publics may be knowledgeable about the organisation, though might not be affected by it directly. *Active* publics have high involvement and knowledge of the organisation and are predisposed to monitor the organisation. *Non* publics are composed of those who have no knowledge or no involvement what so ever with the organisation (Hallahan 2000:503-4).

Hallahans theory offers an alternative rational perspective to Grunigs theory of publics. However, for this research I am exploring the reputation of the nightclub industry and will be exploring more active publics than inactive publics. For this reason Grunigs situational theory is more suitable for the exploration. It will be used as a guideline for how the nightclub industry identifies publics in their public relations programmes.

Identifying publics and situational theory is important in communicating public relations programmes. These theories have been explored so far in relation to their importance to reputation management. This exploration now looks at relationship management theories and where this fits in the reputation of the nightclub industry in Ireland.

2.11 Relationship Management

A number of other fields use relationships as their central concept including group dynamics, interpersonal relationships and family relations. 'Relationship management has become the focus of research in public relations in recent years' (Shen and Kim 2012:2). This exploration looks at understanding how organisations and public relationships are managed. Public relations is discussed as a practice that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and its publics. For this exploration, an understanding of relationship management is required to understand if nightclubs and the nightclub industry manage relationships with their publics.

Bruning and Ledingham (1999:160) defined organisation-public relationships as the 'State which exists between an organisation and its key publics in which the actions of either entity impact the economic, social, political, and/or cultural well-being of the other entity'. Bruning and Ledingham discuss relationships in terms of impacts on each other. These differing impacts are explored throughout this research.

Different research scholars state that relationships should be approached using multidimensional perspectives that affect the level of impacts.

Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) proposed six dimensions of relationship state: reciprocity, trust, mutual legitimacy, openness, mutual satisfaction, and mutual understanding. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) presented five dimensions: trust, openness, involvement, investment, and commitment. Four dimensions have been widely supported: trust, commitment, satisfaction, and control mutuality (Shen and Kim 2012:3).

The four dimensions trust, commitment, satisfaction and control mutuality are good indicators of successful interpersonal relationships. 'Public relations research shows they apply equally well to organisation-public relationships' (Hon and Grunig 1999:18). The level of *Trust* has three sub categories. Integrity is one party believing the other party's behaviour of fairness. Dependability is the consistency of communication measured against a party's actions. Competence refers to the belief in which one party has towards the others ability to do what it says. Hon and Grunig (1999:3) state that the *Commitment* dimension is, 'The extent to which the public (or organisation) feels that the relationship is worth spending time and energy to maintain'. Shen and Kim discuss the *Satisfaction* dimension based on how much one party feels favourably towards the other because of positive expectations (Shen and Kim 2012:4). Jahansoozi (2006:76) states *Control Mutuality*, 'includes the notion of power as each party in the relationship agrees and understands that one has the rightful ability to influence the other or agree upon the power balance'.

Hon and Grunig state questionnaires must be developed to measure outcomes of public-relationships. The questionnaires use reliable scales for trust, control mutuality, satisfaction and commitment. It is also recommended that questionnaires are applied to publics relevant to the organisation (Hon and Grunig 1999:26). This method will not be applied to this exploration. However, the quality of relationship between nightclubs, the nightclub industry and its specific publics will be explored using the four dimensions as

guidelines. 'By measuring the perceived quality of relationships, we can measure the relational forces that usually explain why organisations have good or bad reputations' (Hon and Grunig 1999:26).

Men (2012:2) states, 'That a relationship begins when there are consequences created by an organisation which affects publics or when the behaviour of publics has a consequence on an organisation'. If a consequence or issue created by an industry or a public can create relationships then we must look at consequences or issues. We look at this now in issue management.

2.12 Issue Management

It is highlighted in the first chapter of this study that the Irish nightclub industry faces many issues and problems in current society. These issues vary from social, legislative and economic. Ewing describes issue management in public relations as:

It is the management of an industry's resources and efforts to participate in the successful resolutions of issues that will affect the future viability and the well-being of the industry and its stakeholders...It is now clear, when PR professionals properly execute their issues management duties, they are functioning well beyond the communications field and deeply into the management problem-solving field (Ewing 1997:173-8).

The nightclub industry has issues of public concern ranging from the prevention of crime and disorder to government legislation. 'Many industries are seeking to cope with a flood of public policy issues. Governments as well as industries are turning to experts skilled in problem analysis and conflict resolution to deal with the tough problems facing society' (Wilcox et al 2003:54).

Firstly, issue management ensures the industry is well protected against the many issues that arise. The next goal of issue management is to seek opportunities to improve the circumstances surrounding the industry. Ewing states (1997:179) that ‘Issue managers scan for, monitor and seek resolution only of those issues that might have significant impacts on their company’s future.’

W. Howard Chase, Barry Jones and Teresa Yancey Crane (Hearit 2005:126) developed the Issue Management Process Model:

1. Issue Identification – Identifying a clearly defined issue is the first step in successfully implementing the problem solving process. Chase recommends that issues be classified according to their type e.g. social, political, economical. ‘The idea is that since it is impossible to manage every issue, a company must develop a process by which it classifies issues’ (Hearit 2005:126).
2. Issue Analysis – This second stage involves the application of theory and research to analyse trends and issues. Quantitative and qualitative analysis can help the process. Issue analysis can then use this data to make judgments and decide the response to the issue.
3. Issue Changing Strategy Options – The third stage describes how an industry makes decisions to respond to the problems caused by the issue. Chase suggests three responses including reactive, adaptive and dynamic. Chase advocates the dynamic strategy as the best-practice. The dynamic strategy anticipates and attempts to shape the decisions by determining how the issue will be played out. ‘The dynamic strategy directs change by developing real solutions to real problems with real results’ (Hearit 2005:126).

4. Issue Action Programming – The fourth stage includes formulating a programme to support the strategy change option that tackles the issue. This stage includes setting goals and objectives for the programme. It involves deciding communication and public relations tactics, including the message and publics.
5. Evaluation of Results – Programmes require evaluation to establish the performance levels of the programmes employed. In addition, evaluation can contribute financially to the industry by identifying better resource allocation for similar programmes in the future.

The Issue Management Process Model can be used by the nightclub industry as a template to tackle individual issues. For example, a drugs issue associated with the nightclub industry could be applied to the template.

The association of drugs with nightclubs is the issue identified. The classification of the drugs issue is applied. An analysis of this issue is carried out to identify the cause and full extent of the problem. Research is carried out to add data to the analysis. Changing strategies would include a plan to tackle the problem. The industry would decide on which of the three tactics to employ; reactive, adaptive or dynamic. This plan could include the industry aligning itself with a drug awareness group. The action programme is the implementation of the strategy change and enforcement of the new plan to tackle the issue. Public relations and communications plans devised to deal with the issue are implemented here. Finally the industry would evaluate its overall issue management and results. It would measure the performance and success of the strategy.

L'Etang points out that organisations and industries face danger in dealing with issue management by, 'responding to external issues or trends rather than defining their moral responsibilities in a rational manner' (L'Etang 2006:410). This argument is correct. As well as exploring how the nightclub industry practice the Issue Management Process Model, this research will also explore if moral responsibilities exist towards issues such as drugs, crime, public disorder, noise control and other issues affecting its publics and reputation.

The Issue Management Process Model can help industries address their issues of concern. It does not account for a crisis and that is something every industry should be prepared for. Bernstein states that 'Nothing tests a person like a crisis. Nothing better tests a management or communications management. This is the time when "corporate relations" stand up and gets counted' (Bernstein 1991:224).

2.13 Crisis Management

After a crisis, organisations need to convey messages to stakeholders. These messages begin by telling stakeholders what to do to protect themselves from the crisis and to help them cope psychologically with the crisis. The next step is to address the reputational threat posed by the crisis. Reputations are valuable resources that are threatened during a crisis (Coombs and Holladay 2008:252-7).

Coombs and Holladay state the importance of communication when a crisis occurs and the threat a crisis can cause to an organisations reputation. Regester and Larkin (1997:217) describe crisis in public relations as, 'An event that causes the organisation to become the subject of widespread, potentially unfavourable, attention from the media and other external groups...who for some reason or another, has a vested interest in the actions of the organisation'.

Baines et al (cited in Egan 2007:259) describes crisis management as a, ‘Systematic approach that engages the whole organisation in efforts to avert crisis that may affect the firm, and manage those that do’. Baines describes crisis management as a function that helps avoid a crisis and manages a crisis when unavoidable.

A public relations practitioner should be aware that a crisis could have a detrimental effect on an industry’s reputation and future. ‘Effective crisis management aims to shelter the company, their reputations and at times, can salvage their existence’ (Tench and Yeoman 2006:397).

White and Mazur (1995:206) state that, ‘Crisis management is not only about having a manual for action, but it also is about having enough forethought to face the unexpected with fast effective responses’. There are several templates offered to implement a crisis management strategy in an industry.

Stocker (1997:197) recommends six steps of a Crisis Management Plan:

1. Start with an Approach – The crisis plan starts with the industry’s approach to philosophies and ethics. It asks the question, what does the industry want to protect? With this approach the industry can agree on top management decisions, so that when decisions have to be made they can be made quicker, safer and sounder.
2. Build a Strong Reputation – ‘Goodwill in advance is the best and cheapest of crisis tactics’ (Stocker 1997:197). An industry with a strong reputation can survive a crisis better than one without.

3. Create a Crisis Team – The person in charge of the crisis team should be of top management. The selection of the team will be critical to the crisis management process.
4. Establish a Crisis Center – The crisis center can be a function or conference room. One that is well equipped for technological communication is ideal.
5. The Network Alert System – The system allows those involved in the crisis to know what is going on in the rest of the industry and vice versa. It creates links between the various departments.
6. Prepare Materials in Advance – A great deal can be prepared in advance. The material is prepared by asking the question, if something bad happened today, what would I need to respond? Preparation of press releases in advance is advised.

Fearn-Banks (2007:59) states, ‘Various theories suggest attributes and characteristics of programmes that are likely to prevent crises or enable organisations to recover from crises more swiftly than organisations without those characteristics’. It should be noted that crisis response strategies are still in their infancy and there is much room for development (Coombs and Holladay 2008:252-7). This research will explore whether the characteristics and attributes of a crisis management plan are in existence within the nightclubs and nightclub industry of Ireland.

An understanding of crisis management is vital in considering the reputation of an industry. Robertson (2012:2) states, ‘Companies in crisis have the most influence over the way their reputations are shaped and the company is positioned’. If an industry

employs good practice of crisis management it will pay dividends in how the industry controls the damage of the crisis.

2.14 Summary of Findings

Many companies rely quite heavily on public relations professionals to shape the perceptions of those looking in from outside. But unless those images are anchored in core characteristics of the company and its products or services, they will decay. In general, what companies want or need are reputations that are enduring and resilient, able to withstand scandal and attack, to overcome crisis and assault. This is not the stuff that traditional public relations is made out of. What is needed to sustain reputation is a strong and supportive infrastructure of interwoven managerial practices (Fombrun 1996:60).

This research aims to combine the practices and recommendations outlined in the Literature Review to provide a comprehensive exploration of the reputation of the nightclubs and nightclub industry in Ireland and offer solutions. Reputation management, communication strategies, public relations as a management function, identifying and defining publics, relationship management, issue and crisis management are all 'interwoven managerial practices'. Reputation management requires public relations to enact programmes to establish, improve and maintain a reputation. Communication strategies offer the best methods to convey the public relations programmes. Communication is redundant if it is not conveyed to the correct public and situational theory offers a model to guide the exploration. Four dimensions recommended from organisation-public relationships are used to examine the relationships that exist between the industry/organisation and its publics. As publics and relationships can result from consequences and issues of an industry or public, an understanding of issues and crisis management is required to explore if the industry/organisation implement academic recommended models. The exploration will

combine these models reviewed in the literature review to provide an overall model that aids in understanding and explaining the reputation of the nightclub industry in Ireland. The exploration could not be completed if an understanding of the above practices were not achieved. Having articulated this understanding, it is now possible to focus on the nightclub industry and ask the questions pertinent to its reputation.

Is the nightclub industry aware of the reputation management process and its importance? Has the industry ever conducted a reputational audit? To what extent is public relations practiced in the industry. Is public relations practiced as a management function? Are there public relation plans, goals and long-term strategies? Do public relations currently contribute to the overall success of the nightclub industry? Do these public relation programmes, if they exist, contribute to enhancing the reputation of the Industry?

Do they communicate their public relations programmes correctly? Which of the four models of the communication in system theory are used? Does the nightclub industry achieve any of the twelve hallmarks that Grunig and others identified as excellent public relations?

Has the industry correctly identified its publics in the communication process? Is the industry aware of the differing publics and what consequences they hold on the industry? Does the industry understand their publics and linkages to publics?

How does the industry engage in relationship management? What sort of relationship has it with its publics? What results do the publics demonstrate when asked about the

four dimensions of organisation-public relationships? And finally, is the industry aware of the importance of issue management? Have they a crisis plan in place?

These questions are posed in this exploration to identify and describe the reputation of the nightclub industry. The models and theories discussed throughout the literature review are used as guidelines to explore if the industry is aware and adhering to recommended best practices, that when achieved, can lead to a successful reputation. The questions and answers when applied will effectively complete an audit of the nightclub industry's reputational state. How the research can physically achieve these answers is discussed now in the methodology.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details my exploration and research methods. The purpose is to inform the reader of the methods and techniques I employed throughout the exploration and the reasons behind these decisions. The research process is drawn out, including choices of data collection, recording and analysis procedures. Other factors discussed include my personal involvement with the industry and how this impacts the research.

3.2 Research Rationale

I feel it is important to highlight at this stage, that my involvement with the nightclub industry has been enlightening. I have learned a great deal about an industry that has, in the past, been quite closed about its inner workings. This closed off nature has derived from its evolution. The *Introduction* chapter briefly described the evolution of nightclubs in Ireland including issues of drunkenness, drugs, violence and salacious connotations from mating rituals. The evident cultural issue of Ireland and alcohol problems has also played a role in this evolution of the industry. While the legally defined evolution of the industry has contributed to its closed off nature also.

As a result of the negative attention that the industry has received, nightclubs are understandably withdrawn. In recent years however, I feel the industry has become slightly more transparent and is slowly considering the idea of genuinely communicating and relating with society.

My goals and objectives in this exploration are not to champion the industry. While reading an article by Declan Farrell in 2007 (Farrell 2007:5), it became apparent there was a void in the industry. I identified an absence or lack of several practices, that if rectified, could enhance the industry significantly. My concern is that if the industry fails to address this situation it will continue as an industry that is seen by many as the purveyor of all night-time troubles.

To achieve significant improvement hard questions must be asked of the nightclub industry. I believe my close relationship with the industry allows me this opportunity. The answers from these questions will reflect the true nature of the industry and may be positive or negative. But as Genasi (2002:56) explained in the *Literature Review*, all the skeletons must be removed in order to build a solid foundation.

The findings of the exploration will identify the practices or lack of practices existing within the industry. It will examine the industry from several perspectives with a focus on reputation, communication, public relations, publics, relationship management, issue and crisis management.

The exploration is feasible and necessary for the industry. I have already identified in the *Introduction* that there is a lack of current research on these practices within the industry. This lack of existing research could be a product of the industry's closed nature.

3.3 Qualitative Research Vs Quantitative Research

One of the first decisions I had to make in the research process was what research method to use.

It is true that there is no single, easily understood, standard measurement tool that can be adopted industry-wide to evaluate public relations; however, there is adequate information available that informs practitioners on how to evaluate public relations activities that address organisational needs (Grantham, Vieira and Trincherro 2011:2).

Grantham et al point out the difficulty in evaluating public relations research when applied industry-wide. That difficulty is not lost in this research. There is a primary method of research applied in the exploration. However an understanding of two methods is required as the second method plays a role in the research.

The two paradigms that are widely used in research are quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research collects data in the form of numbers. The method is used to interpret numbers and statistics. It involves the interpretation of large sets of data.

Qualitative research involves an interpretive approach. Researchers study elements in their natural setting and attempt to interpret the meaning. It is concerned with meaning and understanding the meaning. According to Creswell (1994:21) qualitative study is used for exploratory research.

The advantages and disadvantages of both paradigms were considered. Quantitative research is collecting data in the form of numbers and is grounded in the use of statistics and interpreting the views of a sizeable number of people. This form of research does

not allow interaction between the researcher and the person offering their opinion. There is little allowance for interpretation of data. 'Quantitative techniques seek to distance the researcher from the data in order to be "objective" about how data are collected' (Daymon and Holloway 2011:11).

Other features of quantitative methods are that they tend to be large scale, with a focus on specific factors which are studied in relation to specific other factors. This requires researchers to isolate variables from their natural context in order to study how they work and their effect (Daymon and Holloway 2011:11).

Quantitative research standardises facts making it possible to scientifically verify data. It can also allow for easier cross-reference of facts. Quantitative research is usually structured from the beginning. The theory is usually tested throughout the research rather than emerging from the research. Because quantitative theory is grounded in numbers, statistics and detachment it is not well suited to description. This exploration aims to describe the reputation of the nightclub industry through exploring emerging concepts, perspectives and descriptions from the people involved in their natural setting. For these reasons, quantitative theory is not well suited to this exploration. However, quantitative methods need to be understood as there is an element of comparison and evaluation in this exploration. This element of comparison and evaluation is discussed after the qualitative approach is explained.

The qualitative paradigm has its origins in anthropology and sociology. It emerged in the 19th century as a method to research the social world. It involves an interpretive approach. 'Interpretive researchers are concerned primarily with reaching understanding about how meaning is constructed and re-constructed through communication relationships which they study in the "natural" or "local" setting' (Daymon and

Holloway 2011:6). The researcher studies entities in their natural setting and attempts to interpret these entities in terms of meaning. Qualitative research implies a direct concern with experience. Qualitative techniques present a valuable contribution by allowing the opinions and experiences of key representatives.

If a concept needs to be understood because little research has been done on it, then it merits a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is exploratory and is useful when the researcher does not know the important variables to examine. This type of approach may be needed because the topic is new, the topic has never been addressed with a certain sample or group of people, or existing theories do not apply with the particular sampling or group under study (Creswell 2003:22).

For this research, the qualitative paradigm will be used. The qualitative approach is more suitable to the research as it is an interpretative study. The process of qualitative research is inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, and theories from details that emerge from the exploration. The aim is to understand these details and this is best achieved through the qualitative paradigm.

The relevance of the quantitative paradigm in this exploration is through comparison. Several best-practice models have been referred to in the *Literature Review* including the twelve hallmarks of excellence in public relations, situational theory, the four models of communication and the four dimensions recommended in organisation-public relationships. This exploration does not explicitly measure individual models, however the models are used as guidance to retrieve necessary information on how nightclubs and the nightclub industry practice public relations. Comparisons are made against the models to elicit whether or not the subjects being explored are complying with said models and their recommendations. For example, to measure the twelve hallmarks of excellence in public relations through quantitative methods would require a large

sampling group of nightclubs and a questionnaire designed specifically around the twelve hallmarks. This research takes a small geographical sample spread around the country. The exploration does not wish to address exactly how many nightclubs practice all of the twelve hallmarks of public relations. It does want to address how the nightclubs address public relations and uses the twelve hallmarks model to guide and compare in this respect.

‘Therefore, both qualitative and quantitative research are needed if we are to properly understand public relations and marketing communications as distinct phenomena and disciplines, and their role in society’ (Daymon and Holloway 2011:3). This exploration will use the qualitative paradigm but accepts that quantitative methods compliment the research by providing guidance on recommended best practices.

3.4 Types of Research

There are many methods of qualitative research. These include surveys and interviews focusing on the exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. The research in its basic form is exploratory research with the goal being to develop pertinent hypothesis and propositions for explanation and further research.

3.4.1 Interview and Interview Process

The primary method of data collection in this exploration is interviewing. This section demonstrates the tactics and reasoning employed in the interview process. Kane defines interviews as conversations with purpose. ‘Interviews are a useful form of data

collection because they allow the researcher to explore the perspectives and perceptions of various stakeholders and publics' (Kane 1985:160).

Denscombe (2003:189) maintains that interviews as a data collection tool have a number of advantages. 'Interviews provide the researcher with detailed, insightful information, in addition to the opportunity to verify answers'.

There are differing types of interviews. Denscombe (2007:175-6) identifies three types of interview:

- Structured Interview – The researcher has a predetermined list of questions to which the respondent is invited to offer limited option responses.
- Semi-structured Interview – The researcher has a clear list of issues to be addressed but is flexible in terms of order and manner in which they are considered. Questions can be open-ended in nature.
- Unstructured Interview – This type of interview has no set wording or order of the question. The interviewer will invite the respondent to lead the discussion in any direction by asking open-ended questions.

Interviews allow both the researcher and respondent time to reflect on the answers. This is pertinent to the qualitative nature of the study as it enables the overall perspective of each individual to emerge.

I will use the semi-structured interview technique in this research. This is a list of questions compiled in a specific order, but the order may be reshaped depending on the interview. The semi-structure style accounts for flexibility, in that, if an interview goes

off in a certain direction the interview style allows for this. Due to the wide variety of interview candidates that belong to differing publics, it is more likely that specific issues will be concentrated on depending on the interview candidate. This style of interview suits the exploration, and its technique also allows for easier analysis as questions remain in a relatively specific order.

Other methods such as ethnography and participant observation have indirectly contributed to this exploration. An understanding of these methods and how they have contributed are discussed.

3.4.2 Ethnography

‘Ethnography is a research method that has its roots in social anthropology. Ethnography seeks to understand and describe social behaviour in its natural setting’ (Devereux 2003:247). The concept of culture is central in ethnography. The ethnography approach is committed to cultural interpretation.

Ethnography brings the importance of the cultural place to the center of attention, transferring it from ground to figure. An important goal of ethnographic research is to describe and understand the cultural place and its influence on everyday lives of its members...Attachments and trust are important (Weisner 1996:307).

‘The basic ideas in ethnography are that human behaviour is based upon meanings, which people attribute to and bring to situations’ (Punch 2009:125). Punch also states, (2009:127) the ‘Point of ethnography is to study and understand the cultural and symbolic aspects of behaviour and the context of that behaviour’.

Behaviour is not caused but is continually constructed and reconstructed on the basis of people's interpretation of the situations they are in. Participant observers can learn the culture or subculture of the people they are studying and learn to understand the world as they do (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:8).

Punch states (2005:152) there are six features involved in the ethnographic approach:

1. Ethnography starts from the assumption that the shared cultural meaning of the group is crucial to understanding its behaviour. The ethnographer's task is to uncover that meaning.
2. The ethnographer is sensitive to the meanings that behaviour, actions, events and contexts have in the eyes of the public involved. The researcher's main task is to elicit that knowledge from the participants.
3. The group will be studied in its natural setting. A true ethnography involves the researcher becoming part of that natural setting.
4. Ethnography is likely to be an unfolding and evolving type of study rather than pre-structured.
5. Fieldwork is always central. Data collection techniques are varied.
6. Ethnographic data collection will typically be prolonged and repetitive. It takes time for the researcher to gain access to the deeper and most important levels of reality.

Some qualitative research follows ethnographic methods and seeks to satisfy two conditions: (a) the use of close up, detailed observation of the natural world by the investigator and (b) the attempt to avoid prior commitment to any theoretical model (Yin 1994:15).

Ethnography was not used explicitly for this research. However, over a period of eight years I have been working within the natural setting of nightclubs. Ethnography is discussed to demonstrate my experience and the experiences relevancy to this exploration. The experience allowed me to view the cultural influence that nightclubs have on their community and the population as a whole. For example, my recording of data from cash registers and how people spend money in nightclubs is relevant to its reputation. This recording of data showed that spend on alcohol per person increased

closer to closing times. This indicates that people spend more money on drink because nightclubs are closing. This information could then be used to argue that by the nightclubs restrictive closing hours it is indirectly encouraging binge drinking which has a direct effect on the reputation, culture of our country and ‘influence on every day lives’. This example is anecdotal and should not be used to support a point of view in this research. It merely demonstrates that although ethnography does not contribute directly to the research, it has been used to an extent in my own personal experience.

3.4.3 Direct and Participant Observation

‘Field visits in research create an opportunity for direct observation. There will always be relevant behaviours or environmental conditions available for observation. Such observations serve as yet another source of evidence in research’ (Yin 1994:86). The behaviours and environment of the industry are important factors in the consideration of this exploration. Understanding the behaviour and environment of an industry can lead to relevant information regarding its reputation.

Observation is the foundation of scientific method and research. Science involves meticulous observation. Observation is the process of accumulating knowledge to establish empirical facts. Research involves the collection of facts and the production of data through a process of observing events.

Observations can vary from formal to casual data collection. Direct observation may be made through field visits and other evidence such as interviews and environmental

observation. Observational evidence is helpful in providing information to the research being studied.

Participant observation is a different mode of observation where the researcher is not a passive observer. The researcher actively participates in the events being studied. The areas within the nightclub industry where my participant observations were used included marketing, advertising and public relations activity including communication and reputation activities. This unique participant observation experience gives me a deep understanding of these practices within the industry. The experience was not specifically frame-worked for this exploration and the experience was garnered prior and during the research.

Participant observation also provides unique opportunities for collecting research data. The greatest opportunity is the ability to gain access to events or groups that are otherwise inaccessible to explorations.

The other distinct advantage is it allows the research to perceive reality from the viewpoint of inside the research rather than external to it. Other opportunities also arise through participant observation such as the ability to gain access to documents, archival records and interviews.

An understanding of participant observation is needed to explain my own role of participant observation in this exploration. I have been observing the nightclub industry for a number of years, working in the industry and identifying issues that exist in the industry. Additionally my participation has allowed me to perceive the nightclub

industry from within the industry while allowing me access to key interview candidates that have contributed to this research and these interview candidates allowed me access to their monitoring tools. It must be noted that no specific recordings of data from my participant observation in the industry over these years of experience has contributed to the exploration. However, it has given me experience and developed opportunities to carry out the exploration.

One of the major drawbacks to participant observation and ethnography is the potential for biases occurring. The researcher has to be able to step outside the involvement and act in the interest of science and practice. In addition the researcher must quell any support garnered for the industry or group observed.

The issue of bias is something that I have had trouble with throughout the research. I only realised I had an issue with bias after proof reading my first draft results from my *Findings and Analysis*. I found that my results were not consistent with what I was documenting in the *Findings and Analysis*. Even after viewing the results in black and white I found myself writing more favourably for the nightclub industry, stating positives rather than actual true negative occurrences. This bias was not done intentionally. The bias was pointed out to me in a stern and matter of fact manner. It was only then that I realised I had to fully detach myself from the nightclub industry to give the exploration the integrity it deserved.

My intentions are grounded in scientific interests. Bias was an issue but I feel the research is important in the development of the nightclub industry, public relations, industry reputation and my own personal development. Bias would jeopardise the

integrity of the research and that would not contribute to developing public relations as a subject or the nightclub industry. For these reasons it was important that I detached myself from the nightclub industry and this was achieved through personal mature reflection and my determination in achieving the goals of the exploration.

3.4.4 Documents and Secondary Analysis

Secondary data is collected to provide an in-depth understanding of the subject matter. A dual approach using secondary and primary sources allows academic integrity to be applied to the industry specifics. How the research analysed its data is discussed in the *Data Analysis Approach and Method* section of this chapter.

Documents, reports and journals referring to the nightclub industry are also considered for the exploration. They include:

Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Proposed Regulation of the Nightclub Industry in Ireland – The document addresses multiple issues involved in the regulation of the nightclub industry in Ireland.

Licence Fees and Commercial Viability in the Nightclub Industry – The document addresses the impact of the increase in SEO costs and the effect it has on the viability of the industry.

These documents give the research an insight into the work the industry is engaging in. I will also look at the INIA's Nightsafe programme and the policy guidelines required in meeting the standards and criteria to achieve the Nightsafe award. These policies include: Drugs Policy Guidelines, Fire and Emergency, Security, Crowd Control, Noise Control, Responsible Serving of Alcohol, Risk and Claims. Other analysis tools included:

Kanter Media Monitoring Tool – *Kanter* media provides monitoring within press, broadcast, online and social media outlets across Ireland.

Nexis Monitoring Tool – Business intelligence service including newspapers, journals, wire services, market research, country reports, corporate profiles and government documents.

Both *Nexis* and *Kanter* offered the researcher a comprehensive package of multiple reports and research. This coverage gives the exploration analysis of information dating back over 30 years right up to the current time. These reports give a factual account of what has been and is being reported and recorded on the nightclub industry. Additional documents include industry and trade magazines, research journals and court reports. All of these documents combined provide a useful profile of the nightclub industry.

3.5 Interview Candidates

The strategy used in selecting interviewees for this study was purposive sampling as the researcher chose interviewees based upon relevance to the study. ‘Well developed sampling decisions are crucial for any study’s soundness’ (Marshall and Rossman 2006:64).

The research is conducted all over Ireland. It concentrated on cities and towns for geographical selection reasoning. These areas included: Dublin, Galway, Waterford, Letterkenny, Sligo, Listowel, Dundalk, Kilkenny and Carlow. Within these cities and towns, the correct personnel most suitably relevant for the interviews were chosen. There were a total of nineteen candidates chosen for interview. The interviews lasted between one and two hours, depending on the candidate. The interviews were in-depth and concentrated on the individual candidate’s experience of the nightclub industry in Ireland. The questionnaires are available in the *Appendices* section. The criteria for selecting personnel to be interviewed is based on the following:

Affiliate Members:

- Interview operators/managers/owners of nightclubs – This will allow the researcher to establish if there is continuity in the sector on the widely regarded reputation and practices of the nightclub industry.
- Interview public relations, marketing and communication employees of nightclubs – These interviews will allow the research to determine if the public relations and communications practiced by the nightclubs are correct and they deal with reputational matters sufficiently.

- Interview Barry O’Sullivan, CEO, Irish Nightclub Industry Association (INIA)
 - This interview will give an insight into the overall opinions that are held by the nightclub industry with specific reference to reputation.

Non-Affiliate Members

- Interview those affected by nightclubs – This will allow the research to explore the relationship with Gardaí and those most affected by the nightclubs in their relevant areas.
- Interview the media – This will give a clear indication as to why the reputation of the industry is portrayed in a mostly negative manner. Interviewees will include representatives from local and national newspapers.
- Interview judiciary services and organisations that deal with implications of the industry – These interviews will give a further in-depth insight into the reputational capacity held by the nightclub industry.

The list of interview candidates and their relevancy to the exploration are now explained:

Barry O’Sullivan – CEO, INIA. Barry’s participation gives the exploration an insight into all the activities conducted by the industry. He also offers information on the specific topics covered in this exploration. Barry’s contribution to the interview offers an overall view of the current situation of the industry and its future goals and objectives.

Fionnuala Sheehan – CEO, Mature Enjoyment of Alcohol in Society (MEAS) and drinkaware.ie. MEAS promotes social responsibility among producers, marketers, distributors and retailers of alcohol, and works in partnership with the government. Fionnuala offers the exploration an insight into alcohol related problems with the industry and how this contributes to the reputation of the industry. Fionnuala’s expertise also offers insight into normative linkages of the industry including pubs and hotels, and the similar type problems these industries face.

Nigel Tynan – Editor, *Licensing World*. *Licensing World* is a monthly trade magazine that covers the licensed trade in Ireland. Nigel’s experience of the industry was key in offering a unique perspective from someone that witnesses the industry on a daily basis. Nigel gives a wide view of current issues that impact the industry. This interview was slightly unconventional; interviews were constantly rearranged so we conducted the interview via email back-and-forth.

Gerry O Carroll – Crime Correspondent, *The Evening Herald*; Retired Detective Inspector, An Garda Síochána; Private Investigator. Gerry served with Garda Central Detective Unit from the 1970s to the 1990s. He is currently a crime correspondent with the *Evening Herald* and runs his own private investigation company. For this exploration, Gerry was able to offer his opinions from the experiences of three viewpoints, Crime Correspondent, Retired Garda Detective and Private Investigator. These three vantage views give multiple perspectives of the industry.

Ronan Farren – Public Relations Consultant, Q4 Public Relations. Q4 Public Relations have offered public relations solutions to the INIA and have also worked with the

Drinks Industry Group Ireland (DIGI). Ronan has worked first hand with the INIA offering public relations services for the *Licence Fees and Commercial Viability of the Nightclub Industry* report. Ronan has also worked with the INIA on other public relations activities and initiatives. He gives an insight into the practices they have engaged in with the industry and gives his view of how the industry has been practicing public relations.

John O’Sullivan – CEO, John O’Sullivan Solicitors. John has worked within the nightclub industry in three differing capacities. He has represented nightclubs in seeking SEOs for late night licences. He has represented clients that have claimed from nightclubs for accident or injury. Additionally, he has represented clients that have had public disorder cases brought against them resulting from activity in or outside nightclubs. John brings a perspective from the judiciary services.

Eugene McGovern – General Manager, *The Foundry* nightclubs, Carlow and Waterford, The Dinn Rí Group; Executive Member, INIA. Eugene provides an in-depth view on the day-to-day running of a nightclub and where the practices examined in this exploration fit into it. He elaborates on his own practices of public relations and communications and where he believes the industry is in respect to this.

Michael Crossan – Owner and General Manager, *The Pulse* nightclub, Letterkenny. Michael brings a wealth of experience in the nightclub industry to the exploration. He talks of his own struggles in the industry including the reputational damage he suffered from newspaper reports.

Holly Prior – Marketing Manager, *The Wright Venue*, Dublin. Holly details the functions of the marketing department in *The Wright Venue*. Additionally she offers an insight into the public relations and communication practices of their venue.

Selina Regazozoli – Corporate Sales Manager, *The Wright Venue*, Dublin. Selina details the customer relation programmes that *The Wright Venue* engages in. This perspective offers the viewpoint of dealing with multiple publics.

Emma Hayden – Public Relations and Marketing Executive, *The Foundry* nightclubs, Carlow and Waterford. Emma details the functions of the marketing department in *The Foundry* nightclub, Carlow. She describes the public relations and communication activities she has engaged in.

Niall Byrne – General Manager, *Scraggs Alley* pub, Carlow; General Manager, *Nexus* nightclub, Carlow (1997-2005). Niall offers his opinions from the perspective of a competitor of the nightclub industry. He also discusses the joint issues of concern to both industries. In addition he was General Manager of *Nexus* nightclub and details the changes he has seen in the nightclub industry over the last fifteen years.

Esther Hayden – Journalist, *Carlow People*, Carlow. Esther is a local journalist and details her analysis of the industry through court reporting and local issues that affect the community and industry.

Will Burton – Freelance Journalist, North West Region. Will worked with *Highland Radio* and currently works as a freelance journalist covering court reports. He also gives his view on the industry from a local perspective.

Brendan Calinan – Taxi Driver; Retired Head of Security, *Nexus* nightclub, Carlow. Brendan worked as head of security in *Nexus* nightclub for seven years and offers his perspective on the industry from this viewpoint. Additionally, he currently works as a taxi driver and talks of how the industry affects his business on a daily basis.

Jennifer Murnane O'Connor – Fianna Fail County Council Representative, Carlow. Jennifer has represented her local community for twelve years. Her main supports are for the Irish Wheelchair Association, Senior Citizens, Carlow Tidy Towns Committee and the management of St. Fiac's House for the Elderly. Jennifer gives her accounts of representing the community and how she feels the industry impacts and relates with the community.

Kieran Dollard – Chairman, Stretford United Football Club, Carlow. Stretford United FC has been the beneficiary of *The Foundry* nightclub having received continued support and sponsorship for five years. Kieran talks of the impact the nightclub has had on the football club and how they can now look at setting up a youth team in the community.

Anonymity was offered to candidates. This option was offered to help the exploration gain access to interview candidates that would not participate in the research unless they were offered the option of anonymity. It was felt from the outset of the research that due

to the industry's closed off nature that the option of anonymity should be made available. Two interview candidates wished to remain anonymous in the interview process but were happy for their views to be included in the research:

Owner and operator of two nightclubs in the Connaught region – This owner and operator of two nightclubs has worked in the industry for nearly twenty years. He offered an insight into the many issues his industry currently faces. In addition, he informed me of the current public relations and communications practices he employs.

Licensing Sergeant in the Leinster region, An Garda Síochána – This Licensing Sergeant offered a perspective from An Gardaí and an insight of how the nightclub industry impacts his profession. He talks at length on the industry and the communication channels that exist with the industry.

The following information outlines the duty of care the researcher has to the interview candidates:

1. All interviews were taped for accuracy. All interviews were digitally taped and recorded. All recordings and interviews when digitally transcribed were encrypted using the software Truecrypt.
2. All information is held in the strictest of confidentiality. The researcher has a duty of confidentiality to the interview candidates. All information gained in the course of the interview process was considered privileged information and will not be disclosed publicly without the permission of the interviewee. The researcher cannot make unrealistic guarantees of confidentiality with regards to

legal challenges. However, with all of the steps listed within the obligation of care to the interviewee and the correct storage processes outlined above confidentiality will be maintained to the best of the researcher's ability.

3. Anonymity is allowed to facilitate candidates that contribute influential information to the research but only want to do so under anonymity.
4. Interviewee will receive a copy of interview when transcribed.
5. Interviewee can change interview on reflection if they feel they have been misrepresented.
6. The researcher will guarantee that all information is stored for a period of five years following completion. Information is stored in the case where future reference or clarity is needed and was recommended by the *Dublin Institute of Technology Ethics Committee*.
7. The interviewee was offered a copy of the interview transcript after it was transcribed and ~~any~~ changes were returned to the researcher within an agreed period of four weeks.
8. The interviewee was forwarded a draft copy of his or her interview so that factual inaccuracies or incorrect interpretations could be amended. Any changes were returned to the researcher within a specified period of four weeks.
9. For outside publication the interviewee will be approached with a further opportunity to edit or change statements. Outside publication is any publication in addition to the postgraduate award.
10. All interviewees were required to sign a consent form.

The interview process and candidates give an overall view of the industry. It looks at the industry from multiple perspectives to provide a comprehensive assessment of the

industry and the practices that it engages in. The interview process also offers a variety of information as to why the industry is portrayed in the manner it is with respect to reputation.

3.6 Data Analysis Approach and Method

The areas that are analysed in the exploration are reputation, public relations, communications, publics, relationship management, issues and crisis management. These areas are then cross-referenced with emerging patterns, theories and reoccurring issues that arise in the secondary and primary data collection. According to Blaxter et al (2001:203), analysing data involves two closely related processes:

- Managing your data, by reducing their size and scope, so that you can report upon them adequately and usefully.
- Analysing your managed set of data, by abstracting from it and drawing attention to what you feel is of particular importance or significance.

In this exploration the data is managed by using an ordering and coding system in the interview process. The interview questions are ordered in a manner that deals with each of the areas independently of each other and coding is applied to themes and issues that emerge from the interviews.

After collecting all the data for the research, analysis was carried out using the inductive method. This involved organising the information into manageable categories. The categories included secondary data, secondary data compared against *Literature Review*

material, interview data and interview data compared against *Literature Review* material and finally secondary data compared against interview or primary data.

After the data was organised into manageable sections the process of identifying emerging patterns and common themes was applied. This was initially achieved through cross-referencing documents before applying a coding system. Coding was applied to sections that had or shared similar meanings with other sections. This coding method simplified analysing by fragmenting the data making it more manageable, through categorising and sub-categorising. This method of data analysis helped achieve better interpretation of the data and this is demonstrated in the concluding chapters.

There are two sets of interview questions, affiliate interview questions and non-affiliate interview questions. Both employ the same ordering system and are available in the *Appendices* section.

The two processes referred to by Blaxter offer the information collected to be managed in a manner that allowed the important information to be extracted more easily. The data analysis process identified commonalities that existed, aided by the ordering of questions. Recurring themes that emerged are identified and included in both findings chapters.

3.7 Reliability, Validity, Generalisability and Triangulation

This section demonstrates the decisions of integrity that were undertaken in the research process. The reasons for research decisions are outlined in this chapter to give clarity to

the exploration. The validity, reliability, generalisability and triangulation of the research are discussed here.

Because a research design is supposed to represent a logical set of statements, you can also judge the quality of any given design according to certain logical tests. Concepts that have been offered for these tests include trustworthiness, credibility, confirmability, and data dependability (U.S General Accounting Office) (cited in Yin 1994:32).

I will now explain how validity, reliability, generalisability and triangulation contribute to the integrity of the research and exploration.

3.7.1 Reliability

Reliability relates to the methods of data collection and the concern that they should be consistent and not distort the findings. Generally it entails an evaluation of the methods and techniques used to collect the data (Denscombe 2003:100).

The research should provide results that would not vary from occasion to occasion. Nor should they vary according to the particular person undertaking the research. Also, the research should not suffer from any factor interference that provides differing results. A good rule of thumb on reliability is demonstrated by Denscombe who states, ‘Methods can be seen as “reliable” when, all things being equal, they produce very similar findings when used’ (Denscombe 2003:101).

If another or later researcher carried out the exact same procedures as described in the previous research, that other researcher should draw the same conclusions and findings. Demonstrating that the operations of the study—such as the data collection procedures

can be repeated, with the same results. However, Daymon and Holloway point out one problem with reliability in qualitative research:

In qualitative research, the idea of replicability and reliability is rarely used because of the subjective nature of the qualitative research. The researcher is the research tool, the research is context specific and therefore the research would be difficult to replicate (Daymon and Holloway 2011:78-9).

The subjective element referred to by Daymon and Holloway is the researcher's characteristics and background influence. Daymon and Holloway (2011:79) state, this problem of reliability can be overcome by generating an audit trail. The exposition of this research in a step-by-step manner offers the reader an opportunity to restage the exploration or to accept the logic by which the research was conducted. An understanding of reliability is required but Daymon and Holloway also state, 'In qualitative research the concept of validity is more salient than reliability' (2011:79).

3.7.2 Validity

Validity concerns the accuracy of the question asked, the data collected and the explanations offered. Generally it relates to the data and the analysis used in the research (Denscombe 2003:100).

Validity refers to the precision to which the exploration reflects the exact concepts that the researcher is attempting to explore. There are many forms of validity and in quantitative research it is concerned with measurement. In qualitative research it is concerned with plausibility, relevance and credibility (Daymon and Holloway 2011:79). This research is exploring reputation, using methods including interviews, academic recommendations and secondary data.

Yin (1994:32) describes tests that are commonly used to establish the validity of any empirical social research.

- **Construct Validity** – establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied. To increase construct validity, the researcher should make perfectly clear the hypothesis to be examined and justify why the comparisons used mirror the concepts in the hypothesis. The concepts examined in this exploration are reputation in the nightclub industry and the practices that contribute to it. The evaluations used to mirror the hypothesis are comparisons against recommended models and the theories that emerge from the exploration.
- **Internal Validity** – establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions, as distinguished from spurious relationships. There are examples of internal validity in this exploration. I could not evaluate public relation practices merely on how an industry communicates. The relationship between communication and publics is explored because excellent public relations require communicating to the correct publics. These relationships have been explained throughout the research. Daymon and Holloway (2011:79) also state internal validity is, ‘The extent to which the findings and the research account accurately reflect the social world of those participating in the study’. This is achieved through the interviewees receiving a transcription of their interview and amending any inaccuracies that exist.
- **External Validity** – establishing the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalised. Generalisability will be discussed further in this chapter but in essence, external validity asks can this research be generalised beyond this exploration? Could it be applied to another industry or similar industry in another jurisdiction?

The validity of qualitative research is addressed by ensuring that the data is grounded in facts. Validity involves the process in which facts are verified or discredited as the research progresses.

Validity is the quality of data and explanations grounded in truth and reality. The researcher must demonstrate these same qualities in their research. Validity provides the basis on which the researcher argues their findings and analysis. Judgements throughout the research must be accurate reflections of the underlying truth. Validity is relevant to this research because it demonstrates the accuracy of the exploration and the theories that emerge in the findings and analysis.

3.7.3 Generalisability

‘Generalisability (also called external validity) is the extent to which it is possible to generalise from the data and context of the research study to broader populations and settings’ (Blanche et al 2006:91). The question of generalisability asks the question, can the research be applied to a population beyond the sample employed?

The term generalisability has its origins in quantitative research, where conclusions are drawn from statistical sampling and law-like patterns. In a qualitative research such as this, generalisability is achieved through statements that are context specific. Daymon and Holloway state:

Context-specific findings, whilst not necessarily generalisable—because no universal laws or general theories have been established—may still have some external validity if they are shown to be typical of other settings’ (Daymon and Holloway 2011:80).

This research does not look for law-like generalities but the research has specificity and uniqueness. Generalisability is also important because this exploration is conducted in its natural settings to ensure that the findings are applicable to the real world. Definitive

generalisability of this exploration cannot be guaranteed unless replication occurs and this is discussed in the *Limitations to the Research* section. However, I believe this research fits the criteria required for generalisability, as the procedures that are employed are context specific and generalisable.

This exploration uses practices that are widely accepted in public relation theory to be reliable theory. The material covered in the *Literature Review* chapter can be applied to any industry in exploring its reputation, not only the nightclub industry. If the interview process were conducted in another industry, the interview candidates would be similar as they identify personnel from all publics impacted by or involved with the industry. The exploration could be applied to areas outside its current jurisdiction, as the same methods are employed. The findings may yield slightly varying results, as the legislations may be different in other jurisdictions, and this is also discussed in the next section.

Could this exploration be applied to another industry or similar industry in another jurisdiction or a wider population? It is my belief that it could. Correct measures have been taken to allow the exploration to be applied elsewhere. However it must also be noted that generalisability in qualitative research is subjective by nature. The values of the researcher are considered such as background, expertise, theoretical preferences and emotional engagement. The standpoint of the researcher must be made clear, as it is throughout this research. This unique subjectivity is difficult to replicate and this must be considered in generalisability for this exploration.

3.7.4 Triangulation

Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspects of human behaviour. The use of multiple methods approach contrasts with the ubiquitous approach that characterises so much of research in the social sciences. In its original and literal sense, triangulation is a technique of physical measurement (Cohen et al 2007:141).

This exploration employs interviews as the primary method in data collection. However, other methods including secondary document data analysis have been used. The secondary document data analysis is relevant and reflective of the industry, while adding support to the findings of the interview process. ‘The value of triangulation is that it reduces observer or interviewer bias and enhances the validity and reliability accuracy of the information’ (Mackey and Gass 2009:146).

The collection of data through various means in the exploration addresses the issues of concern that one method alone may not provide adequate support. The combination of methods and data collections allows triangulation to be applied to the findings. ‘Qualitative investigators may choose triangulation as a research strategy to ensure completeness of findings or to confirm findings’ (Streubert and Carpenter 2010:350).

This section looked at reliability and how the exploration’s results should not vary from occasion to occasion, and that results are consistent. Validity is achieved through grounding data in facts that are verifiable. Generalisability is achieved through the explorations ability to be transferred to other samples or populations but also considers the subjectivity of the researcher. And, triangulation is used to confirm the findings. All of the above contribute to the completeness of the exploration. However there were limitations to the research.

3.8 Limitations to Research

This exploration is original and extensive but there are limitations. These limitations are discussed:

As discussed, the nightclub industry is a section of Irish nightlife where little has been studied in great detail and the industry is not used to lending to academic development. It would have been preferred to interview more nightclub operators that did not practice any public relations or communications. These candidates would have helped the research clearly identify the answer to some issues that arose throughout the research. These issues included why they did not practice public relations or communications. The difficulty in arranging these interview candidates stemmed from a lack of response from the candidates to my invitations, even after they were offered anonymity. This may be due to the closed off nature of some parts of the industry and the industry's unfamiliarity in lending to academic development.

With two of the interviews I conducted, I felt that the interviewees were telling me what they thought I wanted to hear. The answers seemed to be tant-a-mount marketing jargon. It was difficult to gain natural answers from them. I am not sure if the information I gained from these interviews was altogether accurate. I had to use my better judgement in the subjective context of the research, on whether or not to include large sections of these interviews.

I tried in vain to get an interview with a Court Judge. I felt this interviewee would have offered another valuable perspective from a judiciary viewpoint and add better

triangulation to the findings. The efforts to secure this interviewee proved too problematic with multiple leads failing.

A further limitation to the exploration may have been the exclusion of customer opinions of the nightclub industry in the research. This decision was based on the following: The opinions of customers would vary significantly depending on the individual and their experiences. To gain an overall understanding of the customers experience would require an additional research exploration of magnitude.

As discussed in the generalisability section, it is my belief that this exploration has external validity or transferability to either the wider population, other industries or other jurisdictions. The element of transferability was also discussed in relation to the qualitative nature of the research. However other limitations exist. The nightclub industry in Ireland has had a quite unique evolutionary process, as discussed in the *Introduction* chapter. Other jurisdictions would have differing legislation governing the industry and may have differing legislation regarding issues that have impacted the industry. The theoretical practices and methods would still be employed to explore the reputation but the findings may have slightly different outcomes.

The qualitative nature of the exploration also provided limitations. Objectivity in quantitative research removes the human element. Results reflect accurate measurements and evaluations. In the qualitative paradigm the researcher or human element is involved and the characteristic and background influence how the researcher arrives at their conclusions. In this exploration I am guided by theoretical models that have been discussed in the *Literature Review*, by reoccurring themes in secondary data

that exists in documents, journals and reports and by the findings that emerged from the interviews. Although I can compare against recommended practice models in the *Literature Review*, the research does not explicitly measure against the models and this particular accuracy is subject to my interpretations and the accuracy of an explicit quantitative approach is debatable.

CHAPTER 4: NIGHTCLUBS ON THE STREET – DOCUMENTS, JOURNALS AND REPORTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of documents, journals and reports in relation to the nightclub industry. As discussed in the previous chapter, analysis was achieved by collecting the information. This information was then categorised into relevant categories based on commonalities and reoccurring themes. A coding process was then applied in cross-referencing through the different categories.

The chapter is broken into two sections that present documentary evidence on the nightclub industry. The first section deals with the documents, journals and reports that are written external to the industry's control. The second section incorporates the documents, journals and reports that are internal and the nightclub industry have commissioned or participated in.

4.2 External Industry Reports

This section reflects the information that currently exists on the nightclub industry in Ireland. The sources of information vary from newspaper reports, broadcast reports, court reports and journals. An approach similar to a qualitative content analysis was used. Stories, reports and documents were scanned for words where the aim was to discover new or emerging patterns or overlooked patterns that effect the reputation of

the industry. The most frequent and predominant stories and reports that emerged were chosen.

In the *Introduction* chapter a sample of newspaper headlines over four years were identified. I will now assess these and additional stories and reports in more detail. I will look at how these news stories affect and have affected the reputation of the industry and also attempt to identify what the industry is doing to address these reports.

4.2.1 Alcohol

‘Judge Warns Nightclubs on Cheap Drink Promotions’ (Britton and Doherty 2012a:3).

This story tells of a drinks price war between three nightclubs in the town of Bundoran, Co. Donegal. The nightclubs had been involved in the price war from April – July 2012. The story had been ongoing and courted several headlines in local and national newspapers including, ‘Club Owners Think they are Above the Law, says Judge’ (The Irish Times 2012:4).

This story was unhelpful for the nightclub industry’s reputation. However, the story can be qualified further. Judge Kevin Kilrane stated at the Monday 9th July, Donegal District Court sitting, ‘I realise that we are living in tough financial times and that premises must take innovative measures to attract business. They all have their costs to pay’ (Britton and Doherty 2012b:5). At the previous Friday 6th July, Donegal District Court sitting, Supt. Leo McGinn stated, ‘I have carried out a number of inspections at the premises and I am satisfied that they are very well run and not in breach of licensing

laws. Public order offences have halved, with just 14 offences in June and that includes festivals such as “*Sea Sessions*” (Britton and Doherty 2012b:5). In addition, Supt. McGinn stated at the Monday 9th July sitting, ‘All three premises were been conducted in a proper manner. There was no evidence of anti-social behaviour’ (Britton and Doherty 2012b:5).

The story is qualified even more by Connor McEniff, the operator of Paris Nightclub who stated, ‘My competition is people sitting at home with a bottle of whiskey or vodka that they’ve bought in the off-sales. To stay open I have to compete with the off-sales’ (Britton and Doherty 2012b:5). Supt. McGinn then stated that, ‘A number of members of the public had come to me to express fear and apprehension about the low prices’, referring to the prices of alcohol in the nightclubs (Britton and Doherty 2012b:5).

At the Monday 9th July sitting, Judge Kilrane, concluded that:

I will accept no gimmickry, freebies or inducements. €2.50 is the minimum price and anything thereafter is to be charged at an economic price—if there is any gimmickry I will revoke the bar extensions...the purpose of this is to ensure a level playing field. This type of competition is no good for anyone – the licensees, consumers, the community—and it has to be stopped (Britton and Doherty 2012b:5).

The statement by the Judge refers to the community and the concerns he has for the community. Supt. McGinn also referred to ‘fear and apprehension’ expressed to him by members of the public. This paints a particularly negative picture of the nightclub industry and these negative headlines reached national newspapers. The headlines and story evoke emotions of concern, distress and mistrust amongst the local community. What this story does not highlight and only mentions briefly, is the inequities that exists in Ireland.

The nightclubs are heavily criticised for selling cheap alcohol and are threatened with the revoking or denial of their licenses should they continue to sell cheap alcohol. Where the inequity exists is, the 'off-sales' or off-trade sell alcohol at whatever price they want and have no licensing sanctions imposed on them. The off-trade can sell cheap alcohol because of the repealing of the Groceries Order Act in 2006, allowing the below cost selling of products. The off-sales being the nightclub's competitor is only mentioned briefly throughout the court proceedings above.

On the 3rd of July 2012, Centra, part of the Musgrave Group, with over 450 retail stores nationwide, ran a promotion entitled, 'Children's Allowance Day Deals'. The promotion offered a case (twenty bottles) of Miller beer for €15 or 75 cents a bottle, while two cases of Budweiser were on offer for €25 (twenty bottles of Miller in the nightclubs mentioned above would cost €50 at €2.50 per bottle, €35 more expensive than Centra). After negative public and media reaction Centra apologised and instructed the shops involved to withdraw the promotion. They also courted unfavourable headlines, with this headline from *The Irish Times*, 'Centra Withdraws "Irresponsible" Beer Deals Linked to Child Benefit' (O'Connell 2012:3). Minister for Justice, Alan Shatter called the promotion, 'Irresponsible and reprehensible' and stated 'It suggests that some retailers are more concerned with boosting turnover and profits than selling alcohol responsibly' (cited in O'Connell 2012:3).

On the 24th September 2011, *The Irish Times* ran with this heading on page three, 'Lidl Cheap Wine Promotion "Irresponsible", says Minister' (Pope 2011:3). The story covered how Lidl were selling two bottles of wine for €5. Lidl was roundly criticised in this story and points were made that, 'Lidl's price for two bottles will not even cover its

tax bill never mind the productions and shipping costs’, and, ‘Lidl are clearly doing it because it will get them some attention and will get people through their doors’ (cited in Pope 2011:3).

In both of these cases, it is evident that cheap alcohol is used to increase footfall of customers in the off-trade sector including supermarkets and retail shops. In all of the cases mentioned above, the operators are criticised. It is not this exploration’s objective to determine if the criticism is right or wrong, but it should be noted that only the nightclubs face any sanctions for their irresponsible sale of alcohol. Eugene McGovern of *The Foundry Nightclub* states in his interview that income from admission and bar sales have fallen due to customers drinking more at home. Neither Centra nor Lidl were faced with the possibility of fines or licences being revoked, just negative media attention. Cases of Miller will still be available for €15.

It presents a serious inequality that exists between the on-trade and the off-trade. Despite the Minister’s statement in the Centra report, there are no consequences of ‘reprehensible’ action that can be taken. The cynical marketing or public relations practitioner might suggest, although the criticism is bad for Centra and Lidl, the benefits achieved by both stories could have increased business for them and they will not or did not face any sanctions. If a nightclub engages in this practise of selling cheap alcohol they face vilification similar to the off-sales, by the media, but only the nightclub would lose its license if it continued the practise

The issue of this price and legislation inequity that exists is a consequence of the repealing of the Groceries Order Act in 2006 and is discussed in further detail in

following chapters. However, the questions for this explorations purpose have to be asked, what has and what is the nightclub industry doing to combat this inequity that affects its reputation. Can areas of reputation and public relations from the *Literature Review* help in addressing this issue?

All of the operators involved in the nightclub price war stated throughout that they would welcome a minimum price (Britton and Doherty 2012b:5). Could lobbying in public relations address the inequity? Why are, as Judge Kilrane and Supt. McGinn pointed out in the story, the public and community expressing concern, fear and apprehension when the nightclubs engage in the practise of selling cheap alcohol and not expressing these same concerns when Centra and Lidl practise this? Could public relations have been used to convey the nightclubs concerns and issues more clearly? Could organisation-public relationships in relationship management ease this tension or concern that exists between the community and the nightclub?

4.2.2 Corporate Responsibility

The nightclub industry can feel somewhat aggrieved in the above scenario. There are several other reports that have been detrimental to the reputation of the industry. This headline on the 25th June 2011 in *The Irish Times*, ‘Investigation of Teenage Girl’s Alleged Rape in Nightclub Likely to be Lengthy’ (Lally 2011:8), raises serious concerns for the industry and its reputation. The story deals with an investigation by the Gardaí, where a fourteen-year-old boy allegedly raped a fifteen-year-old girl. The alleged incident happened in a nightclub in Rathmines, Co. Dublin. The incident allegedly occurred at a Junior Certificate disco hosted by the premises. There was no

alcohol on sale at the venue at the time. The investigation is currently been conducted. The same nightclub in question has been at the center of several other controversies and headlines.

On the 3rd September 2011, less than three months after the headline and alleged rape, the same nightclub ran a ‘Knickers for Liquor’ promotion. The headline in the *Irish Independent* read, ‘Nightclub Keeps Late Licence Despite “Knickers for Liquor” Promotion’ (Irish Independent 2011c:5). The promotion involved swapping ‘knickers’ for a free drink. In July 2009, a bouncer who worked in the same nightclub was jailed for two years for throwing a customer out of the venue and ‘leaving him in a pool of blood’ (cited Irish Independent 2011a:6). In June 2007, the *Irish Daily Mirror* newspaper reported a student smashing a bottle into a customer’s face in the same venue. The student was given a three-year jail term (Irish Daily Mirror 2007:4).

As discussed in *Reputation Management*, a single nightclub’s behaviour can influence a public’s disposition towards the nightclub industry. The actions and consequences of this particular nightclub have influenced a public’s disposition towards the industry with several unsavoury incidents and newspaper headlines. This nightclub has had a damaging effect on the reputation of the nightclub industry.

These actions and headlines bring negative connotations, social irresponsibility and evoke the concerns of the community. Concern and distress are acceptable emotions for the community surrounding this nightclub. How can one nightclub tarnish an industry’s reputation so much? How can the nightclub industry govern and sanction the rogue

behaviour of nightclubs like this? In truth the nightclub industry has little or no power to impose sanctions against individual nightclubs.

In the above instance, public relations or communications could struggle to address these issues. In the *Literature Review* Kendall states, 'Ethical behaviour must be managed...It quite often falls on the public relations manager to be a social conscience and defender of the organisations reputation' (1996:330). Correct public relations would not condone or allow a 'Knickers for Liquor' promotion, and certainly not three months after an incident of such magnitude. For this explorations purpose, this story is presented to assess how the industry responds to the behaviour of one of its nightclubs. It also demonstrates the effect one nightclub has on the reputation of the whole industry.

4.2.3 Noise Pollution

A problem that is constantly reported on involves the noise of nightclubs and the impact this has on the community. The *Gorey Guardian* reported (2012:4), that a resident stated, 'Having lived there for the past thirteen years, the noise currently at weekends late at night and early morning from people exiting nightclubs is unbearable'.

Frank McDonald, Environment Editor for *The Irish Times*, wrote an article titled, 'Nightmare in a City that Never Sleeps' (McDonald 2008:17). The article accounts a three-year struggle against nightclubs and late premises and their noise levels. McDonald recounts how after several prolonged approaches to venues that the frustration finally caught up with him.

I asked to speak to the manager and told her the noise was really terrible, she maintained a smirk on her face, saying “It’s a nightclub”...through tiredness and frustration, as well as her unsympathetic attitude and the whole history of noise problems, I reacted irrationally by putting my hands on either side of her and shook her briefly. I regretted this immediately and apologised (McDonald 2008:17).

The actions of McDonald could not be supported, however, the actions of the nightclub here would not fulfill the four dimensions of trust, commitment, control mutuality and satisfaction in the organisation-public relationship model. The actions would not fulfill the criteria recommended in two-way symmetrical communication or issue management as stated in the *Literature Review*. In the article, McDonald along with other residents discussed their pursuance of the noise problem. Their legal team, including barristers, argued their case but were informed that the Licensing Court was not the appropriate forum for pursuing nuisance cases on noise. Their legal team advised them, and there was a real risk of costs amounting to €100,000 being awarded against them. They couldn’t afford this risk.

This case is also an example of *constraint recognition* in *Publics*. A high level of *constraint recognition* reduces the probability that the community, public or person will seek information about an industry’s consequence.

A scan of local newspapers over a period of time can conclude that the problem of nightclub noise and its effects on the community exists. In Donegal alone, there were three headlines over a period of one year in the local paper, *Donegal Democrat*, complaining of nightclub noise. Headlines included, ‘Resident Objects Against Nightclub Noise’ (2010a:10), ‘Appeal Lodged Over Glenties Nightclub Plans’ (2010b:11) and ‘Elderly Couple Object to Nightclub’ (2010c:5).

It is an obvious concern that nightclub noise is a serious issue for its community and public. This issue again calls into question the nightclub industry's practice of relationship management particularly with the community. It affects the reputation of the industry. In an article referring to noisy nightclubs, *The Irish Times* received a letter to the editor. The writer highlighted their concerns and stated that, 'The nightclub industry might spend more time addressing its relationship with its neighbours' (Letters to the Editor, *The Irish Times* 2009b:21). This element of relationship management is discussed further in the remaining chapters.

Wilcox et al state (2003:4) on public relations, 'It should also foster open, two-way communication and mutual understanding with the idea that an organisation also changes its attitudes and behaviours in the process-not just the target audience'. This statement by Wilcox implies that, 'It's a nightclub' is not a reasonable response by a nightclub manager to a complaint made by the public about noise. The industry does need to address the noise issue with its community. A new attitude can be adopted where mutual understanding and compromise is agreed.

4.2.4 Health and Safety

Health and safety is cited as one of the top concerns of the non-affiliates of the industry. Since the *Stardust* tragedy, health and safety of nightclubs in general has been greatly improved, both by nightclubs and safety authorities implementing more appropriate regulations and controls. However, the issue of concern has not been totally eradicated from the nightclub industry. Fire safety and overcrowding have been among the headlines in recent years.

In September 2009, this headline appeared in the *Carlow People*, ‘Fire Chief “Horrorified” at what he Saw’ (Connolly 2009a:1,5). The report stated:

Fire escape routes out of the club were seriously obstructed with furniture, chairs and wheelie bins...A fire exit stairwell was in complete darkness and another one was a lit up fire exit route that led to a store...The fire alarm for the entire building wasn’t functioning and a number of red lights lit up the fire alarm panel (Connolly 2009a:1,5).

The operators of the nightclub were fined €8,000. On the same street, another nightclub was found guilty of similar charges, ‘Clubs “Exit to Nowhere” was Lit up as Safe Route’ (Connolly 2009b:5). The story told of how the nightclub had ‘An exit to nowhere despite being lit up as a safe route in an emergency...the exit was blocked up with timber’ (Connolly 2009b:5). Additionally, fire doors were padlocked and obstructed with a substantial amount of rubbish and debris. The owner was fined €8,000.

On the 26th June, the *Enniscorthy Guardian* reported a headline, ‘Club Padlocked’ (Enniscorthy Guardian 2012:6). This story reported how an emergency exit door was padlocked. The emergency exit was also behind a timber gate. Staff in the premises were unable to locate the fire extinguishers and the fire register was blank. The operator received a €1,000 fine.

The same newspaper reported this headline in 2007, ‘Nightclub Boss Fined for Over-Crowding’ (Enniscorthy Guardian 2007:10). This report documented that a nightclub was overcrowded by nearly 300 people. The venue was closed for four weeks and extra alterations were required including an extra fire escape. The owner was fined €800.

In 2009, *The Irish Times* reported this headline, ‘Students Complain of Crush at Door of Dublin Nightclub’ (Holland 2009:6). This report detailed a number of complaints by customers about overcrowding, ‘A number complained of crushing and panic attacks brought on by difficulties exiting, due to high volumes of people at the doors’ (Holland 2009:6). The operations manager of the venue responded by stating, ‘Staff were unaware of any problems with crowds at the main door on the night’. An ambulance and fire officer responded to calls, they were unaware of issues rising from the inspection (Holland 2009:6).

In 2008, *The Irish Times* also reported this headline, ‘Fire Forces Evacuation of 800 People from Nightclub’ (McGarry 2008:3). The story reported how two people were rescued and approximately 800 were evacuated. A fire broke out in a nightclub in Dublin. Five units of the Dublin fire brigade attended the scene, but there were no reported injuries. One customer reported, ‘The staff were really good, there was no panic. The place was hazing over and the smoke was building up. There was a strong smell of burning’ (McGarry 2008:3). The 800 customers were evacuated in six minutes.

On this occasion, the nightclub and the staff were commended for their actions. Had the fire occurred in any of the preceding venues mentioned in the headlines, the damage would likely have been untold. The actions of operators that padlock fire exits, overcrowd venues and neglect health and safety regulations should not be defended. The stories that are listed above would strike fear in any community. You cannot blame a public that considers the nightclub industry irresponsible and unsafe, when you see the actions of these operators.

4.2.5 Drugs

Drugs have been an issue of concern for the nightclub industry since the ecstasy drug came on the scene in the early 1990s. The ecstasy drug culture brought a new association between drugs and nightclubs in Ireland. Although at present, ecstasy is not as prevalent a drug as it used to be, the stigma of drugs in nightclubs has not gone away.

An RTE “Prime Time” investigation has confirmed the widespread use of cocaine throughout the country, with traces of the Class A drug found in over 90 per cent of toilets tested in clubs, pubs and workplaces (cited Irish Independent 2007:6).

The headline for this story reads, ‘Cocaine Traces in 90pc of Clubs and Pubs’. The swabs were taken from nearly 300 clubs, pubs and workplaces. This story indicates that drugs are still a problem for nightclubs and cocaine has replaced ecstasy as the drug of choice in nightclubs.

In June 2007, the *Irish Examiner* conducted a poll of 200 students and residents in Cork City between the ages of 18 and 35. The headline in the *Irish Independent* read, “‘Party’ Drug that’s Playing a Growing Role in Crime’ (Moloney 2007:7). The poll found that three-quarters of users take cocaine while in a nightclub or pub, and that two-thirds take it daily or weekly (Moloney 2007:7). The poll did not quantify how many of the 200 took drugs.

In December 2007, the *Irish Examiner* reported this headline, “‘Six-Month Closures’ for Pubs and Clubs if Drugs Found’ (Irish Examiner 2007b:3). The story concentrated on leaders’ questions during the Dáil sitting the previous day. An Taoiseach at the time,

Bertie Ahern, stated, 'If large pubs or nightclubs do not work towards improvements in this area they should be put out of business for six months...I think that because there has been a large focus on this with the Prime Time programme...it's good that there has been that focus on it' (Irish Examiner 2007b:3).

One day before the above headline, the *Irish Examiner* also ran with this headline, 'FG: Clubbers Should be Searched at Random for Drugs' (Irish Examiner 2007a:4). This story discussed how the Fine Gael party's justice spokesman Charlie Flanagan stated, 'The government has allowed a situation to develop where some venues are rightly concerned about underage drinking, but turn a blind eye to cocaine use on their premises. Gardaí should mount random searches of customers outside known nightclubs' (Irish Examiner 2007a:4). The spokesman also stated referring to the *Prime Time* programme, 'Pubs and nightclubs must be aware of their responsibilities to prevent illegal drugs been consumed on their premises...RTE should also hand over a list of the premises surveyed to the Gardaí' (Irish Examiner 2007a:4).

The *Prime Time* programme that conducted the investigation highlighted that drug use still exist in nightclubs. The Taoiseach called for a six-month closure penalty imposed on nightclubs if they did not work to improve the issue. Other politicians called for random drug searches at nightclubs and accusations of 'turning a blind eye' were made. These are concerning headlines for the reputation of the industry.

It should be noted, the investigation took place in nightclubs, pubs and workplaces. 'Workplaces' was left out of the headline, 'Cocaine Traces in 90pc of Clubs and Pubs' (Irish Independent 2007:6). There is no reference or recommendations from the

politicians in these stories or any stories I could find, to enact the same enforcements or criticisms to the workplaces. The exact figures of nightclubs, pubs and workplaces were not quantified. As the *Prime Time* investigation stories evolved, it was predominantly the nightclubs and sometimes the pubs that were publicly condemned on the matter.

Other stories on drugs include this headline in the *Limerick Leader*, ‘Limerick Gardaí Probe Drug Claims’ (Martyn 2009:1,3). The story reports an investigation conducted by the *Sunday World* newspaper the previous weekend where two journalists reported buying 40 ecstasy tablets and €100 worth of cocaine. The *Sunday World* investigation referred to the nightclub as, ‘A glorified drugs den’ (cited Martyn 2009:3). Operators of the nightclub handed over 100 CCTV cameras’ footage from the night and Gardaí reported a good working relationship with the venue. The *Bray People* reported this headline in 2010, ‘Passed on Ecstasy in Nightclub’ (Bray People 2010:14). This story told of how a security man identified ecstasy tablets being passed between customers in a nightclub. These stories indicate that ecstasy is still in existence in nightclubs.

There is no doubt that drugs are taken in nightclubs, pubs and workplaces. This research is concerned with the nightclub industry and how it is dealing with the issue of drugs. Again, the industry may feel aggrieved that the *Prime Time* investigation brought the focus on the nightclub industry and not the workplace. But this does not excuse the industry from how it is combating the drugs issue. Has the nightclub industry created links with other organisations to combat the problem? Has it clearly defined strategies to deal with the problem? And how is it dealing with the issue from a reputational and public relations perspective?

4.2.6 Security

Security or bouncers have long received bad publicity, ‘Bouncers to be “Tagged” at Co. Cork Nightclub’ (Burke 2003:6). Headlines in recent years have included, ‘Bouncer gets Seven Years for Sex Assault’ (Irish Independent 2009b:11). The story discusses a sexual assault on a customer of a nightclub by a security staff member. ‘CCTV footage showed him carrying the woman to the skip area’ (Irish Independent 2009b:11).

The *Irish Independent* also reported this headline in 2009, ‘Bouncer Threw Man Face First onto Footpath’ (Irish Independent 2009a:7). The story tells of a bouncer, who had only one day of training, throwing a customer face first into a footpath. The bouncer was ordered to pay €5,000 to the victim.

Returns from a general scan of court reports and headlines on bouncers or security returns mainly negative stories, ‘Some Bouncers Actions “are Cause for Concern”’ (Wexford People 2007:12), and ‘Bouncer Assaulted Man at Nightclub’ (Bray People 2007:5). These stories effect the reputation of the nightclub industry.

The Private Security Authority (PSA), which was established pursuant to the Private Security Services Act 2004, is the statutory body with responsibility for licensing and regulating the private security industry in Ireland. This story in the *Sunday Tribune*, ‘PSA Refuses Licences to One in Every Ten Security Guards’ (Downes 2010:6), reports the story that applications were refused, with many failing to supply details of previous criminal convictions. In 2009, new legislation made it compulsory for security guards,

bouncers and doormen to wear identity badges while working (Taylor 2009:4). This action of the PSA was positive in attributing accountability to individual bouncers.

Security and bouncers' actions have contributed to the reputation of the nightclub industry. The behaviour of some bouncers in the headlines above are disturbing. The PSA have brought in legislation that has given better accountability to the security industry.

In my experience, I have encountered bouncers that are great communicators and excellent at their job and bouncers that are rude and poor at their job either through heavy handedness or bravado, both contribute to the reputation of a nightclub. It should be noted that the job of bouncer or nightclub security is extremely difficult and requires great discipline and restraint among other qualities; they often have to deal with drunken people or crowd control. When scanning court reports and newspapers for incidents where bouncers damaged the reputation of the industry, it was more evident that bouncers and security are assaulted, spat at and verbally abused on a regular basis. Scanning for information showed incidents of bouncers being assaulted greatly outweighed the incidents where bouncers assaulted customers. However, the actions of bouncers can and have negatively affected the reputation of the industry. The research aims to explore what the industry is doing regarding the rogue bouncer's behaviours mentioned above and what effect this has on the reputation?

4.2.7 Closing Time for Nightclubs

In 2008 The Intoxicating Liquor Act was enacted. The impact this had on the nightclub industry was briefly discussed in the *Introduction* chapter. It repealed the Theatre Licence that allowed nightclubs to operate until 3.30am. The Theatre Licence used to cost €270 for a nightclub. The act brought closing times back to 2.30am from 3.30am.

The act also increased the SEO costs by over 50 per cent. Introducing the act in the Dáil, the then Minister for Justice Dermot Ahern said it was designed, ‘To tackle public disorder and alcohol-related harm resulting from excessive alcohol consumption’ (Cullen 2008a:3).

This act gained wide spread media coverage from journalists and commentators. Headlines included, ‘Warning of Job Losses if Bill Makes Nightclubs Close Earlier’ (Cullen 2008a:3), ‘Protest Against Earlier Nightclub Hours’ (Cullen 2008b:12), ‘Troubled Times for Nightclubs’ (Letters to the Editor, The Irish Times 2009a:17) and ‘Calling Time on the Nightclub’ (Holland 2008:19).

Kitty Holland wrote the article with the headline, ‘Calling Time on the Nightclub’ (Holland 2008:19). The article discussed how the new act was threatening the future of the nightclub industry and how it could lead to an increase in trouble on the streets. Holland provides a detailed account of a Saturday night out in Dublin and interviewed numerous people.

The story accounted one group of people who had attended a concert, the concert finished at 1.30am. The group wished to attend a nightclub but could not see the merit in paying ten or fifteen euro entry into a nightclub for one hour, 'In reality, the night is over' (Holland 2008:19). Two other individuals were also interviewed by Holland stating, 'You used to be able to stay out dancing until 4am. Now you're kicked out just as you get going. We wouldn't come into town to go to a club as often now' and 'We are responsible adults who have good jobs, who work hard and want to just go out and have some fun at the weekend. We're in our 30's and we respect these clubs'. Holland goes on to write:

Those opposed to restrictive club hours argue that the changes have done nothing to reduce alcohol abuse and that the new law is killing nightclubs. They also claim that earlier closing has led to an increase in public order issues, with everyone leaving clubs and late venues at the same time (Holland 2008:19).

Holland goes on to interview Supt. Joe Gannon, Pearse Street Garda Station, who oversees weekend night policing in the busiest nightlife district in the State. Supt. Gannon states:

I have seen no reduction in levels of disorder since the new act came into force. Now they are all coming out together at 2.30am. The fast food places do not have the capacity for them. If it's staggered, there is less volume at once, which is easier to deal with. There is less potential for volatility on the streets (cited in Holland 2008:19).

Tommy Gorman, the then President of the National Taxi Drivers' Union stated, 'The change has led to the old problem of people not being able to get taxis. My members are getting maybe two fares in the rush before it all dies down. Previously, they could have been busy until about 5am' (cited in Holland 2008:19). Sunil Sharpe, spokesperson for DJs and entertainers group 'Give us the Night' says jobs and shifts will be lost amongst

DJs, visual artists and dancers. Sharpe also led a protest against the act outside the Dáil, ‘Protest Against Earlier Nightclub Hours’ (Cullen 2008b:12). Sharpe stated in this article by Cullen that, ‘Nightclubs are being “scapegoated” for the problems around alcohol and public disorder’ (cited in Cullen 2008b:12).

In a letter written to the editor of *The Irish Times* entitled ‘Troubled Times for Nightclubs’ (Letters to the Editor, *The Irish Times* 2009a:17), Luke Martin states, ‘Early closing times do not reflect modern working hours and have the side effect of encouraging people to take their drink over a shorter period’ (Letters to the Editor, *The Irish Times* 2009a:17). Martin calls for staggered opening times, as is normal practice across Europe. Martin also states his concern for the increase in SEO prices and the effect it will have on smaller operators, ‘If left unchanged, the act will result in the closure of many smaller venues, costing jobs, increasing the incidence of “superpubs” and reducing competition for the consumer’ (Letters to the Editor, *The Irish Times* 2009a:17).

Fine Gael Justice spokesperson at the time, Charlie Flanagan stated closing times should be staggered, in the story, ‘Stagger Nightclub Closing Times to Curb Street Violence, Urges FG’ (*Irish Examiner* 2008:3). Flanagan stated that he had drafted new proposals for nightclubs to regulate the industry, ‘The new licence would provide for sequential closing, thereby reducing the likelihood of street violence and civic disorder. Ministers should support this amendment in the interest of public safety’ (*Irish Examiner* 2008:3) In the same story Flanagan stated, ‘Thousands of people would mill out onto the streets at the same time creating tension at taxi ranks, fast food outlets and so forth’ (*Irish Examiner* 2008:3). Another Deputy, Joe McHugh of Fine Gael agreed

with his colleague and stated, 'Staggering nightclub closing times is the only way to curb anti-social behaviour...sequential closing reduces the likelihood of street violence in the country during the early hours' (Sunday Mirror 2008:23).

When Holland was compiling the article, 'Calling Time on the Nightclub' she asked Barry O'Sullivan, of the INIA what his opinion was on the act, he predicted, 'Hefty job losses and nightclub closures' (cited in Holland 2008:19). In the article, 'It's Closing Time for Dublin's Nightclub Scene' (Burke 2009:6), Oliver Hughes of Lillie's Bordello nightclub discusses the impact of the act, 'That 1.30am to 3.30am window was crucial. This is when customers leave Dublin's late bars, which close at 1.30am, to hit the clubs. But with nightclubs forced to close at 2.30am, for the sake of one hour of clubbing they're not bothering now' (cited in Burke 2009:6).

Robbie Fox, owner of Renards nightclub, Dublin, also predicted bad news for the industry in Holland's article:

It will seriously damage my business. We get about six hours a week to do our business; two hours each on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. This is taking away an hour each night, so we'll have three hours to do our business. With 50 per cent of my business gone, that will mean job losses and closing down some of the nights a week (cited in Holland 2008:19).

After seventeen years in business, Renards nightclub went out of business in 2009 and was liquidated. In April 2011, the *Irish Examiner* reported this story, '25% of Nightclubs Have Shut Doors' (Irish Examiner 2011:3). They reported that, '130 clubs have closed their doors for good in the last three years...the closures have resulted in 600 full time jobs and 2,500 part-time jobs been lost' (Irish Examiner 2011:3). It should be noted, the economic downturn also had a likely impact on the closure of these

nightclubs and this is discussed in Anthony Foleys report in the second section of this chapter.

The Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008 has had several impacts on the nightclub industry. ‘To tackle public disorder and alcohol-related harm resulting from excessive alcohol consumption’ (Cullen 2008a:3) was the reason for the act stated by the then Justice Minister. The Minister in this statement, on purpose or not, was attributing the blame of public disorder and alcohol related harm, squarely on the nightclub industry. This blame on the industry is unfair and damaging to the industry’s reputation.

Additionally, the restrictive nature of the act appears to result in more potential for late night trouble, as flash points are more evident at crowded taxi ranks and fast food outlets. I have found no evidence to detail if there has been an increase or decrease in public order offences relating to nightclubs since the act was introduced. This lack of evidence on public order offences is discussed in more detail below. There have been job losses and closures of nightclubs since the act was introduced. This act called the nightclub industry to action on the issue and we will look at their actions in the *Internal Industry Reports* section.

4.2.8 Public Order

I refer back to Farrell’s (2007:5) statement, ‘Clubs can be seen by some as a place from where virtually all nocturnal public order problems emanate—which is a rather unfair assumption. It’s just that we’re the last people in the chain customers get to on a night out’.

‘Gardaí Should not Have to Patrol Nightclub – Judge’ (Donegal Democrat 2009:5), ‘GAA Star Waited Outside Nightclub for Revenge Attack, Court told’ (Irish Independent 2012:6) and ‘Garda and Three Bouncers Injured in Stabbing Frenzy’ (Irish Independent 2011b: 15). These are a sample of the headlines where public order offences are attributed to nightclubs. There is ample evidence of public order offences occurring either outside or inside nightclubs. Court reports and newspapers display this evidence.

When I scanned reports it appeared more evident that a lot more offences happen outside or near nightclubs than inside nightclubs. This is not deflecting the blame from the nightclubs, as it is very possible that the offences had some link with the nightclubs. However, there is ambiguity in the exact figures and statistics that exist on this in general. Barry O’Sullivan stated, (interview with Barry O’Sullivan, 18 January 2012), ‘Unfortunately, unlike the United Kingdom, where they typically track and monitor the causes of public disorder, in Ireland that is a black mark against the nightclub. In the United Kingdom they would engage with the nightclub and see what happened’.

The difficulty for the industry and this exploration is it is impossible to quantify public order offences. It is difficult to attribute direct responsibility to nightclubs from current statistics available. We can gauge public order and other social code offences from the Central Statistics Office. These statistics tell us that in 2004 there were 47,791 of these offences and in 2011 there were 49,026 offences in Ireland (www.cso.ie 2012). This shows a slight increase in public order offences over that period.

Another difficulty is presented by the range and scope of public order offences. A public order offence in Ireland (www.citizensinformation.ie 2012) can range from:

- Intoxication in a public place
- Disorderly conduct in a public place
- Threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour in a public place
- Begging in an intimidating or threatening manner
- Entering a building, etc, with intent to commit an offence
- Trespass in a building
- Wilful obstruction
- Failure to comply with direction of a member of An Garda Siochana
- Riot
- Affray
- Violent disorder
- Blackmail, extortion and demanding money with menaces
- Assault with intent to cause bodily harm or commit indictable offences
- Assault or obstruction of a peace officer
- Attacks on emergency service personnel

The National Crime Council (NCC) is an independent body that was established in 1999 by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The body was to act as a forum for the development and contribution of recommendations that would assist public policy making on issues relating to the reduction and prevention of crime. In 2003 the NCC published a report entitled *Public Order Offences in Ireland*.

The report made several recommendations on public order offences. The report (The National Crime Council 2003:19) stated the following:

Research and Statistics

1. There is a lack of research-based evidence to support much of the comment around public order offending. The Council recommends that relevant and useful information should be collected on a regular and coordinated basis across the agencies of the criminal justice system as well as from other relevant bodies which would seek, inter alia, to ascertain:
 - a. the extent of public order offending;
 - b. the link between alcohol consumption and public disorder; and
 - c. the costs associated with public order offending to a range of services including the health service, business and Local Authorities.

Currently, there is still no information on differentiating the types of public order offences and who or where they should be linked. This presents a difficulty for the nightclub industry. Public order offence statistics may include trespassing, domestic violence, trouble at house parties or even blackmail, extortion and demanding money with menaces. Public order offences are unquantifiable when associating them with nightclubs.

There are too many circumstances and hypothetical situations where public disorder can occur, and a nightclub gets labelled with the offence. Eugene McGovern stated in the *Introduction* chapter, 'We refuse more customers now, they are drinking at home and we feel they are, more and more coming to our doors too drunk'. More people are being refused entry into nightclubs. The nightclubs are acting responsibly by denying entry to customers who are too drunk, however, the customer who is refused entry may carry out a public order offence near the nightclub. This public order offence is attributed to the nightclub that acted responsibly.

The Minister for Justice Dermot Ahern said the intoxicating liquor act was designed, ‘To tackle public disorder and alcohol-related harm resulting from excessive alcohol consumption’ (Cullen 2008a:3). Rightly or wrongly, the Minister believed the act was been introduced to tackle public disorder. The NCC said in 2003, ‘There is a lack of research-based evidence to support much of the comment around public order offending’ (The National Crime Council 2003:19).

The fact is there is public disorder carried out in nightclubs and outside nightclubs. The argument that is presented here is how much is the nightclub industry at fault and how much do they contribute to it? How are they tackling the issue of public order? Do they liaise with the correct organisations and publics to deal with the issues? It is clear that public order offences are damaging the nightclub industry’s reputation. It is also clear that unqualified associations are made about the link between nightclubs and public order offences. How does the nightclub industry address the problem and can public relations, relationship management and communications help with the problem?

4.3 Internal Industry Reports

This section provides an account of the reports and studies that the nightclub industry has engaged in. This section shows documentary analysis of how the industry is dealing with the many issues that have been discussed to date in this exploration.

4.3.1 Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Proposed Regulation of the Nightclub Industry in Ireland

The *Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Proposed Regulation of the Nightclub Industry in Ireland* report is here after referred to as the ESIA report. This report was commissioned by the INIA in 2009 and the author is Dr. Constantin Gurdgiev of Trinity College, Dublin. Dr. Gurdgiev is the Head of Research with GT Consulting and Adjunct Lecturer in Finance. He is also the Head of European Strategy and Research with Heinz & Associates, the Chairman of the Ireland Russia Business Association and non-Executive Director of Business Finance Publications at Elevate Ltd.

The ESIA report is the first significant document review of the nightclub industry. The report has a number of functions but primarily it is used to assess the current legislative framework, and appraise the economic and social impacts of the INIA's proposal for the regulation of the industry. In the opening statement by Barry O'Sullivan he states:

We have and will continue to engage with government in a positive manner, in the hope that well thought-out legislation can be introduced in an effective and efficient manner. In the earlier part of this decade, we worked closely with the Commission on Liquor Licensing, and more recently with the Government Alcohol Advisory Group. We look forward to working with government and the other stakeholders in the spirit of partnership (ESIA 2009:2).

The document states their membership will strive to improve standards across a multitude of areas through knowledge, communication, training, and best-practice initiatives. They are mindful of assisting legislators with all levels of legislation, which will impact the industry.

The ESIA report analyses proposals by the INIA for introducing a nationwide nightclub permit, the re-introduction of entertainment during drinking up time and reforming the closing times to introduce a sequential closing and separate extended opening hours in the capital city, Dublin. ‘The objective of this assessment is to evaluate the economic and social impacts of proposals for reform in the regulation of the nightclub industry, as proposed by the INIA’ (ESIA 2009:5).

Firstly, the ESIA provides a review of the current regulatory and operational system that the industry works in. It opens by stating there is no such thing as a nightclub in Irish licensing legislation. It states that because of this, current licensing does not differentiate between ordinary licensed premises (pub, restaurant, hotel) and the more entertainment-focused nightclubs, ‘Overlooking differences that are physical, social, operational, and economic in their nature’ (ESIA 2009:11). It also states that these differences are explicitly recognised across the European Union, but not in Ireland indicating that Ireland has taken its own regulatory path distinct from its closest European counterparts. The ESIA report also compiled a reference group of countries that share similar social and demographic statistics to Ireland.

The courts in Ireland have the discretion to grant SEOs for earlier closing times if they wish. There are only two counties in Ireland where the maximum SEO closing time is achieved. The other 24 counties have closing times at either 1.30am or 2am, decided by the courts. The ESIA report (2009:7) states, ‘This puts exceptional pressure on the effective operating hours of nightclubs in Ireland, and shows a disparity between the letter and spirit of the law, and the application of the law’ (ESIA 2009:7).

The ESIA also highlights the increase in the cost of SEOs as an issue of concern in the current regulatory system. The ESIA report (2009:7) states the following:

The average nightclub in Dublin opens 5 nights a week, with an average of 11.5 effective operating hours per week. This costs over €106,000 in SEO fees per annum. The average nightclub outside the capital opens 4 nights a week, with an average of 7 effective operating hours per week. This costs over €85,000 in SEO fees per annum. In the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, the cost for a comparable late license, which permits longer trading hours, is approximately €2,500 per annum.

The proposed nightclub permit will have an annual €10,000 per operational night. For the average nightclub, this will mean an annual cost of €40,000, ‘Reflecting the reduced administrative burden, and the unsustainable fees at present’ (ESIA 2009:8).

The nightclub permit will yield a €10,000 per operational night. This is a unique stream of revenue (no other drinks retailing venues carry such a significant fee) that can aid the task of minimising the adverse effects of alcohol abuse on society and public order (ESIA 2009:27).

The ESIA (2009:6) also argues, ‘The nightclub industry sells approximately five per cent of all alcohol retailed in Ireland by value, less by volume, yet it shoulders almost seventy per cent of the total annual licensing costs levied on the on and off-trade combined’.

The report also shows that between 2000 and 2008, nightclubs in Ireland declined by 37 per cent. Over the same period bars grew by 300 percent. Despite the decline in nightclubs, SEOs being granted increased by 22 per cent. This information clearly indicates that late bars and nightclubs are in direct competition. 2008 was also the first year in Ireland when the off-trade sold more alcohol by volume than the on-trade (ESIA 2009:9).

The ESIA report details the comparable difference between the reference group countries and Ireland. All the reference group countries allow for operating hours and conditions for nightclubs that are distinct from ordinary licensed premises. The countries in the reference group also allow longer operating hours for nightclubs, with closing time typically between 3am and 6am.

Dublin Tourism chief executive in 2008, Frank Magee (cited ESIA 2009:13), stated:

We see from our European counterparts, that vibrant evening and night-time economies are nurtured not restricted. We support the INIA proposals, that promote responsible and safe socialising, will improve the customer experience, and further boost the vibrancy of our capital city.

The nightclub industry in Ireland entertains over 25 million adults per annum (ESIA 2009:17). To put this figure into perspective, it is 300 nightclubs operating four nights a week, over fifty-two weeks, with an average of 400 customers attending a nightclub each night. The top ten fee charging visitors attractions in Ireland combined together, received 5.7 million visitors in 2007 (ESIA 2009:17).

The development of a definition of a nightclub is also outlined as an objective by the INIA. The ESIA report outlines the definition of a nightclub in their proposal for reform of the regulation of the industry in Ireland. They define a nightclub as follows:

A nightclub is a premises, or part of a premises (hereinafter the “nightclub”), the primary purpose of which is for the provision of music, dancing and entertainment. The sale of intoxicating liquor for consumption on the premises is the secondary purpose. The premises must satisfy the following criteria and conditions:

1. The premises already benefits from an Ordinary Publican’s Licence (OPL)
2. The nightclub permit will set out fixed operating hours of between

10pm and 2.30am outside Dublin and 10pm to 4.00am in Dublin, standard across the week

3. The nightclub will be required to charge an admission fee upon entry using a ticketing system accessible for inspection by the Fire Services, Gardaí and the Revenue Commissioners
4. The nightclub will be required to set aside a designated dancing/entertainment area covering no less than 20% of the enclosed gross public area (excluding outdoor facilities) of the premises
5. The nightclub will provide for a minimum capacity of 400 patrons
6. The nightclub permit will be subject to the operating company holding a public liability insurance cover that is relevant to turnover and capacity
7. The nightclub will be required to provide at least two licensed security staff at the front door and a total of 1 licensed security person per 100 patrons in attendance.
8. The Nightclub Permit will be granted subject to the premises satisfying all Local Authority statutory requirements
9. All requirements as set out in the Intoxicating Liquor Acts, such as the CCTV, licensed security, Building Control Act compliance, and noise and nuisance provisions, must be complied with in addition to the above
10. The premises will already be licensed under the Public Dance Halls Act 1935, which will then be superseded by the Nightclub Permit, for nightclub licensing
11. The premises or part of the premises for which the nightclub permit is being sought will be clearly described in the permit application. Nightclub trading hours as detailed above, will only be applicable in the defined area (ESIA 2009:15,16).

The terms listed above are also proposals for the nightclub permit. The permit if sanctioned will be issued in addition to the Ordinary Publican's Licence. The permit will be valid for a period of one year and is renewable annually at the Annual Licensing Courts. The District Court will be the single authority responsible for licensing, registration, renewal and sanctioning of the permit. 'The introduction of a nightclub permit is expected to significantly enhance safety and public order provisions, security staffing, CCTV, premises specialisation and investment, and provision of less drink-focused entertainment' (ESIA 2009:30).

The ESIA report also outlines the social impacts of their proposed reforms. The report states that ‘Nightclubs operate under more strict security and safety regimes than the ordinary licensed premises...as international evidence suggests, alcohol consumption in the nightclub per person per hour is lower than in ordinary licensed premises or at home drinking’ (ESIA 2009:22).

The fallout from the rising share of alcohol purchased from off-licensed premises is that a growing proportion of alcohol consumption is out of the control of the retailer and the authorities, with a corresponding increase in alcohol being consumed by minors, greater pre-loading and post-loading and the domestication of alcohol associated anti-social behaviour (ESIA 2009:23).

The report states that under the current regulatory system there is deterioration in alcohol consumption controls. It predicts this will lead to larger social and economic risks to safety and public health. The report believes that the switch from consumption in the on-trade to the off-trade will lead to two problems of alcohol abuse:

1. Customers consuming large quantities of alcohol prior to going out.
2. Increasing alcohol consumption per hour of recreation as less time is allocated to entertainment (ESIA 2009:24).

The report states the proposed reforms would aid in efforts to address alcohol abuse by offering a less alcohol-focused form of late night entertainment in conjunction with sequential closing.

One of the objectives of the ESIA report is to detail the social and economic impact of sequential closing or staggered closing times. The report compares public order offences under the previous Theatre Licence arrangement that allowed nightclubs to stay open until 3.30am. It states that the arrangement had a positive impact on public

order offences citing The Garda B (Pearse Street Garda Station) District as evidence. It states the B District over the period of the Theatre Licence 2005 to 2008 showed a net effect of a decrease of 4.8 per cent in public order offences (cited in ESIA 2009:25).

The report (ESIA 2009:25) also states, ‘Any attempts to link public order offences with the availability of late hour licenses are too simplistic to explain the variation in the public order incidents both in time and across various regions’.

The ESIA report cites an example in Scotland where the Scottish National Plan for Action on Alcohol Problems (SNPAAP) made proposals to reduce alcohol related harm in Scotland. The new legislation incorporated five principles: ‘The prevention of crime and disorder; the promotion of public safety; the prevention of public nuisance; the promotion of public health; and the protection of children from harm’ (cited in ESIA 2009:27). A staggered closing time was identified as one of the major tools for achieving the SNPAAP goals.

According to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, ‘Sequential closing times are believed to be the second most effective non-penal means for preventing drunkenness in public places and the most preferred way of combating public drunkenness without resorting to direct restrictions on alcohol consumption’ (cited in ESIA 2009:27-8).

The economic aspect of the report shows that the proposed reforms would result in the creation of 1,650 full time jobs.

The resulting added tax revenues comprising corporation tax, PAYE and employment taxes, alcohol related VAT and non alcohol related VAT, and allowing for substitution effects and decreased annual licensing costs, are €50.4m per annum. The total added economic value, as a result of the proposed reforms are ca €94.8m pa (ESIA 2009:32).

In summary, the ESIA report proposes to recognise the difference between nightclubs and other licensed premises by the introduction of a nightclub permit. The cost structures for the industry are more reflective of the market share of alcohol sales in the country. The annual application for the permit would reduce the administrative burden for the courts and Gardaí. The extended operating hours and sequential closing would achieve economic and exchequer revenue growth. Introducing sequential closing is consistent with regulatory regimes for nightclubs operating in other European countries.

At the same time, the reforms offer significant opportunities to reduce the adverse effects of alcohol misuse, public disorder, binge drinking, pre and post-loading, and the resultant health consequences. The author outlines both domestic and international evidence that the introduction of sequential closing of licensed premises has a positive effect on public order (ESIA 2009:32).

The ESIA report is a comprehensive document that details a wide range of issues that the nightclub industry would like to address. The ESIA report is offered in this exploration to demonstrate the nightclub industry's action towards emerging issues. However, there have been no critical perspectives applied to the ESIA report. This in itself is perhaps a criticism because the document didn't gain enough national attention. However, there is some critical analysis that could be suggested of the report. The ESIA is seeking separate extended opening hours for the capital city, Dublin. Members of the INIA could be disillusioned as to why Dublin nightclubs are receiving special treatment and no other area gets these extended opening hours. The nightclub permit that is offered in this report was suggested to a Licensing Sergeant of An Gardaí during the

interview process and he felt the existing system in place worked fine. The ESIA document also cites public order statistics to support its argument for sequential closing yet public order offences are unquantifiable and unreliable.

The report, in the main identifies and offers solutions to some of the issues that have arisen in the previous sections of this chapter. The ESIA report also demonstrates that the INIA are actively pursuing better legislation and conditions for their industry. A change in these issues may positively impact the reputation of the industry by implementing outcomes that the report states. In addition, it demonstrates the INIA are implementing initiatives recommended in the *Literature Review* including issue management, relationship management and lobbying in public relations through communication that is discussed in the next chapter.

4.3.2 Nightsafe

The Nightsafe campaign was launched in July 2010 by the INIA. The campaign is aimed at raising standards in nightclubs across Ireland. The Minister for Justice and Law Reform, Dermot Ahern, welcomed the campaign, ‘I very much welcome the Nightsafe initiative. Its introduction will contribute to the safety and enjoyment of its members’ customers’ (Horan 2010:8).

Nightsafe is a national best-practice initiative and awards scheme for the Irish nightclub industry. It was developed and is managed by the INIA. ‘Nightsafe includes various policy documents, best-practice guidelines, reference documents, new and existing

training initiatives, as well as regulatory compliance guidance to help nightclub operators achieve the standards set by Nightsafe' (www.nightsafe.ie 2012).

Nightsafe promotes social responsibility among nightclub owners, operators and management. It rewards good management of discouraging binge drinking, helping prevent alcohol related crime, and promoting safe social nights out.

The ultimate aim and benefit of Nightsafe is to improve the night-time experience for nightclub customers and indeed all people out socialising late at night, local residents and business communities, and all other stakeholders in the day, evening and night-time economies (www.nightsafe.ie 2012).

The goals of Nightsafe are:

- Set and raise standards in the nightclub industry
- Promote sensible, safe and sociable nights out
- Reduce alcohol related harm issues such as binge drinking and public disorder
- Ultimately improve the late night experience in Ireland (www.nightsafe.ie 2012).

Nightsafe identifies a number of benefits offered to the business and operator. It helps the management team comply with regulations governing the sector and best-practices in the industry. It sends a clear message to the local Gardaí and judiciary that you run a safe and responsible nightclub. It also sends a clear message to customers about the nightclub and what the nightclub expects of their customers behaviour. In addition, nightclubs that achieve the Nightsafe award can access an insurance scheme, specifically tailored for Nightsafe operators.

Nightsafe evaluates nightclubs under four distinct headings:

- Prevention of crime and disorder – this heading is sub-divided into further headings including crowd control, security, drunkenness, drugs, theft/burglary and disorder.
- Public safety – this heading is sub-divided into further headings including capacity management, fire safety, first aid, special events, glass collection, building safety and transport information.
- Prevention of public nuisance – this heading is sub-divided into further headings including noise, nuisance and litter/waste.
- Protection of children from harm – this heading is sub-divided into further headings including sale of alcohol and online activity (www.nightsafe.ie 2012).

Under each of these headings there are a number of essential criteria that must be completed in order to achieve the Nightsafe standard. Each venue that applies for Nightsafe will be independently audited against the criteria listed. The criteria must be met before the award is accredited.

To be accredited the Nightsafe standard; it is a requirement to have written documents to support the following:

- Drugs policy – The policy guideline covers developing a drugs policy for the venue. The policy should include training staff on awareness of drugs and drug use. Signage to the effect of preventing drug use and drug dealing. Proper supervision to deal with drug use and drug dealing. Emergency protocols in dealing with drug use and drug dealing.

- Fire and emergency procedures – In line with the Code of Practice for the management of Fire Safety in places of assembly, the procedures should include: management duties, staff training, fire prevention, fire and evacuation drills, informing the public, escape routes, assisting the fire brigade and keeping records to this effect. To achieve Nightsafe requires more than compliance, best-practice is expected.
- Security manual/handbook – This policy document will include codes of conduct guidelines. The document will also cover communications and reporting, opening and closing procedures, positioning and duties, dealing with customers, conflict management and resolution, physical intervention, CCTV and first aid and emergency procedures.
- Crowd control policy – Guidance is offered in covering a wide range of elements which affect effective crowd control. The policy document should cover environmental issues such as design and layout of the venue, lighting, CCTV, noise control and ventilation. Other operational issues include capacity management and control, staffing, incident management, communication, crowd control such as congregation and dispersal policy.
- Risk, incident and claims management policy – This policy document helps identify risk and outlines steps to reduce and minimise the probability of risk taking place. It outlines the steps necessary when that risk does take place. It will outline how you deal with the incident, the follow up procedures and any claims arising from the incident.
- Noise control – This document must outline an overview of noise, the risks, the exposure levels, your responsibilities, noise risk assessments, control measures, hearing protection and provision of information and training.

- Responsible serving of alcohol policy – This policy document will cover the key provisions of the Responsible Serving of Alcohol policy. The document will include training in the control measures required by security, bar staff and management. The document will include the responsible marketing, promotion and serving of alcohol (www.nightsafe.ie 2012).

Nightsafe aims to improve the night-time experience for nightclubs, customers and publics impacted by the industry. ‘Through improved safety, reduced crime, and reduced alcohol abuse, Nightsafe benefits those involved in law enforcement, and also those dealing with the after effects of alcohol abuse and alcohol related crimes’ (www.nightsafe.ie 2012). Since the launch of Nightsafe there are currently five venues out of 300 in Ireland that have achieved the award. This is a low figure of awards. This may be due to the various different criteria and time that is needed to meet the standards required to achieve the award. It may also be due to the lethargy of nightclubs to meet the criteria required in achieving the award. This will be discussed further in the following chapters. Additionally, interviews show that Nightsafe is broadly unknown by non-affiliates of the industry and this is also discussed in the following chapters. Nightsafe does demonstrate that the industry are taking action on some of its more concerning issues.

4.3.3 Licence Fees and Commercial Viability in the Nightclub Industry

The *Licence Fees and Commercial Viability in the Nightclub Industry* report is here after referred to as the LFCV report. This report was commissioned by the INIA in 2011 and the author is Anthony Foley of Dublin City University. Anthony Foley is a senior

lecturer and head of the economics finance and entrepreneurship group in Dublin City University. Prior to joining DCU, he worked in the Department of Finance, the National and Economic Social Council, Dublin Corporation and the Economic and Social Research Institute.

The objectives of the LFCV report (LFCV 2011:3) are:

- To identify and assess the impact of special exemption orders/licence fees on the commercial viability of nightclubs
- To identify recent economic trends and performance in the nightclub industry
- To identify the taxation revenue implications of the recent performance
- Evaluate the jobs impact of the current SEO fee, and of the proposed reduction to €200

The methodology applies a quantitative and qualitative approach in the LFCV report. A survey was issued where 62 nightclubs out of 300 responded. Interviews were also held with four nightclubs to obtain detailed financial operating costs and tax revenue associated with the operation of nightclubs. The survey includes roughly 20 per cent of the nightclub industry, including members and non-members of the INIA. The LFCV report opens with the current licensing arrangements. As this has not changed since the ESIA report or my own research there is no need to discuss this again. However, the report brings new figures published by the Revenue Commissioners that states:

Table 1.3 – Table of Annual Licensing Costs

<u>Licensed Activity</u>	<u>Trading Hours per week</u>	<u>Annual Licensing Costs</u>
Off-Licence	78.5	€1,500
Ordinary Publican's Licence	90	€3,805
Nightclub	18	€148,000

Source: LFCV report. Foley, A., 2011:5

The LFCV report states there has been a considerable decline in the volume of business in the nightclub industry. ‘The overall decline in nightclub economic activity is determined by the decline in number of nightclubs, the decline in the number of nights operated by nightclubs and the decline in revenue per night of operation’ (LFCV 2011:5).

In 2007 nightclubs operated on average 4.2 nights a week and in 2010 this had reduced to 2.7 nights a week. This is a decline of 36.5 per cent in the number of nights operated. The report states that the INIA estimate that there were 430 nightclubs in 2006 and in 2012 there are 300. In 2007 the number of applications for SEOs were 90,691 and in 2009 this had declined to 64,011. ‘Unfortunately nightclubs are not separately identified from ordinary publican licences in these statistics from the Courts Service Annual Reports’ (LFCV 2011:7).

Relatively conservative assumptions are to assume that nightclubs accounted for 75% of SEOs in 2007 and that the number of nightclub SEOs declined by 40% between 2007 and October 2010. This results in a decline of 27,207 nights. It is reasonable to assume that the bulk of the lost nights were in low

demand/turnover nights. On the assumption that average revenue per lost night is €2,000, the 27,000 lost nights account for a revenue loss of €54m. This is a low estimate since we know that some of the decline was due to closures which would have included busy nights as well as low demand nights. Consequently the €54m loss of revenue is a conservative estimate (LFCV 2011:7).

The report attributes the decline in the number of nights to several factors on both the supply and demand sides. The economy entering a severe recession is cited as a factor. Consequently demand for nightclub services declined. This reduction in demand pushed the weaker nights beyond commercial breakeven point. The LFCV report argues ‘The increase in the SEOs increased the cost of supply and may have resulted in previously viable low demand nights becoming non-viable’ (LFCV 2011:8).

The LFCV report estimates that a reduction in the SEO cost from €410 to €200 would increase an additional 20,000 operational nights. This would equate to 330 full time jobs composed of eight people working five hours a night. The extra employment would improve the exchequer finances by €1.7m. ‘The reduced SEO fee would contribute to the protection of the existing 2,400 jobs in the sector. The decline since 2007 of 27,000 nightclub-operating nights is associated with the loss of approximately 600 jobs’ (LFCV 2011:9).

The report states that for a nightclub operating on a weaker or break even night, the revenue generated in income tax, Pay Related Social Insurance, Value Added Tax and excise is about €520. The effect of the €410 fee for a licence prevents the operator opening, resulting in a loss of €520 to the exchequer. A reduced fee of €200 would allow operators to open on the breakeven night and contribute a positive impact on exchequer revenue despite the lower licence fee (LFCV 2011:11).

The LFCV report offers more detailed financial assessment than is detailed in this summary. It identifies the benefits that could be achieved for the industry and the exchequer by a decrease in the existing SEO cost. The purpose of the report for this exploration is to highlight what the industry is doing about the increased SEO. SEOs do not directly affect the reputation of the nightclub industry, however the report demonstrates that the INIA have engaged in lobbying government and this is discussed in the remaining chapters. If they are applying correct public relations and lobbying practices to this report could they apply the same practices to addressing its reputation through public relations and lobbying?

4.4 Analysis – Documents, Journals and Reports

This chapter has provided evidence that exists in the public domain on the nightclub industry. This evidence has provided multiple perspectives on the general portrayal and perception of the industry. Throughout the chapter issues are identified that impact on the reputation of the industry. These issues are analysed now and in the remaining chapters and are guided by recommendations from the *Literature Review*.

This chapter has identified a differential in alcohol pricing structures that has caused an inequity to exist in Irish legislation. Fionnuala Sheehan, CEO of Mature Enjoyment of Alcohol in Society (MEAS) and drinkaware.ie states, ‘What I would say is this, and we would be very clear on this, that there is an inequity in regulation in Ireland between the on and off-trade. There is no doubt about that’. This inequity is currently the catalyst for pre-loading and at home drinking. This issue is a cause for concern for the future of the industry. Pubs compete with nightclubs as a result of trading hours lost to pre-loading.

Pubs are now applying for SEOs that allow them to stay open for the same duration as nightclubs, becoming direct competitors. The *Findings - Interviews* chapter will explore what the industry is doing to combat the inequity with regards to using public relations, relationship management and lobbying?

Another issue for the industry, is how there appears to be a genuine concern among the community if nightclubs sell cheap alcohol and this concern is not expressed when supermarkets or off-licences engage in the same practice. Barry O'Sullivan of the INIA explains:

From a public's perspective, when you're talking to a politician, he doesn't seem to be overly concerned that you can buy a bottle of Miller for 70 cent and he is not concerned because his constituents are not concerned. Politicians or consumers are not concerned that you can buy a bottle of wine for €3. Unfortunately when you bring that into the on-trade, and we saw this in Letterkenny recently where a nightclub started selling units of alcohol for 99 cent. There was public outcry that this was going to specifically target a young audience...and in their opinion this was going to lead to binge drinking, public disorder and all of that. So pricing doesn't seem to be a sensitive issue for the off-trade in particular, when you bring that on to a licensed premises there seems to be a lot more media attention and public concern around cheap alcohol being sold.

The nightclub industry has tried to express its own concerns by producing documents to highlight the impact and extent to which this inequity is damaging their industry. However, evidence from non-affiliate interviewees shows the documents are relatively unheard of. Evidence throughout the findings in both documents and interviews showed that the nightclub industry would welcome a minimum price on drink, but this must be across the off-trade and on-trade. Eugene McGovern of *The Foundry* nightclub describes:

We were asked at our last INIA meeting did we want to make a submission on the budget and we said there should be a minimum price order on the off-trade and the on-trade. We felt if there should be one for the off-trade then there should be one for the on-trade.

The Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008 and the loss of trading hours are cited in the LFCV report as direct causes for the closure and loss of jobs in the nightclub industry. It should be noted the economic decline also likely had an impact on this. There is evidence that politicians believed this act would either reduce public order offences or increase public order offences. Because of the ambiguity that exists on public order statistics, it is hard to quantify either argument. The ESIA report offers domestic and international evidence that the introduction of staggered or sequential closing would have a positive impact on the social public order offences. This point is debatable and explored in the next chapter. The ESIA and LFCV reports both state economic exchequer benefits by the introduction of sequential closing. But again, both documents did not have the major impact that the industry was hoping for.

Nightsafe and the ESIA report both outline procedures that would help the industry in improving social and public order problems. One thing for certain is the repealing of The Groceries Order Act 1987 and the introduction of the Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008 have both contributed to a major change in the landscape of the night-time offering and economy in Ireland. Retired Garda Detective Inspector and Crime Correspondent with the Evening Herald, Gerry O'Carroll has stated:

Something the legislators never envisaged was that nightclubs would be rather benign sort of social atmospheres, where people are more likely to behave themselves in a more respectful and courteous way, the norms of ordinary society. Whereas freed from the shackles of having to behave in their homes where they can gorge their cheap liquor, they have no limits. There has been a huge upsurge in domestic violence and especially where young people invite

dozens of other like-minded people and this has ended up in riots and murders...Over the past two years I can recollect serious disturbances that include multiple stabbings, murders and manslaughters. It's becoming a terrifying phenomenon, house parties.

Pre-loading and house parties before a night out are more likely to contribute to nuisance and disturbance in the community according to the ESIA report and interviews. Interviews suggest that more people are being refused entry to nightclubs for being too drunk. This accounts for more drunk people on the streets and the increased likelihood of public disorder. Evidence from interviewees suggests the restrictive nature of the closing times leads to volatility and potential flashpoints at taxi ranks and takeaway services. The nightclub industry has identified these problems in their reports. Additionally the Nightsafe programme has identified areas where they can try to tackle the problem of public disorder through responsible serving of alcohol and the refusal of drunken customers. The number of premises awarded Nightsafe raises debate, a small number have been awarded the standard and this is concerning. However, the difficulty in achieving the standard adds more credibility in that the standards are high in achieving the award. Is there a real will of the nightclubs to achieve these difficult high standards?

The practices of some nightclubs have also clearly shown evidence of corporate irresponsibility. Pad-locking emergency exits and negligible fire, health and safety practices are reckless and dangerous. Carlow Councillor Jennifer Murnane O'Connor states, 'At the end of the day, safety of people is the most important thing and making sure that if something did happen everybody is able to exit safely'. These rogue operators that practice unsafe operations tarnish the reputation of the industry for everyone involved. The INIA are improving health, fire and safety regulations

constantly within the industry. Initiatives such as Nightsafe promote and reward the practices. However the industry could be more proactive in condemning those that have conducted negligible practices and seeking licences to be revoked if it is a regular occurrence. These actions by the industry would demonstrate social responsibility and promote a caring side of the industry.

Additionally the INIA have set out grounds for noise exposure and regulation in the Nightsafe initiative. It is evident that noise remains a constant problem for publics that are living near to nightclubs. It is also evident from this chapter that the industry is not dealing with this problem sufficiently. Under the guidance of public relations and relationship management, these publics should be engaged with. This engagement and communication would demonstrate a new attitude by the nightclubs, one where they are prepared to meet and genuinely discuss issues of concern with the public. This would demonstrate the qualities of 'A good citizen, doing things right'.

The Nightsafe initiative promotes a drugs policy guideline. These guidelines are to improve how a nightclub tackles the issue of drugs in their venue. Evidence in this chapter shows that drugs are still part of the nightclub scene and interview evidence suggests it is still a major concern for non-affiliates of the industry. The industry may have felt aggrieved that they bore the brunt of the impact of the *Prime Time* investigation. However, ultimately the industry did not sufficiently deal with the drug problem by engaging proactively and positively with the issue. Until the industry is seen to be clearly and publicly addressing the issue of drugs, drugs will continue to negatively effect the reputation of the industry.

The INIA and nightclubs are seeking a nightclub permit that will define 'nightclub' in Irish legislation. They are hoping to introduce reforms that will improve the industry both socially and economically. They are extremely worried about the viability and continuation of their industry. Since the ESIA and LFCV reports have been conducted, and the introduction of the Nightsafe initiative, the government have still not addressed any of the immediate issues. This is a concern for the industry because they might be trying to do the right things, but are they doing them in the right manner to achieve their goals? The Sale of Alcohol Bill has long been talked about in addressing these issues but its introduction in 2010 was delayed and no date has been put on its enactment. Public relations and its practices can help assist in achieving industry goals. This chapter has shown that nightclub owners are actively addressing their issues but whether they are addressing them correctly has not been established. In the next chapter, interviews with INIA members, affiliates and non-affiliate members of the nightclub industry will tell us if public relations and reputation management are practiced and to what extent.

CHAPTER 5: BEHIND CLOSED DOORS – INTERVIEWS

5.1 Findings – Interviews

Public relations is identified by the interviewees affiliated with nightclubs as the single thing that can help the industry on the issue of reputation. Barry O’Sullivan, of the INIA, was asked if public relations could help the reputation of the industry and he answered, ‘Absolutely. It is the single thing that can help us. I guess the challenge that we face particularly with public relations is misperception, bad perceptions and misconceptions about our industry’.

This chapter presents the findings of the interviews conducted in the primary research. The objective of this exploration is to research the practices of the nightclub industry and see how they effect its reputation. Communication, public relations, reputation management, publics, relationship management, crisis and issue management all contribute to gaining an overall understanding of the reputation of the nightclub industry.

These practices were analysed in the interviews using keywords and the interpretations of keywords by interviewees are compared and contrasted. Additionally, emerging and reoccurring keywords that affect the industry’s reputation became evident such as media relations and the identity of the industry. These are also discussed in the remaining chapters.

5.1.1 Reputation Management

This section explores the findings on the industry's reputation. It analyses the affiliates and non-affiliates view of the nightclub industry and offers potential solutions to improve the reputation. In the first step of reputational management, an audit must occur and this section of the research lends itself to an audit of the nightclub industry.

According to Barry O'Sullivan of the INIA:

When politicians and publics think of a nightclub owner, for some reason they think of a long haired middle aged man with an ear ring, whom may not be as upstanding as other business operators in the community. They may have misconceptions regarding tax compliance and various other negative images associated to the nightclub operator. By contrast, hoteliers are seen as offering accommodation to the weary travelers, and the publican is someone who gives the thirsty traveler a drink providing a homely story and an easy ear. Restaurateurs are quite highly regarded. Amazingly, nightclubs really exist in hotels, restaurants and pub complexes around the country. So the publican, hotelier, restaurateur and nightclub operator are usually the same person. The perception of nightclub operators is a negative one.

Fionnuala Sheehan, of MEAS and drinkaware.ie, was asked about her opinion on the reputation of the industry and she gave another view on the matter, 'I'm not sure that those who would comment on it always distinguish the nightclub element, let's say from the regular pub or hotel, where alcohol is served'. This is qualified even more in a later question regarding reputation:

I would go beyond that in fact. And say in circumstances, where irresponsible promotions are being conducted by any licensee, within the broader on-trade industry, they will impact negatively on the nightclub sector. Politicians and the media do not necessarily distinguish between nightclubs and other on-trade premises.

This suggestion by Sheehan is a concern for the industry. Sheehan and O'Sullivan have slightly conflicting opinions but they both agree that there is a level of ambiguity and

confusion about the industry among the people who have power and influence. The above statements suggest that the reputation of the industry and its operators is one of confusion and misconception. This opinion is also shared by other interviewees both affiliated and non-affiliated with the industry. Hon and Grunig (1990:26) state in relationship management, 'By measuring the perceived quality of relationships, we can measure the relational forces that usually explain why organisations have good or bad reputations'. The ambiguity and misconception that is evident contributes to the reputation of the individual nightclubs and the industry as a whole. The quality of relationships is not good when there is confusion over the identity of the industry. This leads to asking about the general perception of the industry.

All interviewees felt that the nightclub industry had garnered a poor to average reputation. Eugene McGovern, General Manager of *The Foundry* nightclubs, Waterford and Carlow, explains, 'I would say it has improved but it was improving from the bottom'. Barry O'Sullivan believes the reputation is not hugely reflective of what the industry is. The Connaught representative who wished to remain anonymous, believes that, 'People may still blame the nightclub industry for the root of all night-time evil. It has abated quite a bit but we do not want it to get back up to the level it was'.

Carlow Solicitor, John O'Sullivan who deals with cases for and against the industry, states of the reputation, 'I would say it is a mixed bag. In certain areas it is very positive and in other areas, it is very negative. There is a certain level of apprehension regarding the industry. It has a twilight quality that other industries do not have'. Retired Garda Detective and Crime Correspondent with the Evening Herald, Gerry O'Carroll stated, 'I would say the reputation in rural areas is not favourable. A lot of locals are wary, and

shy away from the industry, and parents would too. A lot of it is exaggerated, but it scares them'. Fionnuala Sheehan from MEAS was asked if she had seen a difference in the reputation of the industry, since her time as CEO of MEAS and she answered:

We received a disproportionate number of complaints to us in relation to nightclub premises, prior to the appointment of a CEO to the INIA. So that development stands out as a positive one for the sector. It has helped focus the sector on what it is about and how it should manage itself, vis-à-vis all of its stakeholders, from the customer through to the state. And that's not to say it's perfect, it's not perfect, certainly, it's a work in progress.

Ronan Farren, public relations executive with Q4 Public Relations, Dublin, who worked along with the INIA on public relations initiatives including the *Licence Fees and Commercial Viability in the Nightclub Industry* (LFCV) report and Nightsafe, explained his belief as to why he thinks the industry has the reputation it does:

I think there is a lack of understanding of the sector and I do not think nightclubs in Ireland are seen as central to a night out or to how we socialise and engage. We are so much more pub-focused here in Ireland. Ireland doesn't have a reputation, as a destination for nightclubs. Ireland is strongly identified with the pub and the pub been central to both the community and social basis.

Farren states that Ireland doesn't have a reputation as a destination for nightclubs and is more pubs focused. This would imply, given that some 25 million people attend nightclubs annually according to the *Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Proposed Regulation of the Nightclub Industry in Ireland* (ESIA) report, that there is a flaw in communicating this information to the necessary publics. Ireland is a destination for nightclubs, but this reputation is not conveyed.

Nigel Tynan, Editor of *Licensing World*, states that the landscape of drinking has changed in Ireland and this may have reputational consequences for the industry:

How we, as a nation, socialise has radically changed. Cocooning, namely consumers choosing to socialise and gather at home instead of in traditional licensed premises, has moved from a trend to a de facto component of Irish culture. This trend has been driven by economic decline, however the rise of cheaper alcohol in supermarkets has majorly contributed. As a result the 18-25 year old generation, the traditional primary nightclub customer base, has a fundamentally different approach to socialising. They prefer to go out later, pre-loaded from drinking alcohol at home, and use nightclubs primarily as a destination for dance and scoring. For the nightclub operator, this is not good news.

Interviewees suggest the industry has a poor reputation. Their opinion was asked, as to what particularly contributes to this reputation. Eugene McGovern, *The Foundry* nightclubs and Michael Crossan, owner and operator of *The Pulse* nightclub, Letterkenny, both believe that the media play a central role in the reputation of the nightclub industry by putting a slant on stories and including a nightclub's name where they can. All evidence suggests the media does play a role in the reputation of the industry.

There are some differences of opinion on the media's contribution to the reputation of the industry. Esther Hayden, journalist with the *Carlow People*, states that in most cases journalists only report on, 'What they have heard in court'. Hayden does however accept that, 'There are times where there might be one-off-incidents. The courts are factual reporting, but certain stories I can see why it's a handy headline'.

Will Burton, free lance journalist, Letterkenny, furthers this statement that nightclubs might gain a negative reputation through poor media coverage:

Yes it could be true, nightclubs can be added to a story and gain negative connotations. It does cast a black cloud over a nightclub but that needs to be qualified because you can't have a story without a what, where and when. A juicier story can be, they were outside a nightclub, as opposed to, they came from home.

The Connaught nightclub owner describes the media as, 'They are pretty fair to be honest'. Barry O'Sullivan describes the difficulty with the media as, 'We try to tell some positive stories on what the industry is, the taxes that we pay etc. More often than not from the media perspective, not the story we want to talk about but the story the media are portraying is typically different or negative'. Fionnuala Sheehan demonstrates a similar understanding of the media:

The Irish media is predisposed to bad news and sensationalist stories. That's not unusual. We see it in so many other jurisdictions. It's a very full space, there's scarcely a day when there's not someone reporting on some aspect of alcohol and we tend to hear only the bad news stories. Half of Irish 16 year olds were not regular drinkers in 2011. This is a very significant drop on the percentage recorded in 2003. That fact has not been reported. It is regrettable because teenagers gain an inaccurate perception of the drinking norms within their peer group. Their perception, gained from media coverage, is that there is a much higher rate of regular drinking going on. The problem with that is that teens tend to aspire to the norms they perceive within their peer group and behave in accordance with that inaccurate perception.

However, Farren of Q4 Public Relations argues that:

The media aren't going to go away, and they're going to have an interest in these particular stories so you have to find a way of dealing with them. Secondly you have to profile the good things about your industry or business, getting Anthony Foley to do reports, then talking about the report and talking about the wider issues. So you go to the media with the issues where you are strong.

Licensing World editor, Nigel Tynan says, 'There is no portrayal of the sector until something notably bad occurs. No element of the licensed sector in Ireland can afford a degradation of reputation and greater vigilance is needed to avoid further poor publicity'. Gerry O'Carroll was asked his opinion on the fairness of the portrayal by the media and he argued:

Over the years I would have to say, I have not witnessed or experienced or read in my personal life, or as a Garda, or as a columnist, or as an investigator, I haven't experienced any bias in the media towards the nightclub industry. Never, strangely enough, despite all the bad publicity it gets, mostly from court reporters. All they are doing is reporting the facts. As for any personal vendetta or campaigns by newspapers, no, never targeted against the industry.

In the research, we have seen media stories where the industry may have felt aggrieved, including the headline, 'Cocaine Traces in 90pc of Clubs and Pubs' (Irish Independent 2007:6). The story particularly focused on nightclubs, while pubs and workplaces were relatively unmentioned in the story. But we have also seen media stories, where the industry is supported, including the legislation story, 'Calling Time on the Nightclub' (Holland 2008:19). This issue of the media is discussed in more throughout the remaining chapters, but in relationship management, trust and competency are highlighted as the belief one party has to the others ability to do what it says. This view is conflicted amongst interviewees. Interviewees both affiliated and non-affiliated then raised concerns about legislation and its contribution to reputation.

I have dealt with the impact of legislation throughout this research, and the effect it has had on the reputation of the industry. John O'Sullivan compared the legislation governing drinking in Ireland to a child playing with plasticine, 'We'll stick a bit on here and a bit on there and so forth. They should be occupying the Dáil about it, because it is creating massive social problems, and it is unfairly attributed to their industry'.

Barry O'Sullivan believes that the issue of legislation has greatly affected the reputation of the industry:

We have been forced to operate in these loopholes and historically it had to be a function room in a hotel or restaurant that served food in order to obtain a late night license, and historically that hasn't created a positive image of the

industry. Unfortunately, every piece of legislation for the past 20 odd years out of government has had this accumulative effect on our reputation.

A common statement that occurred throughout the exploration is, ‘The licensing laws are deliberately grey’. Ronan Farren believes this is because, ‘It suits a lot of people. It suits the authorities. It suits publicans. Any attempt to rock, change, or make things very defined, can cause a huge amount of problems’. Eugene McGovern argues:

We have spent the last number of years trying to get the government to understand our business. Unfortunately, we came from non-alcoholic ballrooms into alcoholic ballrooms, and that is the way things unfolded over the years. I do not believe the government understands what it is all about.

These arguments above and in the previous section have given us a diagnostic review and understanding of the nightclub industry’s current reputation. The questions ‘How could the industry’s reputation be improved?’ and ‘Where do you see the future of nightclubbing going regarding reputation?’ was put to interviewees to help define a desired future reputational state.

Eugene McGovern says:

I believe we have some excellent operators, but we also have the opposite to those operators. We find, that through the INIA, we try to put structures in place and membership in place and have people adhering to the best principles and practices. It certainly has difficulties with regards to the image and portrayal, and unfortunately some of it is justifiable. Our PR machine costs a lot of money to run and members are not willing to pay for it. That is a problem. It won’t certainly be changed in a long time; it will take money first, hard work and an excellent PR company. I would fear for the future of us as an organisation, to keep a good positive spin on it. We have made great improvements for nightclubs and trying to portray a positive image. It will only improve with the willingness of the operators and investment and it won’t any other way. We have a long road and a difficult road ahead.

Councillor Jennifer Murnane O'Connor believes that continued practice of health and safety, and the demonstration of these practices will help the reputation of the industry grow. She also thinks that until the industry addresses the problem of drugs, its reputation will always be affected. Gerry O'Carroll, also believes drugs are 'The elephant in the room', when it comes to the reputation of the industry. He did state other reasons, that he felt contributed more to the industry's reputation, but believed that the industry and its reputation will always be tarnished with drugs.

Holly Prior of *The Wright Venue* says:

Each nightclub has a duty to itself and its own customers, to ensure that once they walk in, the nightclub takes care of them. Duty of care to the customer is really important and I think it's reinforcing that and allowing people to know that we do care about the customer and we want them to have an enjoyable experience. I think that if people in the industry knew how to communicate in a proper manner, they could facilitate the reputation growing in a positive way. I do think that, if you communicate in a proactive manner, it will aid the reputation growing in a better way.

Both Gerry O'Carroll and John O'Sullivan believe that until the issues of public disorder and sequential closing are addressed, they will blight the image and reputation of the industry. John O'Sullivan states, 'At two o'clock, everyone empties onto the streets. People are drunk and there may be substance abuse, and there is definitely going to be trouble. Until this is addressed the industry will always struggle to shake off the association with public order offences and its reputation'. Gerry O'Carroll states:

People, parents and especially the Gardaí would say, they dread that moment when, and I remember it from my own time working in Dublin, when we got the difficulties and when the activity began, and when we were busiest, for the hour after the nightclubs disgorged their patrons onto the streets...So on sequential closing, that argument is already won where I'm concerned. I have heard my colleagues, when I was out on duty in Dublin as a uniform and as a detective, on

umpteen occasions we had surmised and discussed among ourselves the merits of sequential closing. We came down firmly in favour of it. It would instantly be more preferable. It would certainly alleviate the pressures on the Gardaí. It would cut down on public antisocial behaviour and ultimately improve the reputation of nightclubs. It's something that should be seriously, seriously considered.

Barry O'Sullivan believes:

In terms of reputation and politics in a broader sense, it's a slow and arduous project. The media is certainly one of the most challenging issues because it's information and misinformation i.e. using the word nightclub in relation to any sort of violence or late night argument or incident of public disorder. Obviously we try to engage with the media broadly to say look this is what we do, we are late night entertainment, and here are the attributes of being a nightclub...I think, the problem or one of the problems involved is, a nightclub operator getting involved with PR is typically reluctant to get involved with anything that could be construed as contentious. Not to sound too negative about the reputation of the industry, from a consumer's perspective, the reputation of the industry has changed hugely for the positive. Young people now have traveled abroad and seen many nightclubs and how good they can be and operators have risen to that challenge so to speak. Certainly the operators that are doing well now have invested hugely in their products. I think from a consumer's perspective and not just the reputation, the industry standards have changed hugely for the better over the last ten years.

There are several issues of concern in auditing the nightclub industry's reputation that have been raised here. There are also several recommendations on how to address the reputation of the industry. The next section looks at the public relation practices that are used and how they affect or can affect the reputation.

5.1.2 Public Relations

One of the nightclubs involved in this research said they did not practice any public relations. All other nightclubs practiced what they described as public relations at some level. The levels of public relations varied from nightclub to nightclub. The most common tools used by nightclubs practicing public relations are press releases, photo-

calls and promotional publicity. Additionally, lobbying and engagement with stakeholders and publics is practiced. The INIA itself was the most advanced in the practice of public relations.

Of the nightclubs that practiced public relations there was a mix between in-house and outsourced public relations. *The Foundry*, Carlow and Waterford, *The Wright Venue* and the INIA employed both in-house and outsourced public relations. Barry O’Sullivan described the use of public relations in the INIA:

We practice public relations in its simplest form, by employing public relation experts who do various things for us in terms of monitoring media, press releases, trying to implement policy with our stakeholders and policy makers. Plus on the lobbying side of it, we represent an industry, and using various tools try to bring that industry together in a unified and singular message.

Eugene McGovern, states on his in-house public relations, ‘We practice it somewhat’ and ‘It’s not an area we devote a lot of money and time’. He states his preference for out-sourcing is, ‘For two reasons, there is a trust problem with the media number one, and number two we are not professional enough to do it.’ Demonstrating his lack of trust in communicating with the media he explains:

I suppose looking from the inside out, nightclubs always shied away from public relations, especially with the written media. They can put a spin on it that doesn’t actually get the message across and we have learned that over the years.

Selina Regazozoli, corporate sales manager with *The Wright Venue*, Dublin, states:

We work in-house on public relations and we would have a lot of outsourced public relations. We do a lot of outsourcing for specific projects. With crisis management and certain things like that, the public relations practitioners are more used to it.

The Connaught nightclub owner and operator states, 'We practice public relations in-house and always have done since we started. We have a marketing department and put together our own marketing plans to communicate with customers'. There is evidence here of the confusion between marketing and public relations. Other interviewees have highlighted misconceptions about public relations in the industry. One interviewee claimed to practice public relations by handing out flyers and putting up posters. This is not public relations. However some elements and understanding of public relations is demonstrated by interview affiliates of the industry.

Non-affiliates give their opinion on the matter. Gerry O'Carroll was asked his opinion on the public relation practices that he has witnessed from the industry. He answered:

I do not think they are doing themselves any favours. As far as I know they have no central body, they have no central mechanism. They do not have spin-doctors or public relations practitioners and they rarely get a forum. In other words, I believe they're not really organised as an industry and certainly they have done nothing to combat bad news and bad publicity, and indeed incidents that quite often, nine times out of ten, are not of their own making. So they do themselves a disservice, by not having a more professional response or a better relationship with the media... (When informed about the INIA, Nightsafe and reports) I have never heard of this organisation. It seems to me to be terrific initiatives but sorry they're keeping their light under a bushel... They need to address how they can, through public relations, cope with the fallout from incidents.

Councillor Murnane O'Connor had a similar view to O'Carroll:

The industry has to promote themselves, there are as many good stories as there are bad. They probably do not highlight it enough, sponsoring soccer teams and contributing to charities... I am not aware of Nightsafe and I think they need to work on that more. If these people are doing good work it should be recognised.

Fionnuala Sheehan was aware of the practices of public relations by the industry, 'I would be very aware of the Nightsafe training programme. It received good publicity when it was launched but I am not aware of any similar initiative since then'.

The opinion of non-affiliates demonstrated a mixed response to nightclubs and the industry's practice of public relations. Other public relation activities were discussed. John O'Sullivan says, 'I'd be aware if they do something in the community, sponsor teams etc. and I am aware of Nightsafe...But, from a PR point of view I think the difficulty they have is with lobbying. You have a disparate lobby group. People presume they have a strong lobby group, they do not and that is a problem'.

Interviewees discussed lobbying as a public relations practice. Barry O'Sullivan believes lobbying is an important tool for the industry, 'A lot of what we are trying to do is inform people about the industry. I have met three government Ministers, two Garda Commissioners and many high-ranking Gardai, hundreds of TDs at this stage'.

The main reason O'Sullivan insists the industry use lobbying is because:

We have technically been born out of loopholes as an industry. There is no such thing as a nightclub in this country in the legal definition. That is a problem that successive governments have failed to deal with. Technically we are licensed under the Public Dance Hall Act of 1935. The dance halls that our parents and grandparents went to back in the 1930s,40s and 50s are a polar mile away from what nightclubs actually are these days. I suppose one of the reasons that perceptions are out there is that nightclubs have never legally been permitted or legally defined.

Ronan Farren profiled the LFCV report carried out by Anthony Foley and the INIA. Farren brought the report to government for discussion. The aim was to win government support in the reduction of the SEO cost and to highlight the current sustainability

problems facing the industry. Farren felt the government's view of the industry was, 'There weren't a huge number of negative connotations against the industry amongst those that we met. That being said, there wasn't a huge appreciation for the key issues of the nightclubs, amongst the political classes'. Farren did state that, generally, he found that there was a familiarity between the local nightclub operator and local TDs because they were seen as business people and employers.

Eugene McGovern expressed frustration at lobbying as a public relations practice:

I do not have an appetite for it. For our business, unfortunately, it is not something politicians have a genuine interest in. I have met with a minister who I must say was very receptive and well tuned-in to what was going on, but nothing has happened.

The Connaught nightclub owner also conveyed his frustration of lobbying by stating:

In terms of lobbying, you need to have a very strong case before lobbying will pay any dividends. We have in the industry, met a number of successive Ministers for Justice and we have been continually discussing the modernisation of licensing laws in Ireland. And we have been ten or twelve years at this, and it is still "around the corner"; it is almost ready. They must be very bad workers in the department if they can't get this together in ten or twelve years. There is obviously not the will there.

Barry O'Sullivan states, 'We are trying to get information out there about how seriously the industry addresses its responsibilities and what we are doing to ensure that happens'.

Ronan Farren believes that lobbying plays an important role for the industry but also believes the industry must be clear on what it wants before it practices lobbying:

What I discovered is there is not unanimity in the industry on what is the best way forward on some of the key issues. The industry itself has to decide what it wants. Defining a nightclub in legislation makes perfect sense to me.

Here, Farren is stating that the industry needs to be united on what it wants particularly when lobbying. This may be in reference to the fact that, a nightclub owner can and may be a bar, restaurant and or hotel owner also. And there may be a conflict of interest in their different segments of the business. These conflicts of interest could result in the nightclub industry not being united on key issues. In addition, it may also refer to the number of agendas the industry has engaged in, defining nightclubs in legislation, reducing SEO costs, introducing sequential closing and introducing a nightclub permit.

When Barry O’Sullivan was asked if he thought the majority of individual nightclub operators practiced public relations he answered, ‘Not a huge amount, probably their focus is largely around business development’. Ronan Farren answered the same question qualifying that, ‘I understand the huge pressures that nightclub operators are under at the moment and they have to plan, perhaps just the survival of their business as the key priority for many of them’. Fionnuala Sheehan echoed these sentiments:

There are very significant economic pressures and what I am seeing is that there are instances coming through where practices are being engaged in, in this more survivalist environment, that are not what they should be from the point of view of responsible serving and selling of alcohol.

When Ronan Farren was asked if he thought public relations could help the nightclub industry’s reputation he stated,

Yes, it has to. If you are out there getting negative press, you have to change the issue and try to get people to perceive the issue in the way you want it to be perceived. And that allied with ongoing dialogue is the only way you are going to achieve the changes that you want.

Farren also reiterated the importance of strategic public relations in helping the reputation by explaining, ‘You can’t pick and choose when you talk to people, you have to have ongoing dialogue, ongoing public relations’. Farren highlights the importance of ongoing public relations as opposed to ad-hoc or circumstantial public relations.

Selina Regazozoli explains how on-going public relations has gained their venue a favourable reputation, ‘It certainly gives us that extra edge and a lot more presence than other clubs. This is down to developing better media contacts and developing public relations’. Emma Hayden, marketing executive for *The Foundry* nightclubs, describes why not using public relations fully has halted the betterment of their reputation, ‘*The Foundry* has done a lot of good in the local community, providing many variants of sponsorship to different publics and charities. They could do an awful lot more to let people know this’.

Kieran Dollard, Chairman of Stretford United Football Club, has benefited from sponsorship and facilities from *The Foundry* nightclubs, and he states, ‘The support *The Foundry* has given us is important to our club. We may not be in existence today without their support. Next year we are introducing a youth team structure to our club. Again, this would not have been possible without their financial support’. Kieran also stated, ‘Apart from our own photo-calls to highlight the sponsorship, I’m not sure people would know they sponsor us’. Hayden and Dollard both show evidence where a lack of public relations by individual nightclubs, lead to a missed opportunity to gain reputational improvement.

Michael Crossan, owner and manager of *The Pulse* nightclub, Letterkenny, was the only operator who did not practice public relations and he admitted, ‘We would like to be practicing public relations. There are times when I feel it would be an advantage to have somebody to deal with the issues that arise, particularly in the media’.

Nigel Tynan, of *Licensing World* believes that ‘The sector could do with more self promotion’. This statement was agreed upon by all non-affiliates of the nightclub industry that were interviewed. Esther Hayden of the *Carlow People* stated, ‘Sometimes they send in the odd press release. It’s quite infrequent. They do not demand a lot or ask for a lot of publicity’. Will Burton in Letterkenny, agreed with this stating, ‘They could send in more press releases highlighting the different initiatives that they are involved in’. Hayden and Burton, both demonstrate Farrens concern that individual nightclubs practice public relations circumstantially.

The Licensing Sergeant in Leinster, the pub manager in Carlow, the soccer chairman, the retired Garda Detective and current crime correspondent, and Brendan Calinan, ex head of security staff and current taxi driver were not aware of any public relations activity that the nightclub industry had engaged in. This is a poor reflection of the public relations practiced by the industry. It is also important that the industry is not just practicing public relations circumstantially, but that it is practicing it on an ongoing and consistent basis. This is an important point for both the INIA and individual nightclubs.

5.1.3 Communications

The nightclub affiliates that were interviewed felt there were problems that existed in their communication practices. One problem identified was their nightclubs lacked a face or personality. Eugene McGovern stated, 'Of our mediums of communication I suppose the difficulty with these mediums is there is no personal touch involved'. Emma Hayden agreed with this, 'I think there could be a bit more human interaction. I do not think there is enough of that'. Holly Prior was asked what would help the communication of the nightclub industry and answered, 'It is important to let people know that we are not just a building, that there are people here that are willing to take into consideration what you have to say. That there is a personal touch. People like that'. Barry O'Sullivan describes the issue of a lack of face in more detail:

A lot of what we need to do is put faces on our businesses. So, when somebody thinks of a nightclub owner, they are not thinking of a crime lord in the Costa del Sol on the front of the 'Evening Herald' that was buried in a pit of cement. They are thinking of Oliver Hughes, who employs more people than 'St James's Gate', 240 people, and we need to put faces to our industry and our businesses. We need to personalise it, so they can identify who we are. Unfortunately it is slow and a lot of work has to be done on this.

Interviewees discuss this lack of identity. Identity and face is an important element in relationship building. This identity can help in creating a relationship where key elements of organisation-public relationships exist by relating to an identity. This identity can then facilitate communication. Barry O'Sullivan does however believe nightclubs are communicating better now than they ever did:

Certainly in my time in this industry, the vast majority of successful nightclubs out there, most of them have pretty efficient websites, email databases,

membership systems, Facebook sites, Twitter accounts, they are up to speed on how best to communicate with their target audience and customers.

Holly Prior, marketing manger for *The Wright Venue*, Dublin, reiterates this positive approach to communication:

I think it's so important, not just to use our online tool as a place where we throw out information, but as a place of engagement and where we can communicate with the people who want to find out the information. For me, it is about developing relationships, which is important to us.

The level of communication by nightclubs has been significantly facilitated by the development of online marketing tools such as Facebook, Twitter and other online social media tools. All nightclub operators, marketers and public relations staff involved in the interviews stated that they used these tools for communicating two-way with their customers. Social media tools have advanced communication between the nightclub industry and their customers. Two-way communication is practiced according to interviewees and evidence from nightclub affiliate interviewees suggests it helps create and maintain a relationship with their customers. A simple example of evidence of this was cited as communicating 'lost and found' with their customers and the good will garnered from this. The effectiveness of two-way communication in social networks is contentious but relationships are been created that may not have existed with out the facility. The level of two-way communication practiced by the industry was put to non-affiliate interviewees.

Gerry O'Carroll makes a number of arguments on the level of communication practiced by the industry. In a professional capacity O'Carroll found them to be, 'Absolutely cooperative in the extreme'. O'Carroll refers to his professional capacity when he

worked as a Garda Detective and currently as a crime correspondent and private investigator. However, O'Carroll points out several communication flaws that he feels are evident:

There is a failure by the industry to communicate with their public, public representatives, town councils, councillors, youth councillors, clubs and schools. They have refused or have failed to do that. It's been a huge lacuna in their approach...It's a lack of judgement on their part. All down through the years it's been their abject failure to communicate their industry in a positive light.

O' Carroll's statement is qualified by Councillor Jennifer Murnane O'Connor, who states, 'In my time, I have never been approached or really had any communications with anyone from the nightclub industry'. It is evident throughout the interviews that the industry practices very little communication with the community and this is a failure on their part. Solicitor John O'Sullivan in Carlow has had numerous dealings with nightclubs and states that their communications is inconsistent:

Some of them are better than others. Some of them communicate much more professionally than others. Some of them are haphazard. People who are generally very good at communicating in the nightclub business tend to have very good staff and systems set up to engage with the outside world. But, in the end, some of them are just very poor. And that's why there are problems for their industry when issues arise. There's a lot of smoke and mirrors literally in some of their communication...A lot of them do not realise that they have to keep communicating, every week, to keep some form of profile in the minds of their public.

The Garda Licensing Sergeant in Leinster shared a similar view to O'Sullivan, stating, 'We have a very good relationship with the biggest nightclub in town. Our communication works both ways with this nightclub and we understand each other's needs, but that communication does not exist with all nightclubs in the town'. In

addition, the Licensing Sergeant was asked if he thought better communication could help relations with the Gardaí and other nightclubs, he stated:

Yes it would improve relations, because we are human as well. If there is no communication with a nightclub, then you can have a preconceived perception of a place, particularly if there are rows and trouble there. We have to react to this. Where we have positive communication with a nightclub, we feel we can proactively engage problems before they occur...I suppose the best way to improve this is to sit down and meet with the nightclubs, so you can put a face to the venue. And maybe there should be a meeting twice a year between us and all nightclubs.

Fionnuala Sheehan discussed her experiences of the communications between MEAS and nightclubs. Sheehan stated that communication existed between MEAS and both the INIA and individual nightclubs. Sheehan stated that communication is, 'As needs be'. Sheehan also mentioned that nightclubs are proactive in communicating with her organisation, 'We have an advisory service and there is proactive communication regarding advisory matters'.

Esther Hayden, journalist with the *Carlow People*, stated that two-way communication did not really exist with the nightclub industry, stating that communication is 'Circumstantial' and 'Not really two-way'. The levels of communication demonstrated by the non-affiliated interviewees would suggest the industry is poor at communicating, with some small signs of communication channels existing between nightclubs and both the Gardaí and MEAS.

Two-way symmetrical communication was explained to interviewees. It was described as a communication model where practitioners use research and dialogue, to bring about

mutual changes in the ideas, attitudes and behaviours of both their industry and the publics whom they deal with.

The Wright Venue in Dublin claimed to practice two-way symmetrical communication with the media. Selina Regazozoli states that ‘We are constantly developing our media relations and we feel we have gained a lot better media presence because of this’.

Eugene McGovern highlighted why his nightclubs do not communicate with the media or engage in two-way symmetrical communication with them:

I do not trust them. And that is the difficulty; nightclubs were in the dark ages and did no public relations. Now we see it as being imperative to our industry but we’re afraid and that is why we have to hire professional PR consultants to try to get our message across. And we found that down in Waterford, we had to go and use Q4 Public Relations, because we were terrified, what would be written about us.

Michael Crossan, of *The Pulse* nightclub in Donegal, was asked about two-way symmetrical communication with the media and he stated, ‘If there were two-way symmetrical communication with them, we could put our side to the story and that does not happen currently’.

The industry is inconsistent in its communication and this is evident with the media also. Some nightclubs actively engage in communication with the media and there is a trust issue with other nightclubs. The nightclubs that actively engage with the media report good relationships and good media coverage.

Two-way symmetrical communication between the nightclubs and one of its main publics, the media, is evidently damaged. This relationship should be re-established by

nightclubs. The nightclubs must aim to bring about a symbiotic change in the ideas, attitudes and behaviours of both their industry and the media.

Regarding the INIA's communication practices, Ronan Farren, Q4 Public Relations, stated, 'In terms of how they communicate I found that it was very good, it was very strong. But I would have a view of communications that you can't just communicate whenever it suits you; it has to be an ongoing dialogue'. As discussed in the *Literature Review*, dependability in trust is the consistency of communication that exists between two parties and leads to better relationships. Farren was asked if he felt the INIA practiced ongoing communications, he answered, 'I thought there was a desire to, but I thought it was a little bit ad-hoc'. Farren was also asked if he thought the INIA practiced two-way symmetrical communication and he stated, 'It was very strategic. We would work with groups to say a specific thing to the media at a specific time for a specific reason'. This is not two-way symmetrical communication as recommended by Grunig et al in the *Twelve Hallmarks of Excellent Public Relations*. It is more similar to two-way asymmetrical communication, where practitioners have conducted research to determine how to persuade publics to behave in the way the industry wishes.

Each of the nightclub affiliates interviewed expressed a desire to practice better communications. They generally felt that their industry had improved their communications but there was room for further improvements. The nightclub owner in Connaught stated:

It is something that we are going to pay more attention to. In terms of exploiting new media, we need to become conversant with and more active in promoting ourselves through new media. We need to ensure that the communication is not

one-way communication. We do feel that is important and becoming even more important.

Barry O’Sullivan indicated the importance of good communication internally to his industry by stating, ‘I believe good communication is important, typically for us when we are trying to bring an industry together that has been quite fractious for a number of decades’. Here O’Sullivan refers to the internal communication that exists between the INIA and its members, the individual nightclubs.

Eugene McGovern was asked if he believed good communication practices could improve the overall reputation of the industry, he answered:

We have had a real lack of communication in the past and things have moved on so fast that we have had to adjust. In truth, we probably haven’t adjusted as quickly as we should have. But at least we have identified it and are trying to do something about it. It is definitely important for the future of the industry and its reputation.

Michael Crossan believes modern communication practices have made a simple difference to the way the industry communicates, ‘If a customer has a problem, they can actually communicate with us immediately. It certainly wouldn’t have happened in the past and that’s not to say we didn’t want to communicate, it’s just the channel didn’t exist’.

The findings show that nightclubs and the nightclub industry understood the importance of communication. However, the understanding and practice of two-way symmetrical communication by the industry was not as evident, and poor in general. Some interviewees claimed to practice it with the media. And some interviewees claimed to practice it with customers. No interviewees claimed to practice it with the community.

The majority of nightclub affiliates interviewed were confused between two-way communication and two-way symmetrical communication.

The desire to communicate correctly was expressed by interviewees. The emergence of online technologies has helped nightclubs converse with their publics. One of the drawbacks to online communication is that, to an extent, it is faceless, however, it has advanced the industry and for the first time ever some nightclubs claim to be practicing genuine two-way symmetrical communication with its customers. I would note this two-way symmetrical communication is with customers and not all publics. Of all the nightclubs involved in the exploration, none had developed communication strategies. All but one interviewee stated they had good internal communications. I would also note that most non-affiliates of the industry that were interviewed thought the communication practices of the industry were poor.

5.1.4 Publics

The nightclub affiliate interviewees had a good understanding of their publics. The Connaught representative stated:

There is nothing worse than having a good and valid point or case to make and you're not making it A. In the right manner and B. Not making it to the right people. You need to be able to get your message out there to the right public and it is very important to have it understood.

Broom et al (2001a:5) states, 'Public relations is a management function...between an organisation and its publics, on whom its success or failure depends'. Emma Hayden, explained she defined publics when initiating communication:

How we differentiate our publics depends on what we want to achieve at the time. If we were promoting entertainment, then we target and communicate to our customers. If we were promoting corporate social responsibility, then we target parents and the Gardaí.

Hayden demonstrates a good example of differentiating publics, but again it is similar to asymmetrical communication, where research is conducted to determine how to persuade a certain public to behave accordingly to industry wishes.

Barry O'Sullivan was asked if the INIA prioritise communication with an active, aware, latent and non-publics. He stated:

The people that we are trying to influence and communicate to is anything from the 65 year old representative, TDs, judiciary, Gardaí, the mums and dads that are looking at young adults going out at weekends and trying to influence them that this is something we take very seriously. We have responsibilities and here is how we manage them. So yes, we would have a lot of communication and goals aimed around publics that are latent or aware or indeed non-publics and not just active. It is a broad net of publics that we need to communicate with.

Ronan Farren, detailed how he and the INIA chose their publics when lobbying for changes in the industry:

There are a large number of politicians that have never set foot in a nightclub and we were quite strategic about the ones we approached. We could tell it is a waste of time approaching certain TDs, but we did identify a group and we were asking this group to raise certain issues with the Minister in advance of our meeting. So the Minister could say that he had been approached by some of his members. Given those that we identified, we went to them again with good reasons.

The *Literature Review* discussed the reason for defining publics is to establish priorities within the scope of the resources and budget. Holly Prior adopts this practice when communicating with *The Wright Venue's* publics:

There is no point throwing out information for the sake of it, general advertisements in the media can be a waste of money when you can use other mediums that are specific to the groups to whom you want to communicate. A lot of our information is distributed in the different mediums but it is specific in a sense that we would filter the audience.

Prior demonstrates that her nightclub differentiates between publics; however, I would note that advertising is not public relations. Eugene McGovern was asked if he believed communicating to specific publics saved in resources and his response was:

I suppose we used whatever we had to use in the past and that probably went out to a general public, which may have been somewhat redundant. But now we have learned that in dealing with publics we have to be more specific. If there is a certain public, we have to try to communicate with them through the best medium, on the message we are trying to convey.

Prior and McGovern both demonstrate the importance of defining publics. However, the onus is always on the message 'We' are trying to convey as opposed to a mutual understanding of the message. This highlights again, asymmetrical communication is the model of communication that some nightclubs prefer to use.

Gerry O'Carroll believes that lines of communication do not exist between the nightclub industry and its different publics:

It's a difficult problem they have to face (referring to communication) and how they can do it, is by more liaising with publics and the community. There should be a committee of every nightclub, or somebody, who meets monthly with the community to discuss issues. They could meet with parish councils, town councils and the local Gardai to discuss what they can do to prevent issues...If they had consulted the majority of Gardai or the Gardai association offices, they would identify multiple mutually beneficial initiatives. I do not know of any nightclub owner that would voluntarily ask to see the Superintendent or the Licensing Sergeant to discuss problems. They are definitely failing in that.

O'Carroll refers to the lack of relationship that exists between the nightclubs and their community or stakeholders. Bruning and Ledingham state that organisation-public relationship is the state that exists between the organisation and its publics, and the actions that impact upon each other (1999:160). The state that exists between the nightclubs and their community, according to O'Carroll is non-existent. The four dimensions of trust, satisfaction, commitment and control mutuality are also not evident.

The findings do show that the nightclub industry and INIA are knowledgeable of the four key linkages identified by Grunig and Hunt in 1984. They understand and define them effectively in their communication programmes. However, this element of identifying publics is 'common sense' and not necessarily the industry's ability to use Grunig and Hunts concept of linkages.

They were specific in identifying enabling linkages. One of the main enabling publics for the nightclub industry is the government. The main tool used for this public is lobbying and two-way symmetrical communication. Evidence of two-way symmetrical communication was supported by the number of meetings the interviewees have had with TDs and Ministers. Interviewees also stated that both parties had to approach these meetings with open minds to ensure the possibility of changes being made to the industry and legislation.

The industry also communicates with their functional and normative linkages. The methods of communication in these instances are more similar to two-way asymmetrical

communication and public information. They communicated to the diffused publics through press releases and advertisement highlighting their events and promotions.

5.1.5 Issue Management

Issue management as discussed in the *Literature Review* is the identifying and addressing of issues that affect the industry. Throughout this exploration a number of issues have been identified that affect the nightclub industry and in particular its reputation. The question of which issue most affects the reputation of the nightclub industry was put to interviewees. The answers varied from health and safety, prices of alcohol, drugs, media, public order and government legislation.

The issue of the price of alcohol is of great concern to the very existence of the nightclub industry. Price in the off-trade and off-licences greatly varies from those in the on-trade, pubs and nightclubs. Alcohol is now more readily available and easily accessible than it has ever been. It is also being consumed in more uncontrolled environments. In turn, this has led to a further negative impact on the nightclub industry. Pre-loading has led to more people being turned away from nightclubs because they are too drunk and this has resulted in further disturbances in public order. The availability of cheap drink has increased competition between nightclubs, and in some cases started price wars between clubs, which has further damaged nightclubs reputations through irresponsible serving of alcohol and negative reporting in the media.

‘We are the dance-floor for supermarkets’, Barry O’Sullivan tells me this is the mantra that is re-iterated now at most INIA executive meetings. This mantra and interview

evidence suggests that bars are becoming more redundant in nightclubs as customers have already pre-loaded in alcohol from supermarkets. Eugene McGovern asks how fair these price differences are:

This has been going on for six years and nothing has been done about it. We pay enormous prices for our licenses as opposed to supermarkets. How much more alcohol do they sell than we sell? I would say it is quite dramatic. It's completely wrong.

The alcohol price issue is a complex one for the industry as off-traders are able to set any price on alcohol. Fionnuala Sheehan has stated that there is an inequity in the price difference. But as Ronan Farren indicates, it is a bad decision for nightclubs to try and compete with these prices, 'These irresponsible promotions are always one that comes up again and again. It ticks a lot of boxes for the media, young people out of control, clubs pouring drink down their necks. That is one of the key issues'. McGovern describes another problem with cheap drink:

The difficulty is, regardless of what drink they bought in the off-licence, they are going to end up at our door tonight. Inside it or outside it, and they are going to be another notch on the public disorder sheet down in the courthouse, which is bad for us all.

Emma Hayden also agrees with this, stating, 'There are more incidents now because people are drinking too much at home in uncontrolled circumstances and this is not the nightclub's fault. Even though it is a personal thing, people will blame the nightclubs'.

The issues of price of alcohol, public order and government legislation are interlinked and have an effect on the reputation of the nightclub industry. In the Issue Management Process Model developed by Chase, Jones and Crane (cited in Hearit 2005:126), they

state issue identification is the first step followed by issue analysis. Issue changing strategy option is the third step and interviewees were asked if they had tried any changes in strategy or could they recommend any changes in strategy.

The Connaught nightclub owner feels that to deal with the pricing issue, lobbying is required:

The sale of alcohol in supermarkets and off-licenses needs to be addressed urgently. That is probably the most crucial element. The industry can't do anything with the price. It has to lobby government in the best way it can and it needs to support the Minister in terms of what she is proposing to do (Roisin Shortall, then Minister of State, Department of Health with responsibility for Primary Care). We are only ever going to see a difference through bringing in new legislation to raise the price of alcohol.

Niall Byrne, manager of *Scraggs Alley* pub in Carlow, believes that the industry could join forces with its normative linkages in joint lobbying:

We suffer very similar problems to the nightclub industry. We also have to turn people away from our doors because they are too drunk. We are suffering from losses in sales because the majority of people are now pre-loading at home. Pubs are almost in direct competition with nightclubs. One of the possible solutions is for the Vintners Federation of Ireland, Drinks Industry Group Ireland and the INIA to joint lobby on the issue of minimum prices. If we have more people, we can rattle more cans.

The Garda Licensing Sergeant in Leinster agrees that nightclubs are unlucky in their attachment to public order offences and states, 'The reality is we get called to very few incidents in the nightclubs. They have come a long way'. Solicitor John O'Sullivan states, 'The licensing laws in the country contribute greatly to the level of public drunkenness, before and after nightclubs operate'.

The fourth and fifth steps in the Issue Management Process Model are issue action programme and evaluation of results. Regarding public disorder, Barry O’Sullivan believes the nightclub industry has changed its attitude to the issue:

In an ideal world the nightclubs do and will take responsibility attributable to their venues. I think nightclubs will continue to improve in managing public order. Five years ago nightclubs paid no attention to pre-event crowd management, and it has improved dramatically now. We would like to see an improvement or change in the monitoring of public order cases that are in no way attributable to the nightclub industry. Safety is continuing to improve in huge leaps and bounds. Standards will continue to improve.

Barry O’Sullivan was asked if public relations have helped with these issues, ‘It can, it’s back to communication and conveying key messages to our publics’. The greatest example of the INIA actively engaging in issue management is the Nightsafe initiative. Nightsafe addresses many of these issues. The success of Nightsafe is still to be determined as it is still in a growth period but it does demonstrate the INIA’s positive approach to the issues within the initiative. The *Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the Proposed Regulation of the Nightclub Industry* and the *Licence Fees and Commercial Viability of the Nightclub Industry* reports contribute to good issue management. These reports identify the issues clearly, offer analysis of the issues, offer changing strategy options, and offer programmes of action while evaluating results.

5.1.6 Crisis Management

Crisis management is a systematic approach where the organisation engages in efforts to avert crisis that may affect them and manage those that do. *The Wright Venue* in Dublin stated, they had consulted with a public relations company regarding a Crisis Management Plan and were currently outlining the necessary steps to putting a plan in

place. None of the other nightclubs interviewed have a Crisis Management Plan in place. McGovern stated:

We do not have a crisis management plan. I cannot speak for other venues, but I believe we are aware, as many businesses are, of the many issues and potential threats to our industry. We constantly scan for issues of concern to our business...I would think there are a lot of eventualities to consider and maybe we should be considering a crisis plan.

Two nightclubs had demonstrated an awareness of the importance of a Crisis Management Plan and stated that it was something they were intending to look at.

In light of some of the serious incidents that have occurred in the industry during its history, a Crisis Management Plan is necessary. A Crisis Management Plan prepares an industry for potential threats and eventualities.

5.2 Analysis – Interviews

I will now conclude the contribution from the interviews with a view to reflect on the recommended communication, relationship management and public relation practices identified in the *Literature Review* in order to explore and bring focus to analysing the reputation of the Irish nightclub industry.

5.2.1 Reputation Management

Bernstein (1991:205) in the *Literature Review* highlighted two tasks for research in reputation.

1. Exploring the nature of the industry's reputation and how it may have to be corrected and supported.
2. Measuring the success of the communications in strengthening reputation.

Having explored the reputation of the nightclub industry in this chapter and throughout the research, we can identify a number of reputational issues and prepare how they can be addressed. One of the first issues of concern raised in the interviews was the confusion and misperceptions that surrounded the industry. Barry O'Sullivan and Fionnuala Sheehan both highlighted ambiguity in the industry, particularly by those who have power and influence in the decision and policymaking process. This ambiguity was related to the perception of a nightclub owner or operator and the industry itself. Haywood states in the *Literature Review*, 'Ultimately everything...is dependent on how you are regarded. Your corporate reputation may well be your most valuable asset (2002:9). We have identified that the INIA has taken steps to address this, by meeting with ministers and politicians to discuss industry affairs. These practices help create an improved profile of the industry and put faces to the industry.

Additionally, this lack of identity existed with individual nightclubs. Relationship management was discussed and the Garda Licensing Sergeant felt it would help the Garda's relationship with the industry if they could put a face to the business. McGovern, Hayden, Prior and Barry O'Sullivan all felt it was something the industry had to address. Individual operators have an opportunity to address this by meeting and communicating with their publics. This opportunity can create new initiatives, while putting a face to the business. Creating and maintaining relationships are cited as the

cornerstones of public relations in the *Literature Review*. Shen and Kim (2012:1) also state the correlation between relationships and a positive reputation.

Some interviewees were of the opinion that the nightclub industry, compared to the pub industry, was not central to Ireland's social scene. The ESIA report and Frank Magee of Dublin Tourism (ESIA 2009:12), both disagree with this. The ESIA reports some 25 million customers visit nightclubs annually and Magee, who was supportive of the ESIA report, believes the industry is central to a nighttime offering. In the *Literature Review* it was discussed that a reputation will determine how a public behaves towards an industry. There is an opportunity for the industry to improve and promote its reputation here through a public relations programme to convey this message. A message that states this industry contributes to jobs, tourism, exchequer and economy growth.

The fact that the nightclub industry has, in the last five years, moved from a disproportionate amount of complaints through MEAS, to a more in-line proportionate amount of complaints, as suggested by Sheehan, the industry is addressing issues of concern. What is equally evident is they are not communicating this to their publics. Kendall pointed out in the *Reputation* section of the *Literature Review*, 'Industry behaviour wins both the interest of the media...the public...especially when the deeds are ethically sound in the sense of acting in society's best interests' (Kendall 1996:330). There is an opportunity to highlight this improvement in the industry through a public relations programme and communicating this evidence to relative publics.

O'Carroll stated that parents and the community were 'apprehensive' and 'scared' by the industry. He also stated their attitudes were exaggerated. John O'Sullivan stated the industry had a 'twilight' factor. The association of alcohol and public disorder were cited as reasons for both causing fear and affecting the reputation of the industry. Both O'Carroll and John O'Sullivan cited legislation as having a direct impact on the industry's reputation. This legislation included the issues of public disorder, sequential closing and alcohol. Both men also cited the industry's inability to deal with issues as a factor leading to a poor reputation. This suggests that the industry is not correctly implementing the issue management model as suggested in the *Literature Review*.

The INIA have taken several steps in trying to address the issue of legislation. Interviewees have expressed frustration with lobbying. McGovern and the Connaught representative stated there was not a genuine interest from politicians to address the needs of the industry. Realistically, only in the last five years has the industry begun compiling reports to support their initiatives. They have only recently started using public relations to implement and try influence policymaking decisions. Public relations should be ongoing and results can take time. Fombrun states, 'To achieve prestige requires a long-term outlook' (1996:8). I would note here that the current legislation has changed the landscape of socialising and we now see more house parties and more pre-loaded drinking than ever before. This unhealthy situation presents an opportunity for the industry to promote themselves as a safe and controlled environment in the night-time economy.

The media were also cited by a number of interviewees affiliated with the industry as an influence on the reputation of the industry. Arguments from both sides were given and

evidence concludes that it does have a real impact on the reputation of the industry. However, evidence could not clearly determine if the treatment of the media is particularly unfair on the nightclub industry. Evidence did conclude that there is a relationship issue, with trust being cited as the reason for this as indicated by both McGovern and Crossan. The nightclub industry can address this issue. The media can have an important role in influencing public opinion. Farren stated the media is not going to go away and the industry has to find a way to deal with them. Two-way symmetrical communication is recommended in correcting and dealing with this issue.

In sustaining a reputation, Fombrun (1996:202) in the *Literature Review*, asked the following questions. Answers are provided that were suggested from evidence of interviews.

Q. What are we doing to maintain healthy relationships with all of our constituents?

A. The INIA is actively engaging with publics through various initiatives. Individual nightclubs are inconsistent in engaging with their publics and in many cases not engaging with them at all. Improvements are required from the individual operators in establishing and maintaining relationships with their publics. Relationship management did not appear to be practiced by nightclubs with their community and many of their publics.

Q. How well do we monitor our images with each of our different audiences?

A. The INIA has used *Kanter* media monitoring to analyse their image. Interviews showed that nightclub operators and staff did not consistently engage in monitoring their image with different publics.

Q. Could we improve our reputation by developing better, more consistent images?

A. Yes. All participants believed that better communication and public relations would improve the reputation of the industry. An inconsistency in recognising the benefit of and actually using public relations was evident throughout the exploration.

Q. What kinds of activities should we engage in to sustain our reputation?

A. The INIA have engaged in reports and initiatives including Nightsafe to sustain and improve their reputation. It is recommended that all nightclubs should strive to achieve the Nightsafe standard. This initiative promotes best practice in the areas of most concern to non-affiliates interviewed. There are a number of other activities that can be engaged in, including public relations programmes, where two-way symmetrical communication is established with publics that are affected by the industry.

Q. Do our employees understand and appreciate the importance of our reputation? Do our customers, suppliers, and rivals? The local government and community? The public at large?

A. Evidence suggested that interviewees accepted the importance of reputation and the effects this has on the nightclub industry.

Q. How much money should we give to charity? Through a foundation or direct giving? How much publicity do we want from corporate giving?

A. Evidence showed that all nightclubs involved in the research contributed to the community through either sponsorship or donations. The level of publicity achieved from this sponsorship or donation was low. Other initiatives can include, free usage of premises on non-operational nights, where community initiatives are supported. This

would also help in creating organisation-public relationships that are currently poor or non-existent.

Q. How can we obtain favourable reviews and ratings in the media?

A. An inconsistent relationship exists between the media and the nightclub industry. There are trust issues and very little communication between the majority of the industry and the media. Two-way symmetrical communication is recommended where a mutual understanding is achieved to change attitudes towards the media. Ongoing media relations are also recommended where a relationship is built on the four dimensions of organisation-public relationship including trust, commitment, satisfaction and control mutuality.

Q. How can we generate more favourable appraisals by financial analysts?

A. This issue was not discussed with interviewees.

Q. How can we improve our relationships with those organisations which monitor social responsiveness?

A. These organisations refer to the Gardaí, MEAS, government and media. A number of recommendations were made during interviews including lobbying with government, creating better links with the Gardaí, and two-way symmetrical communication with the media. These are also organisations that the industry can create and maintain better relationships with through better relationship management.

One of the aims of this research is to conduct a reputational audit of the nightclub industry. Fombrun (1996:206-7) stated three principal components of a fully executed reputational audit:

- Stage 1: A diagnostic review of the company's current identity, images, and reputation.
- Stage 2: A strategic analysis of trends, plans, and competitive positioning that defines the company's desired future state.
- Stage 3: A review of the company's plans for managing the transition toward the future state.

A diagnostic review of the current reputation has been completed. The future desired reputational state has also been identified. Recommendations are made in this section and in the remaining chapter on how to achieve this desired state. A plan to manage such a transition, where it exists at all, is reviewed throughout the research.

5.2.2 Public Relations

All but one of the nightclub affiliates interviewed claimed to practice some form of public relations. However, the level of public relations practiced by operators was inconsistent. Some interviewees claimed it was not an area they spent a lot of money or time. Regazozoli from *The Wright Venue* claimed that their public relations programmes had helped their business and reputation, by creating and developing media relations.

Industry non-affiliates including Cllr. Murnane O'Connor, O'Carroll, Burton, Dollard, Byrne and the Garda Licensing Sergeant were not aware of any public relation programmes the industry had engaged in. This would imply that the industry is either not practicing public relations or it is practicing it poorly.

The INIA were the most advanced in practicing public relations programmes. They used multiple strategies and multiple techniques including press releases, photo-calls, media monitoring, media relations, compiling reports for policy making decisions, working with publics and stakeholders internal and external to the industry, and implementing initiatives that promoted best-practices that tackle issues of concern in the industry.

All interviewees stated that they felt public relations was important in improving the reputation of the industry. Barry O'Sullivan, McGovern, Farren, the Connaught nightclub owner and John O'Sullivan felt it was the single most important thing in improving the reputation of the industry. Correctly practiced public relations can address a lot of the issues of concern facing the industry.

Larissa Grunig, in *The Excellence Study*, determined there were twelve hallmarks of excellent public relations (Grunig 1997:289-99). I will now explore these twelve hallmarks against evidence from interviews.

1. Strategic management of public relations:

Ronan Farren stated, 'Public relations is a very important element for any industry, to talk to government and media. In public relations you have to have a strategy and plan'.

The individual nightclub interviewees in the research did not have clearly defined

strategies or plans regarding public relations. Public relations within the industry is practiced somewhat circumstantially and ad-hoc. The INIA applied strategic management practices of public relations in their efforts to change the legislation governing and regulating the industry. However, Farren does highlight the problem of unity within the industry on its strategies, 'I think the industry has been rather unclear on exactly what it wants on some of the key issues' (interview Farren). The key issues Farren refers to are the agendas of reduced SEO costs, sequential closing and the regulation of the industry in general. Farrens statement also suggests that the INIA need to improve their relationship management with members in their own organisation.

2. Separation from marketing:

Of the interviewees from the industry that claimed to practice public relations, only one separated public relations from marketing, with a separate public relations department. All other participants included public relations in their marketing department's brief. The INIA kept public relations separate from marketing by outsourcing public relations to Q4 Public Relations.

3. Direct reporting relationship to senior management:

Evidence suggested there was a direct reporting relationship between the public relation practitioners and senior management. This, however was due to the size and description of the various operations, rather than a need felt by management to take an actual role in public relations.

4. Within an organisation, public relations is a single integrated department:

Only one of the nightclub participants had a single integrated public relations department.

5. Two-way symmetrical public relations is practiced in philosophy:

The INIA practiced both two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical communications when engaging with its publics. The INIA demonstrated that mutual understanding and attitude changes with publics were necessary to achieve industry goals. Two-way symmetrical communication was evident in three cases with individual nightclubs where the nightclub or staff claimed to practice it with either customers or the media. All other nightclub interviewees either did not understand two-way symmetrical communication or confused it with two-way communication. Two-way symmetrical communication is not practiced in philosophy by individual nightclubs; two-way symmetrical communication should be practiced with all publics. The INIA showed a desire to practice two-way symmetrical communication in their practices.

6. The senior public relation executive plays a managerial role:

This was not evident in this research. Evidence suggested that in many cases the public relations manager played a junior role as a public relations technician.

7. The potential for public relations lies in knowledge, education and professionalism:

The interviews identified that public relations is a relatively new practice to the nightclub industry in Ireland. All interviewees affiliated with the industry had a desire to practice public relations. However, knowledge, education and professionalism were not evident, with the exception of Ronan Farren, no interviewees were educated or qualified in public relations or were members of the Public Relations Institute of

Ireland. Evidence suggested there was a lack of understanding in key areas such as two-way symmetrical communication and the fact that communication needed to exist with all publics and not just customers. There was a lack of understanding of public relations in general. Even the INIA and two nightclubs, which held a more sophisticated view of public relations, had identified that they needed to outsource public relations because of their lack of knowledge, education and professionalism in the area.

8. Public relation practitioners and top management share a schema of symmetrical public relations:

This was evident in the INIA as Barry O’Sullivan and Ronan Farren demonstrated similar views and understandings of ideas regarding the practice of public relations in the industry. There was a lack of evidence to support that this hallmark existed in individual nightclubs.

9. Equal opportunities exist for women’s advancement in public relations:

This was evident in the research, where applicable. All public relation staff within nightclubs interviewed were women, so it was hard to qualify if equal opportunity for advancement existed.

10. Activism and a complex turbulent environment enhance the value top management places on public relations:

This was evident in the interviews conducted. Public relations is cited by Barry O’Sullivan as the single thing that can help the reputation of the industry. The industry is currently in a challenging environment. Public relations is relatively new to the

industry and its introduction may be due to the turbulent complex environment in which the industry exists.

11. Top management support:

Of all the interviewees that practiced public relations, all received top management support. In some cases it was top management themselves that were the sole public relations practitioner.

12. Supportive organisational context-participation:

Evidence suggests that interviewees that practiced public relations were supported but the context of good internal public relations did not exist.

The nightclub industry has a long way to go to achieve the standards required to adhere to the twelve hallmarks of excellent public relations. There is an expressed understanding by the interviewees that public relations can help the industry and its reputation. There is also evidence of a desire to practice public relations. However, this is not evident in their current practices. Some interviewees felt that promotional activity constituted public relations and they were confident that they practiced public relations on this basis. Evidence concluded that a lot of what interviewees claimed was public relations practices were, in actual fact, promotional activity. I have identified that public relations can tackle many of the industry's problems. The industry has an opportunity to educate itself in the practice of public relations and use this practice for its benefit.

The INIA are seeking to advance all twelve hallmarks of excellent public relations. However, they were inconsistent in their use of two-way symmetrical communication

despite expressing a desire to practice it in philosophy. They did not have a single integrated public relations department but cited financial constraints as the reason for this. They are not educated in public relations and cite out-sourcing the function as a result of this. They apply strategy to public relation practices including lobbying, but evidence suggests that there is still some distance to go due to a failure to set goals and objectives.

In the *Literature Review* it was stated that public relations cannot achieve all its objectives in the short term; building up and improving relationships, changing attitudes, means a continuous, sustained effort rather than a short, sharp, campaign. The INIA have an opportunity to improve their public relations. Additionally, they can promote the importance of public relations to their members and demonstrate that public relations can create and maintain relationships that could improve the reputation of the industry. Public relations will not offer all the solutions to their reputational problems but combined with correct communication, relationship and reputation management it will lead them on a more strategic path to dealing with their reputational issues.

5.2.3 Communications

In the *Introduction* chapter I described my own perception of the nightclub industry based on my experience. I felt the industry considerably inward looking. A number of issues arose concerning the practices of communication by the industry.

The first concern was a lack of face that existed to represent the industry, or putting a face to the personality of the industry and the individual operators. This lack of face exists due to the lack or inconsistent nature demonstrated by the industry's communication practices. Barry O'Sullivan has stated that operators are reluctant to engage in public relations in case it could be construed as contentious. Eugene McGovern states that he has trust issues with the media.

Evidence from the interviews concludes that this lack of face or personality exists because there is a lack of communication between the industry or operators and their publics. There is a lack of relationship management. Gerry O'Carroll stated several times that he feels there is a failure on the part of the industry to communicate through any channels, with their publics. John O'Sullivan states that their communication is haphazard and inconsistent, and at times, their communication can be compared to smoke and mirrors. The Garda Licensing Sergeant admitted that he has had preconceived perceptions of the industry and operators because of a lack of communication. Wakefield and Walton point out in the *Literature Review* that an organisation must communicate at least three to six times before the public will 'believe that the information is likely true' (Wakefield and Walton 2010:5). Interview evidence showed the nightclub industry did not communicate with their community and were failing to demonstrate the four dimensions of organisation-public relationships identified in the *Literature Review*.

The introduction of technology and online social media tools has facilitated two-way communication between the industry and its customers. An example of two-way symmetrical communication has claimed to be practiced with customers and the media

by staff of the industry. The practice of two-way symmetrical communication was evident to a small extent in the interviews. However, evidence suggests that the majority of affiliates do not practice two-way symmetrical communication and when it was practiced it was only practiced with a certain public, consumers. The exception was the INIA. Evidence also suggested that there was a lack of understanding of two-way symmetrical communication by the industry, with the exception of the INIA.

In the interviews, the INIA had stated they practice two-way symmetrical communication. Evidence showed they do with certain initiatives, but they also practiced two-way asymmetrical communication more regularly. Evidence also showed that of the 300 individual nightclubs in existence in Ireland, there is only 25 per cent paying membership to the INIA. This means that the INIA are only really representing a quarter of their industry and may imply certain difficulties in internal communication practices within the association.

Evidence from interviewees has indicated that communication has improved in the industry and they minimally practices two-way communication. However, it was improving from a poor foundation. The communication practices have not improved significantly enough in order to address the issues that are affecting the industry's reputation.

In the *Literature Review*, I posed three questions to be answered by this exploration.

1. Do the nightclubs and nightclub industry of Ireland have a communication strategy?

All owners, operators and staff of nightclubs stated they did not have a communication strategy or plan in place. One of the interviewees stated he was currently looking into implementing an internal and external communication strategy and hoped to have this in place before the end of the year. Communication practices of individual nightclubs were found to be inconsistent and lacking in any strategy or plan. This was reflected by the non-affiliates perception of the industry's communication practices. The INIA had a communication strategy in place that reflected their goals and objectives both internally and externally. The internal strategy outlined steps for improving communications with members and non-members. Their external strategy outlined steps in communicating with publics aimed at achieving industry goals.

2. Do they use the correct tactics to implement their strategy?

As none of the interviewees, with the exception of the INIA, had a strategy in place, tactics were not demonstrated. Communication tactics, where they existed, were on an ad-hoc or circumstantial basis. The INIA demonstrated planning and a use of tactics including two-way symmetrical communication, two-way asymmetrical communication and other public relation programmes in their strategy. Evidence would suggest that the INIA could improve their two-way symmetrical communication with the media, government and non-members of the INIA.

3. Do their communication strategies support industry missions and goals?

With individual nightclubs, evidence suggested that survival in the current climate is their primary mission and goal. Communication strategies did not exist to support their goal. The INIA demonstrated that its communication strategies supported its mission and goals regarding the development of legislation and regulation of the industry.

Despite the missions and goals not yet achieved, strategies are aimed at achieving these goals.

The interviews show that individual nightclubs do not have communication strategies let alone two-way symmetrical communication strategies. In many cases communication is not practiced at all. Evidence from interviews showed that nightclubs are inconsistent in their communication. The interviews showed that there is a lack of communication and relationship management with publics including the community, the Gardaí, Councillors, policy influencers, policymakers, and the media.

The interviews showed the INIA demonstrated a good level of communication in their external practices. Evidence also suggests that they are conveying these practices to their members but are not requiring their members to engage in these practices highlighting Brooms view that communication is more than just sending a message (Broom et al 2001b:251). There is an opportunity for the industry, both the INIA and individual nightclubs, to significantly improve on their communication practices. Farren stated that he believed there was ‘Not unanimity on the best way forward as an industry’. Some interviewees were not even aware of the INIA. Improvement is required from the INIA on communication. The improvement of these practices can facilitate the establishment and maintenance of new relationships with publics. This can further enhance the reputation of the industry.

5.2.4 Publics

The interviews showed that the nightclub industry claimed to have a reasonable understanding of its publics and some of this understanding is based on ‘common sense’. However evidence showed that communication with their publics was poor or lacking in consistency. Nightclub owners, operators and staff that were interviewed demonstrated they were aware of active, aware, latent and non-publics. They were aware of the importance of differentiating communication programmes when communicating with each of these differing publics. Evidence showed that there was a lack of communication programmes with these differing publics.

Nightclub owners, operators and staff also claimed to understand the differing linkages including enabling, functional, normative and diffused. They claimed that they would use different communication practices dependent on each of the linkages. However, evidence showed that communications varied with each of these linkages and in many cases it was poor or not evident due to poor relationship management.

The INIA demonstrated an understanding of the differing publics and demonstrated different communication strategies. The strategies included either lobbying, two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical communication with government, politicians and the enabling linkages. They used two-way symmetrical communication with their normative linkages, including meetings with MEAS, the Drinks Industry Group Ireland and the Vintners Federation of Ireland. They used internal communication including email, monthly meetings and newsletters with their functional linkages when

communicating with members. Press releases were used to try to inform diffused publics on the best-practice initiatives in which they were engaged.

Identifying, defining and understanding publics help achieve detailed information about an industry's public. This facilitates communication programmes, including developing objectives and developing messages and strategies to deliver the programmes. Nightclub owners, operators and staff claimed an understanding of the importance of defining publics. However, this is redundant if communication does not exist with the publics, and evidence suggested this.

With the exception of the INIA, from interviews I could not comprehensively determine if the interviewees had an understanding of publics, because it was not evident that communication existed between the industry and many of its publics. This was due to poor or inconsistent communication practices by the individual nightclubs.

5.2.5 Issue Management

There are a number of issues concerning the nightclub industry and we have looked at these in detail throughout this research. The issues range from concerns that the nightclub industry feels are important, to concerns that non-affiliates feel are important, and both concerns overlapped. All issues affect the reputation of the nightclub industry.

'Nightsafe' was launched and put into practice during the time frame of this exploration. This initiative was designed to raise standards within the nightclub industry by promoting sensible, safe and sociable nights out. The industry also wanted to reduce

alcohol related harm and address issues such as binge drinking and public disorder while improving the overall late night experience in Ireland. The Nightsafe initiative also dealt with concerning issues of non-affiliates including drugs, noise and health and safety. As stated in the *Issue Management* section of the *Literature Review* it is, ‘The management of an industry’s resources and efforts to participate in the successful resolution of issues that will affect the future viability and the well-being of the industry (Ewing 1997:173-8).

Separate issues were also identified by the nightclub industry as a concern to their businesses survival and reputation. These issues included the defining of a nightclub in legislation, the introduction of a nightclub permit, the increased cost of SEOs, the effects of The Intoxicating Liquor Act 2008 and the repealing of the Groceries Order Act. The industry has made efforts to tackle these issues through commissioning reports and meeting with government to try address the issues.

The Issue Management Process Model (Hearit 2005:126) was discussed in the *Literature Review* section as an appropriate model to address issues. I will use interview findings to determine how nightclubs and the industry are addressing issues that confront them.

1. Issue Identification

Interview evidence showed that issues were clearly identified and that a classification process was assigned to issues. Evidence showed they were usually classified in order of priority.

2. Issue Analysis

Depending on the issue and its importance, evidence showed that analysis of issues was applied. Examples of this were the ESIA and LFCV reports by the INIA. Additionally, individual nightclubs analysed issues usually through brainstorming meetings, using whatever information was available to them on the issue.

3. Issue Changing Strategy Options

The interview evidence showed that individual nightclubs mostly used strategies that were applied reactively to issues. However, there was evidence of dynamic solutions through best-practice initiatives such as Nightsafe.

4. Issue Action Programming

Programmes have been formulated for specific issue changing strategy options by the INIA. Goals and objectives for the programmes were defined and communication and public relations tactics were applied. Individual operators demonstrated examples of action programmes through improved customer relations, with examples cited as enhancing their presences on online social media sites and improving communications with customers.

5. Evaluation of Results

The INIA stated they evaluated their ESIA and LFCV reports and were currently evaluating Nightsafe. Individual nightclubs claimed to evaluate results and examples varied on the issue. An example cited by McGovern, was the reduction in insurance costs through the achievement of the Nightsafe award.

The interviews showed that there was a good understanding of issue management. This may be as a result of the many issues with which the industry is challenged. Interview evidence did show that issue action programming was weak among individual nightclubs as public relations programmes and correct communications or relationship management were not practiced.

5.2.6 Crisis Management

I was not able to discuss the issue of crisis management with the INIA. Therefore there is no evidence to determine their stance on the matter. I discussed the issue with individual nightclubs and only one was in the process of implementing a Crisis Management Plan. All other nightclubs did not have such a plan in place.

All interviewees demonstrated understanding of what could go wrong in their business and Eugene McGovern believes, 'You are only as good as your last night in this business...one serious incident could cause irreparable damage'. Several examples of what could go wrong were cited, including worst-case scenarios of arson, death and murder.

The interviews showed evidence, in many cases that the nightclubs were prepared for certain eventualities. All interviewees demonstrated good health and safety practices, including evacuation and emergency procedures. Three of the nightclubs had fully equipped emergency treatment rooms. Security manuals demonstrated procedures for rogue acts of behaviour or unethical acts.

To this extent, interviewees were prepared and anticipated eventualities and acts that could damage the reputation of their establishments. However, as stated in the *Literature Review* the introduction of a crisis management plan is recommended for the industry on a whole and all nightclubs should try to anticipate possible threats and eventualities. This plan should also include communication and public relations programmes to facilitate the crisis plan.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

The purpose of the exploration was to research the reputation and the nature of public relations practiced within the nightclub industry in Ireland. I will now draw on the conclusions from the research.

6.1.1 Reputation

Evidence demonstrated that the nightclub industry's reputation has improved in recent years, but as McGovern best describes this, 'It has improved from the bottom'. The industry has always appeared to have negative connotations attached to it. This is due to several factors. The industry was technically born out of loopholes and continues to operate through loopholes. In the early days, the government and church wanted to outlaw cross road dances or house dances. These dances were brought into a more controlled and regulated environment where church and government controlled them. It can be noted, one of the biggest issues of concern to the survival of the industry in Ireland today is house-parties.

Modern problems that contribute to the reputation of the industry are alcohol, public order, drugs, corporate social responsibility, government legislation and the industry's own lack of practices in dealing with publics, community and media.

It can be noted, there is a unique blend of drink issues involved generally in Irish society. This has also contributed to governmental decisions in dealing with issues that affect the industry. The Irish government has implemented more restrictive measures on drinking times within society than other countries according to the ESIA report, including dictating when drinking should stop. As the industry is then the last link on the chain that is a night out, it generally gets the majority of blame and is often labeled as the cause of so many public order offences. This contributes to damaging their reputation.

The media have been accused of irresponsible reporting at times. In order to enhance their reports, it is claimed that they sometimes include nightclubs in close vicinity to a public order incident. This has contributed to the overall reputation of the industry. However, the industry is lacking good media relations, and therefore, they are responsible for not working with the media to improve joint understandings of the issues, to better these relations.

Legislation has been introduced by government which impacts on the reputation of the industry. We have seen examples where inequities exist, and these inequities have proven detrimental to the reputation of the industry, and additionally to its survival. Fionnuala Sheehan of MEAS, makes the argument, 'It raises the question to be asked, what arrangements should be in place to actually manage your night-time economy in the same sort of way as you go about managing your day-time economy?' Sheehan pointed out that we do not focus on this issue in Ireland. The nightclub industry plays a significant role in the vibrancy of the night-time both socially and economically, and evidence showed that the government and legislation do not treat the issues in the same

manner as 'Managing your day-time economy'. The issue has been raised by the industry through the ESIA and LFCV reports, and meetings with government representatives. However, the industry has not been united or clear on its agendas, and has not been forcing the issue in the correct manner through circumstantial or ad-hoc lobbying and public relations. Members of the INIA have stated, 'They do not understand our industry', referring to government and politicians.

In the *Literature Review* Fombrun (1996:9) recommends that organisations initiate policies that reflect their core values, consider the welfare of their stakeholders and invoke concern for the development of the local community. The nightclub industry should follow the advice of Fombrun in addressing their reputation. Evidence shows that the industry has many issues in relation to its reputation and ultimately it is how they deal with the issues through correct practices that will determine the future of the reputation.

6.1.2 Public Relations

Of all the research candidates, the INIA practiced public relations with the greatest proficiency. Public relations is correctly practiced as a top-level function within the industry body. The INIA practices strategic public relations and showed a desire to practice symmetrical communication in philosophy. They worked to public relations plans and goals.

Not all nightclubs practice public relations and of the nightclubs that practice public relations, many practiced it incorrectly. There was some confusion as to what

constituted public relations. Promotional activity, such as flyer distribution and advertisements were regularly cited as public relations activity. None of the nightclubs participating in the research adhered in principle to all twelve hallmarks of excellent public relations.

The majority of the nightclubs that were studied did not practice strategic public relations in any way. They used some elements of public relations to create awareness on certain issues. Public relations when practiced, was practiced either ad-hoc or circumstantially. It was generally practiced reactively. There were not clearly defined public relation goals, objectives or plans in their public relation programmes. Apart from one venue, public relations was considered a branch of the marketing department and was not separated as a single department. However, two nightclubs outsourced it. Public relation practitioners did report good direct relationships with senior management and senior management showed a desire to support public relations.

All industry interviewees believed public relations is extremely important in solving many of the industry's reputational problems. They believed it was the single most important practice in helping with its reputation. However, only two non-affiliated interviewees in the exploration were aware of any public relations activity that the industry had been involved in.

Of those individual nightclubs that practiced public relations, they felt that it had contributed to the overall success of their business and industry by either creating better brand awareness or addressing individual issues, but this was largely owing to its customers concerns. Evidence showed that there were very few public relation

programmes aimed at creating, improving or maintaining relationships with the community or other publics.

6.1.3 Communications

The INIA is more advanced than individual nightclubs in its practices of communications. The INIA expressed a desire to practice two-way symmetrical communication in philosophy. However, they do not practice symmetrical communication consistently and demonstrate the use of two-way asymmetrical communication on a more consistent basis. The INIA have communication strategies based on research goals and objectives, examples of these strategies included communication with government on the ESIA and LFCV reports, where objectives are outlined in the reports. However, when they have practiced these communication strategies with policy makers and the government, it had been in an ad-hoc manner.

The nightclub industry has been 'quite fractious' in the past and evidence suggests it is still not united on the key issues concerning the industry. Membership is low but has been increasing year on year according to the INIA. Strategic two-way symmetrical communication is important for the INIA in bringing the industry's members together. It is also important to adopt this symmetrical approach to their communications with all their publics and that these communications are consistent and ongoing.

Individual nightclubs are not as advanced at communication practices with their publics, as the INIA are. Some nightclubs claimed to practice two-way symmetrical communications, however, evidence suggests that this symmetrical communication was

only with customers. In general, communication was either poor or inconsistent, largely using the asymmetrical or press agency models. Communication with many publics was either non-existent or poor, and in particular with the community. None of the nightclubs involved in the research had developed communication strategies however one was currently addressing this. Communication was mainly practiced ad-hoc or circumstantially. Communication was practiced in many cases reactively rather than proactively.

Nightclub interviewees did not understand the importance of two-way symmetrical communication to the industry but did feel that the industry is currently practicing two-way communication better than it ever had in the past. There was a confusion or misunderstanding of symmetrical communication. Interviewees accepted that more consistent communication was required with their publics and the community. Additionally, it was felt more nightclub operators in the country needed to improve their communications, particularly with the community. Interviewees felt that there is huge room for improvement in their communication practices and this is something they are aware of.

All interviewees believed that improving communication practices is extremely important in improving the reputation of the industry. Currently the main barriers cited by the interviewees to the improvement of communications are resources including the devotion of time and money to the area.

6.1.4 Publics

The interviewees affiliated with the nightclub industry had a good understanding of publics. They understood the reasons for defining publics. If they were engaging in a public relation programme, they were specific in whom they were targeting with the programme. They allocated resources that were tailored to the public relations programme. All were aware that the accuracy of the message was important in achieving effective communication with the public. However, there was evidence that very little communication existed between the industry and its many publics, with the exception of the INIA. The nightclub affiliates that were interviewed had an understanding of latent, aware, active and non-publics.

The research showed that the nightclub interviewees understood their linkages to publics. They understood that these linkages could require differing communication mediums. The INIA varied the communications they engaged in with their linkages. They used two-way symmetrical, asymmetrical and lobbying with their enabling linkages. The exploration showed that communication with enabling linkages was not on an ongoing basis. It was practiced only when necessary.

There were several methods of communication employed by the INIA and nightclubs when practicing with their functional linkages. This was dependent on which linkage the message was intended for. The methods most commonly used were press release, photo-call, advertisements, online marketing tools, press agency, two-way asymmetrical communication and in two cases, two-way symmetrical communication.

The relationship between nightclubs and their normative linkages varied. In some cases the nightclub owner also owned a bar, restaurant and hotel. The nightclub owner, restaurant owner, hotel owner and bar owner, when not the same person, shared similar problems. Research showed that greater improvements could be made in communicating with all linkages both within and outside the industry. Research also showed that there were conflicting interests with one of these linkages, the pub, now both competing for the one audience.

6.1.5 Relationship Management

Relationship management was not explicitly discussed in the interview process; conclusions were derived from information ascertained from interviews and document analysis. Organisation-public relationships are based on the state, which exists between an organisation and its public. The impact and actions that these relationships have on each other determines the state of the relationship. Managing this state is relationship management.

The research showed that nightclubs did not practice relationship management with many of their publics. The four dimensions of *trust*, *commitment*, *satisfaction* and *control mutuality* are indicators of successful relationships. *Trust* and its subcategories integrity, dependability and competence showed to be non-existent in a number of examples. Integrity was demonstrated as been non-existent in the nightclub industry's approach to noise control, where fairness in the eyes of the public is not seen. Dependability is the consistency of communication measured against a party's actions. Evidence from interviews showed nightclubs to be inconsistent in their communication

practices. Competence, or lack of, was highlighted in some nightclubs behaviour towards health and safety practices.

Commitment is the extent to which the public (or organisation) feels that the relationship is worth spending time and energy to maintain the relationship. Evidence showed that there is a lack of relationships in existence between nightclubs and publics.

Satisfaction is how much the public feels favourably because of positive expectations of the organisation. Again, this was hard to explore due to the lack of relationships that existed but evidence from interviewees showed there were emotions of fear and apprehension expressed by the community towards the industry. *Control Mutuality* is the notion of power sharing and influence upon each other to agree on power. This was non-existent in large because of a lack of relationships between individual nightclubs and their communities or publics.

The INIA demonstrated better organisation-public relationships mainly by creating and maintaining relationships. They were more consistent with their communication. They demonstrated commitment to developing relationships made evident through their initiatives. Satisfaction was shown by a decrease of complaints against the industry's practices through MEAS.

Hon and Grunig (1999:26) state in the *Literature Review*, 'the quality of relationships...usually explain why organisations have good or bad reputations'. The quality of relationships between nightclubs, the nightclub industry and its many publics is poor as made evident throughout the research. Hon and Grunig state that improving the quality of these relationships will lead to an improved reputation.

6.1.6 Issue Management

Nightclub interviewees did adopt the same approach in issue management as that advocated by the process model developed by Chase, Jones and Crane. The best example of the use of issue management is the Nightsafe initiative developed by the INIA. The issues of drugs, fire and emergency, security, crowd control, risk and claim, health and safety and noise control were all addressed under the Nightsafe initiative. These issues were identified as significant in improving the night-time experience of the industry and the overall reputation. These issues were also highlighted as issues of concern by non-affiliates.

The initiative was launched during this exploration and preliminary evaluations were made. Five members of the INIA had been awarded with the Nightsafe award. Two of the nightclubs involved in the study were awarded Nightsafe. They stated that press releases on the award had helped raise their profile and evidence demonstrated by interviews suggested that the community were impressed with the award achieved. It was stated by interviewees that media uptake on the story could have been better. Evidence also showed in interviews that the award of Nightsafe had obtained favourable response with the Gardaí, political representatives, judiciary services when applying for licences, and customers felt they were in a safe and responsible nightclub.

However as L'Etang states (2006:410), the nightclub industry should also define their moral responsibilities in a rational manner as opposed to just responding to external issues or trends.

6.1.7 Crisis Management

None of the nightclub affiliates had a Crisis Management Plan in place. One nightclub was in the process of implementing one. Evidence showed that nightclubs are well prepared for many potential threats and incidents. However, they are not prepared for extreme or unforeseen incidents that may impact their industry. It is recommended that nightclubs implement a Crisis Management Plan.

6.1.8 Summary

In the *Summary of Findings* in the *Literature Review* several questions, aims and goals were posed. The aim was to provide a comprehensive exploration of the reputation of nightclubs and nightclub industry of Ireland. The goals in achieving this aim was through exploring a set of ‘interwoven managerial practices’ that have been explored throughout the research. It is stated that reputation management requires public relations to enact programmes to establish, improve and maintain a reputation. The exploration showed that many facets of public relations are not carried out in a correct manner by both nightclubs and the nightclub industry. Communication strategies offer the best medium of conveying public relations programmes. The nightclubs and nightclub industry did not demonstrate well-developed communication strategies or consistency of communication. By and large they did not communicate using the two-way symmetrical model of communication. It was also stated in the *Literature Review* that communication is redundant if it is not communicated to the correct publics. The nightclub industry showed they are aware of the correct publics but they are not communicating with them.

There is also a lack of organisation-publics relationship management. The industry is not communicating with many of its publics or managing its relationships and this is supported by evidence from both interviews and secondary documents. The industry demonstrated knowledge of both issue and crisis management and had developed strategies to deal with issue management but the same developed strategies were not evident for crisis management. The above practices 'interwoven' lead to a better reputation. The nightclubs and nightclub industry are failing in many of the practices and as such the 'interwoven' framework that is suggested is not in existence to help the reputation of the industry. These lack of practices demonstrate why the industry has a poor reputation.

The nightclubs and nightclub industry are solely responsible for managing the industry's reputation now and in the future. This reputation has improved over the last five to ten years, and a reduction of complaints through MEAS is indicative of this. This may be mainly down to greater professionalism in the INIA and demonstrated by the first ever appointment of a CEO to manage the INIA. This appointment has allowed the industry to directly tackle key issues in a strategic fashion. The INIA demonstrate better 'interwoven practices' and this is evident in the reputation improving slightly. Reports have been compiled to support industry initiatives in a strategic fashion. The INIA have engaged in public relations programmes. They have created relationships with some of their publics. They are practicing two-way communication and aim to adopt a symmetrical philosophy, where understanding, dialogue, ideas and attitudes are changed to better the industry. The 'Nightsafe' initiative is an example of this. This initiative is addressing the many concerns of the public.

Public relations and the ‘interwoven practices’ of communication, reputation management and relationship management can help improve the reputation of the nightclub industry and interviewees believed this. Ultimately, there is a lack of understanding of public relations in general by the nightclubs. Interviewees from the nightclub industry were less aware of the functional aspect of public relations and viewed it primarily as the promotion of functions. You are known by your actions and what you do. Public relations can help achieve, in both the doing of actions and the promoting of actions. These actions can lead to an improved reputation.

6.2 Recommendations for the INIA

Any person, business or industry practicing public relations must have a public relations plan. This plan includes analysis of its current state, the development of future goals and objectives, the tactics and strategy employed to achieve its objectives and finally it must evaluate the public relations plan.

The exploration showed that there is not unanimity in the industry on the key issues and objectives. The industry has been quite fractious for a number of years and although this has been addressed to an extent, greater efforts are required to bring the industry together on key issues. The INIA has to engage in two-way symmetrical communication with its members to agree a mutual understanding on what is the best way forward. The key issues of the industry need to be outlined, defined and prioritised before any public relations plan can commence. These public relations plans must include short, medium and long-term objectives.

A reputation is a reflection of a business or industry's identity and practices. This research has shown that the industry and individual nightclubs suffered from a lack of identity either through poor communication or the non-existence of relationship management. This lack of identity has added to the reputational problem of the nightclub industry. The INIA can use a public relations programme to improve this identity problem. This public relations programme would focus on better communications by the INIA and individual nightclubs with their publics and the community.

In the wider tourism sector, Ireland does not appear to have a reputation as a destination for nightclubs. Ireland is strongly identified with the pub being central to tourism. Yet nightclubs report figures of 25 million visitors annually. It is recommended that the INIA and industry should align themselves with the wider tourism network. Failte Ireland was not mentioned by any nightclub interviewees during interviews. Normative linkages should be created between the INIA and the national tourism promoters. Promoting nightclubs is integral to the nightclub industry, tourism and the hospitality sector. Tourism requires a night-time offering and the nightclubs have to make themselves central to that offering. This requires the industry to also force the issue of their importance to the night-time economy, and additionally, raising the issue of the management of the night-time economy.

The INIA has practiced lobbying for a number of years. This lobbying has been practiced either circumstantially or when necessary and has yet to pay dividends. The industry strongly tried to tackle the issues made aware by the ESIA and LFCV reports. The industry engaged in these reports and initiatives to tackle their problems. There is

not continual lobbying. Lobbying and talks with government representatives should be continual and ongoing dialogue, not just when issues occur. The industry cannot pick and choose when it practices lobbying. It has to engage in ongoing dialogue and ongoing public relations activity.

The research recommends the INIA offer its member's guidance on media relations. The research showed that the nightclubs that were practicing media relations gained an advantage competitively and created greater brand awareness. The research showed that nightclubs that did not practice media relations had trust issues and missed out on this brand awareness.

It is recommended that the INIA promote the importance of engaging with publics to their members, with particular emphasis on creating greater relationships with their communities and engaging in relationship management. There is currently a void in relationships between individual nightclubs and their communities. This void has created a misperception of the industry. Evidence shows that nightclubs have failed to relate with their communities and this has been detrimental to their reputation and the overall reputation of the Industry.

The CEO currently leads all public relations activities on behalf of the INIA. Arising from Larissa Grunig's work on *The Excellence Study*, it is recommended that a similar public relations role should be created within the INIA to address all public relation and media activities. It is recommended that the role would include work on an ongoing basis with the industry's key publics including government and media. The position would liaise with INIA members on all public relations activity and include media

training for members. A further aim of the role is to assist and develop the issue of community relations amongst individual nightclubs. Additionally, this role should focus on the promotion of the industry in the wider tourism sector. The creation of this position would also free up the CEO to concentrate on other matters.

It is also recommended that the INIA should have a public relations company on an ongoing retainer to continue ongoing dialogue with its lobbying efforts. They currently employ Q4 Public Relations to address public relations, but this is on a case-by-case basis. The ongoing public relations company would fill the existing vacuum where ongoing dialogue with key publics is not occurring. They would also contribute to all other public relations activities engaged in by the INIA, liaising as necessary.

The INIA have made huge steps in terms of improving the industry's reputational capacity. They have to continue to focus on where their areas of strength are. The role of a public relations practitioner and retaining a public relations company are resource dependent, but positive public relations is vital to the industry's economic survival. Public relations, media relations, community relations and government relations are all key to the future success, not only the success of its reputation but also for the viability and future success of the industry.

6.3 Recommendations for Nightclubs

It is recommended that nightclubs engage in public relation programmes and plans. Public relations is currently practiced ad-hoc and when required. It is also practiced without plans and often only practiced for promotional activity purposes. Public

relations plans need to be implemented. These plans should include objective setting, strategies and analysis of short, medium and long-term objectives. Key issues need to be defined and public relation plans built around these key issues.

Communication in the industry has improved significantly but it is not consistent. Nightclubs need to draw up communication strategies that are relevant to the commercial interests of their venues. Two-way symmetrical communication has to be at the forefront of these strategies. Greater two-way symmetrical communication needs to be created between the nightclubs and their public linkages. In particular it needs to create greater links with the community, the Gardaí, local politicians and the media.

Evidence has shown that individual nightclubs have failed to communicate with their community and are failing in relationship management. This failure has led to a negative reputation. It has led to the community expressing fear and apprehension regarding the industry. To eradicate these fears and apprehension, the industry has to engage in two-way symmetrical communication, where the industry is open to a mutual understanding on issues of concern to the community. The industry needs to create and maintain relationships with this important public. Currently it does not.

Media relations are imperative for the reputation of the industry and nightclubs have to communicate with the media. The nightclubs have to be proactive and promote the areas where they have advantage. If a nightclub is getting negative press, they have to get people to perceive the issue from their perspective. This is achieved with ongoing dialogue allied with promoting your strengths on a regular basis in the media.

Greater relations are recommended with the Gardaí. Ongoing dialogue can help create an understanding of the issues that affect the business and two-way symmetrical communication can achieve this. A better relationship with this public can lead to limiting public disorder and improving the reputation of the industry.

Continual and ongoing dialogue with public representatives is recommended by the research to coincide with INIA lobbying initiatives. Ongoing dialogue and two-way symmetrical communication with public representatives creates a greater understanding of the industry and individual businesses concerns. When specific issues arise, the public representative will have a pre-existing knowledge of the industry. This will offer more potential in addressing overall industry concerns.

It is recommended that all nightclub venues should strive to achieve the Nightsafe award. Evidence showed this award demonstrates social responsibility to the industry's publics. It offers the opportunity of positive public relations programmes and the creation of new and improved relations with public linkages including the community, the Gardaí, the media and responsible drinking promoters. It offers the nightclub the opportunity to improve its reputation.

Individual nightclubs must create and or improve their identity. It is recommended that this agenda is included in all future communication strategies and public relations programmes engaged by the business. Additionally, the creation and maintenance of relations with their communities will improve this current area of concern.

It is recommended that nightclubs should include themselves in the wider tourism sector of their geographical area. Greater links with the tourism sector will help improve the reputation by promoting a night-time package for tourists that includes nightclubs.

Nightclubs that engaged in public relations reported it as helpful to their business in promoting individual projects and creating brand awareness. Public relations is a relatively new practice in the nightclub industry. Nightclubs now need to look at public relations as more than a promotion tool and recognise the importance of its functions. To improve the reputation of their individual businesses they must look at how public relations can help them strategically address issues that greatly affect their business. They need to engage in strategic public relation plans that can ultimately improve their reputations and furthermore their commercial interests and viability.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

This exploration has helped bring a hard edge to the intangible asset of the reputation of the nightclub industry in Ireland. It has helped explain the practices or lack of practices of nightclubs and the nightclub industry in respect to reputation and public relations. The research has demonstrated that the reputation of an industry can be explored through the elements of public relations, reputation management, communication, relationship management, publics, issue and crisis management.

There are a number of recommendations that I can make from this research for future research. The implications of this research can help promote public relations and how public relations can help in the development of an industry. The nightclub industry is an

industry that is in the main lacking in the practice of public relations. In this respect, future research should identify if an improvement in these areas could see the industry's reputation improve. Many facets of the industry should improve if they implement recommendations from this research including its organisation-public relationships and its overall reputation.

Further research is recommended in exploring industry reputation through the practices mentioned above. It was discussed in this research that it is more difficult to explore an industry's reputation compared to an individual organisations reputation. Many of the recommended literature is specific in organisational reputation and this is something that this research aimed to achieve by combining individual nightclubs and the overall representative body the INIA. But future research could explore this concept even further.

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APPENDIX I – INTERVIEW CANDIDATES

Anonymous – Owner and operator, two nightclubs, Connaught region. Interviewed: 12th December 2011.

Anonymous – Licensing Sergeant in the Leinster region, An Garda Síochána. Interviewed: 24th February 2012.

Burton, Will – Freelance Journalist, North West Region. Interviewed: 29th December 2011.

Byrne, Niall – General Manager, Scraggs Alley. Interviewed: 11th January 2012.

Callinan, Brendan – Taxi Driver; Retired Head of Security, Nexus. Interviewed: 13th January 2012.

Crossan, Michael – General Manager, The Pulse. Interviewed: 5th December 2011.

Dollard, Kieran – Chairman, Stretford United Football Club. Interviewed: 2nd July 2012.

Farren, Ronan – Public Relations Consultant, Q4 Public Relations. Interviewed: 17th February 2012.

Hayden, Emma – Public Relations and Marketing Executive, The Foundry nightclubs, Carlow and Waterford. Interviewed: 14th December 2011.

Hayden, Esther – Journalist, Carlow People. Interviewed: 17th January 2012.

McGovern, Eugene – General Manager, The Foundry nightclubs, Carlow and Waterford. Interviewed: 10th December 2011.

Murnane O'Connor, Jennifer – Fianna Fail County Council Representative. Interviewed: 25th July 2012.

O Carroll, Gerry – Crime Correspondent, The Evening Herald; Private Investigator; Retired Detective Inspector, An Garda Síochána. Interviewed: 26th July 2012.

O'Sullivan, Barry – CEO, Irish Nightclub Industry Association. Interviewed: 18th January 2012.

O'Sullivan, John – CEO, John O'Sullivan Solicitors. Interviewed: 01st August 2012.

Prior, Holly – Marketing Manager, The Wright Venue. Interviewed: 18th October 2011.

Regazozoli, Selina – Corporate Sales Manager, The Wright Venue. Interviewed: 18th October 2011.

Sheehan, Fionnuala – CEO, Mature Enjoyment of Alcohol in Society and Drinkaware.ie. Interviewed: 27th July 2012.

Tynan, Nigel – Editor, Licensing World. Interviewed: 5th December 2011.

APPENDIX II – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS NIGHTCLUB AFFILIATES

Name:

Age:

Male/Female: M F

Mobile Number:

Email Address:

What position do you hold within the nightclub industry?

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Question 1 – Public Relations

Does your business practice public relations?

Sub Questions

How do you practice public relations? What public relation techniques have you employed? Do you believe public relations can improve your business? Do you believe public relations can improve your industry? What public relations techniques would you see improving the industry? Do you believe public relations can improve the reputation of the industry?

Question 2 – Communications

How do you communicate with your publics?

Sub Questions

What are the barriers to your communication? Do you engage in two-way communication? Do you engage in two-way symmetrical communication? How could you improve in your communication practices? Do you receive feedback from your communication? Do you have good internal communication practices? Do you believe good communication can improve the reputation of the industry?

Question 3 – Publics

Do you communicate to the general public? Do you communicate to a particular public?

Sub Questions

How do you communicate to your various publics? How do you prioritise your publics? Do you monitor 'public opinion'? Do you believe better communication between you and your publics would improve the overall reputation of the business/industry?

Question 4 – Reputation

In your opinion, what is the current reputation of the nightclub industry in Ireland? How do you feel the nightclub industry is portrayed with respect to reputation?

Sub Questions

Why do you believe it has the reputation it has? What factors contribute to this reputation? What do you believe could be done to improve the reputation? Where do you see the future of nightclubbing going regarding reputation? What is the most important aspect of a nightclub's reputation?

Question 5 – Issue Management

What issues do you feel currently affect the reputation of the nightclub industry?

Sub Questions

How could these issues be addressed? Are you aware of the Issue Management Process Model? How do you address issues? Are these issues detrimental to the reputation of the nightclub industry? Are the issues manageable? Could public relations and communication address these issues? Can these issues be improved?

Question 6 – Crisis Management

Do you have a Crisis Management Plan?

Sub Questions

What are the potential threats to your industry? Can you plan for these threats? Do you have plans/preparations for every eventuality? What does/should your crisis management plan protect against?

APPENDIX III – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS NIGHTCLUB NON-AFFILIATES

Name:

Age:

Male/Female: M F

Mobile Number:

Email Address:

What job/position do you hold?

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Question 1 – Relationship

How would you describe your relationship with the nightclub industry?

Sub Questions

How closely would you work with the nightclub industry? Are you dependent on the nightclub industry? Does the industry affect your day-to-day business? Do you monitor nightclub activity?

Question 2 – Communications

How often would you communicate with the nightclub industry or vice versa?

Sub Questions

What are the barriers to these communications? What type of communication do you engage in? How could you/they improve in the communication practices? Do you receive feedback from your communication? Do you believe good communication can improve the reputation of the nightclub industry?

Question 3 – Publics

What do you think of the communication between the nightclub industry and their publics?

Sub Questions

In your opinion, how do you think the nightclub industry communicates with its various publics? Do you believe better communication between the nightclub industry and its publics would improve the overall reputation of the business/industry?

Question 4 – Reputation

In your opinion, what is the current reputation of the nightclub industry in Ireland? How do you feel the nightclub industry is portrayed with respect to reputation?

Sub Questions

Why do you believe it has the reputation it has? What factors contribute to this reputation? What do you believe could be done to improve the reputation? Where do you see the future of nightclubbing going regarding reputation? What is the most important aspect of a nightclubs reputation?

Question 5 – Issue Management

What issues do you feel currently affect the reputation of the nightclub industry?

Sub Questions

How could these issues be addressed? Are these issues detrimental to the reputation of the nightclub industry? Are the issues manageable? Could public relations and communication address these issues? Can these issues be improved?

Question 6 – Public Relations

Are you aware of any public relation activity that the nightclub industry has/is engaged in?

Sub Questions

In your opinion, do you feel the industry could improve its public relation practices? How do you feel it could improve its public relations activity? Do you think improved public relations could improve the reputation of the industry?