CHAPTER 3: CREDIBILITY, TRUST AND LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

3.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the concepts of credibility, trust and long-term relationships. They are universal and multidimensional and apply to all instances of communication in the organisation and to other disciplines. They may have different meanings in different contexts. Theorists have various perspectives on the meaning of these concepts.

This chapter focuses on these three concepts, their various dimensions and their relevance to MPR. This discussion is important because the statements for the empirical part of this study were selected in accordance with these dimensions and their relevance to MPR (see chapter 6).

3.2   CREDIBILITY

According to McCroskey and Young (Simons 2002:22), theorists regard credibility as a multidimensional concept comprising the perceiver's assessment of the communicator's relevant knowledge, honesty and good intentions towards the perceiver (McCroskey & Young, 1981 in Simons 2002: 22). Herbig and Milewicz (1995:7) contend that credibility is the "believability of an organisation's intentions at a particular moment in time". The more believable the message source, the more likely it is to influence the receptor. Credibility occurs when an organisation can be relied on to do what it says it will do. Credibility is also time-sensitive because nowadays, the organisation's perceived credibility may differ completely from its perceived credibility by the same organisation in future. Credibility is also based on an organisation's intention and exists when one can confidently use past actions to predict future behaviour.

Simons (2002:20) refers to O'Keefe (1990), who states that credibility is "a perceiver's assessment of believability, or of whether a given speaker is likely to provide messages that will be reliable guides to belief and behaviour". He argues that the concept of credibility overlaps with the broader concept of trust and may be regarded as a "subclass"

of trust. He regards behavioural integrity[37] as an important dimension of credibility.

Hoeffler and Keller (2002:80) argue that credibility also manifests itself in an organisation's brand. Brand credibility[38] should be perceived in terms of three dimensions, namely expertise (competency, innovativeness and being a market leader), trustworthiness (being dependable and meeting customers' needs) and likeability (being fun, interesting and worth spending time with). They state that brand credibility can be established by corporate societal marketing[39] because the organisation may be perceived as unbiased and as a highly credible source on account of its positive involvement in the community.

The concepts of credibility and reputation are interrelated. Herbig and Milewicz (1995:5), for instance, contend that a good reputation generates credibility, whereas Swift (2001:22) regards reputation as the result of trustworthy (above approach) behaviour, which is said to be a dimension of the concept of credibility. According to Herbig and Milewicz (1995:5), the concept of reputation is a "historical notion" based on the sum of past actions of an entity and therefore requires consistency of actions over a long period of time. This estimation is based on the entity's willingness and ability to perform an activity repeatedly in a similar fashion. Bennett and Kottasz (2000:225) refer to Balmer (1998) who argues that the concept of image differs from that of reputation because the former refers to the "public's latest beliefs" about an organisation. The concept of reputation, on the other hand, "represents a value judgement about the organisation's qualities 'built up over a period and focusing on what it does and how it behaves'".

Herbig and Milewicz (1995:6) add that credibility must be established before the organisation's message will have any effect. The receiver evaluates the credibility of the source. The organisation must therefore develop a reputation for producing and delivering high-quality products. Credibility influences reputation only through the final

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[37]Behavioural integrity refers to the "perceived pattern of alignment" between a person's words and deeds (Simons 2002:19).

[38]Brand credibility refers to the extent to which the brand as a whole is perceived as credible in terms of three dimensions (Hoeffler & Keller 2002:80).

[39]Corporate societal marketing refers to marketing initiatives that have at least one noneconomic objective related to social welfare and that use the resources of the organisation and/or its partners (Hoeffler & Keller 2002:78).

outcome - that is, promised quality must be delivered.

3.2.1   Source credibility

According to Simons (2002:22), the concept of source credibility or communicator credibility has been extensively researched in the studies of attitudes and attitude change by, for instance, Eagle and Chaiken (1993) and Fiske and Taylor (1991). According to Lafferty, Goldsmith and Newell (2002:2), source credibility has been proposed as an important forerunner to consumers' attitudes towards an advertisement and advertising effectiveness. They argue that source credibility is manifested in corporate credibility which has gained much momentum in literature. They point out that in earlier studies, corporate credibility's influence on consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions had only been advanced in literature on persuasion, for instance, a study by Kalwani and Silk (1982). Lafferty et al (2002:2) argue that research (for instance, that by Lafferty and Goldsmith in 1999) indicates that corporate credibility plays a vital role in influencing consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions.

According to Ferguson (1999:131), source credibility can have a dramatic impact on the way audiences receive messages.   Audiences accept messages from credible sources and reject the same messages from less credible ones. Ferguson (1999:131) argues that various studies, for instance, by Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1953), McCroskey (1966) and O'Keefe (1990) indicate that factors that influence audience perceptions of source credibility are level of expertise, composure, trustworthiness, dynamism, sociability, extroversion and similarity to the audience. The way a source uses the media also affects perceptions of communicator credibility.

Ferguson (1999:131) explains that the two primary source credibility factors proposed by Hovland (1953) are trustworthiness and expertise. He states that factor-analytic studies such as that of O'Keefe (1990), confirmed them as highly valued factors in source credibility. The trustworthiness factor refers to the extent to which a source is perceived as sincere, safe, honest, hard-working, supportive, socially responsible and willing to take a stand or sharing a common fate with the audience. *The concept of trustworthiness*

differs from the concept of trust in that it does not refer to confidence in another's goodwill, based upon reputation, dialogue and experience but the extent to which the source is perceived in terms of consistency.

The expertise factor refers to the degree to which a source is perceived as qualified, knowledgeable and intelligent, and experienced in relevant areas. Extroversion, sometimes also referred to as dynamism, refers to the extent to which a source is perceived to be forceful, bold, outgoing, active, involved, powerful, healthy, energetic, busy, assertive, progressive and supportive of change. Sociability refers to whether the source is perceived to be likeable and friendly, whereas composure refers to whether we perceive a source to be confident, articulate and in control. Source credibility is also influenced by a perception of similarity as indicated by studies in psychology such as that by Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith and Bem in 1990 (Ferguson 1999:131).

Table 3.1 below summarises the dimensions of the concept of credibility and their relevance to MPR.

Table 3:1: Dimensions of the concept of credibility

DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
Believability of intentions	The organisation's good intention in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s) is illustrated by its continuous community involvement and participation.
Behavioural integrity	Because of media endorsement and the organisation's community involvement, its product(s) and/or service(s) are more believable. The organisation is perceived as keeping its promises in this regard.
Past actions can predict future behaviour	The history and actions of the organisation are an indication of its responsible action and future behaviour in terms of its product(s) and/or

	service(s).
Brand	The organisation's product(s) and/or service(s) are regarded as credible because of its visibility, media endorsement and involvement in the community. The organisation is also valued for its expertise, trustworthiness and likeability with regard to its product(s) and/or service(s).

Sources: Herbig & Milewicz (1995:6); Simons (2002:19)

Table 3.2 below summarises the dimensions of the concept of source credibility and their relevance to MPR.

Table 3.2: Dimensions of the concept of source credibility

DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
Level of expertise	The organisation's level of expertise is illustrated by its brand, culture, product(s) and/or service(s) and efficient messages in this regard.
Composure	The organisation's composure is evident in its activities, history and media endorsement in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s).
Trustworthiness	The social responsibility and the good intentions of the organisation are indicative of its trustworthiness in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s).
Dynamism	The dynamism of the organisation is evident in its expert personnel with regard to its product(s) and/or service(s).
Sociability	The organisation's sociability is evident in its actions, special events, as well as community and environmental

	involvement in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s).
Extroversion	The organisation's extroversion is evident in its history, actions and media endorsement in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s).
Similarity to audience	The organisation's similarity to the audience is evident in its profile, history and useful information in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s).
Use of media by sources	The organisation's product(s) and/or service(s) are accepted because it is perceived as a credible source. The way the organisation uses the media affects perceptions of its credibility in terms of, say, its level of expertise, composure, trustworthiness, dynamism, sociability, extroversion and similarity to the audience (with regard to its product(s) and/or service(s).

Source: Ferguson (1999:131-138)

3.3   TRUST

According to Swift (2001:18), literature on the concept of trust is underresearched and "fragmented across a variety of disciplines". Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2001:1238) explain that most research on the concept of trust was in the field of social psychology in the form of the analysis of personal relationships. Trust is considered to be an inherent characteristic of valuable social interaction. They argue that these studies have resulted in the use of "varied and sometimes confusing terminology" to explain this concept. Martins (2002:756) reiterates the above arguments and states that various researchers have emphasised different aspects and dimensions of trust in an effort to develop a theory of it.

Martins (2002:755) argues that researchers have mainly examined trust at three distinct levels of analysis, namely individual, interpersonal/intergroup and institutional/cultural. This has "led to the accumulation of a great deal of knowledge on the subject". However,

literature indicates that there is little evidence of any effort to integrate this knowledge and to build a comprehensive theory of trust.

As a result of the effort to conceptualise trust, there are various definitions of the concept in these different levels of analysis across a variety of disciplines. Swift (2001:21), for instance, argues that trust "is the confidence in another's goodwill, based upon reputation, dialogue and experience", while Gilson (2003:1454) describes it as "a relational notion: it generally lies between people, people and organisations, people and events". He explains that trust may also be regarded as "self-trust". Moore (1999:76) sees it as a "mental state" and refers to it in terms of impulses to act in a specific manner. He provides an operational definition of trust, namely that "a trusting individual is one who makes a low personal investment in monitoring and enforcing the compliance of the individuals with whom he or she has made a compact from which she or he believes he or she will benefit".

Charlton (2000) summarises the concept of trust as follows:

- "congruence in word and deed;
- expressing positive regard and belief in others (individual trust);
- manifesting accountability, predictability and reliability of an organisation's position;
- articulating and embodying a moral code that cares about people (innate worth of people); and
- relying on people and enabling them to enrich their lives".

Literature describes trust as a multidimensional concept, within relationships with the organisation's stakeholders, from different approaches, and as having different forms and levels. It is also described as being essential for good employee relations with the organisation. However, this focus is not relevant for the purpose of this thesis. For instance, Grey and Carsten (2001:229) and Mills and Ungson (2003:143), discuss how organisational structures, the management approach and bureaucracy can have an impact on employees' trust.

3.3.1   Trust as a multidimensional concept

Svensson (2001:431) explains that numerous researchers have dealt with trust as a

multidimensional concept. He refers to studies by, for instance Dwyer and Lagace (1986), Kwant (1965) and Cook and Wall (1980), which identify some of these dimensions of trust as confidence, predictability, ability, expertness, competence, intentions or motives, benevolence, motivation to lie, business sense and judgement, altruism, loyalty, integrity, congruence, consistency, fairness, character, openness of management, liking, respect, faith, acceptance and security. He points out that a "common denominator" between the presented trust dimensions in literature is the emphasis on issues that may directly influence the trust in an individual or an organisation.

Swift's (2001:17) work on trust is based on trust-based relationships with the organisation's different stakeholders. He regards accountability as an important dimension of the concept of trust because organisations are currently more accountable for their impact upon society. Accountability refers to "the requirement or duty to provide an account or justification for one's actions to whomever one is answerable" and is about whether stakeholders have sufficient, accurate, understandable and timely information on which to act (Swift 2001:17).

Organisations should account for their actions through the provision of information to stakeholders and society which in turn results in the organisation being trusted by its customers/publics. Information is required to afford stakeholders the opportunity to make decisions or take action with regard to organisational behaviour. Organisations therefore disseminate information to their customers/publics via, for instance, focus groups, interviews and corporate social reports and engage in social and ethical auditing.

Swift (2001:20) refers to Hosmer (1995) who identifies the following dimensions of trust-based organisational/stakeholder relationships:

- "Trust will generally be expressed as an optimistic expectation that the organisation will behave in a socially responsible way.
- Trust will generally occur under conditions of vulnerability and will tend to be required in circumstances where the most vulnerable of societal interest groups are dependent upon the behaviour of the organisation concerned.
- Trust will generally be associated with the willing cooperation of stakeholders with the organisation in which mutual benefit to the parties is assumed.

- Trust (especially if it is generated in the absence of a formal, contractually-defined relationship) will be difficult to enforce should there be a breakdown.
- Trust will generally be augmented by an expectation that the trusted organisation will be 'morally' obliged to protect the rights of, and to behave in a way that is beneficial to society".

Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman (2001:1241) refer to studies in which trust is also described as honesty, dependability and responsibility, for instance, those by Larzelere and Huston (1980) and Rempel, Holmes and Zanna (1985). They state that all the concepts that are used to describe trust share the same idea, namely that trust in a person is a feeling of security based on the belief that his or her behaviour is guided and motivated by favourable and positive intentions towards the welfare and interests of his or her partner. Hence, it is expected that he or she does not intend to lie, break promises or take advantage of the other's vulnerability. Therefore, the smaller the doubt that his or her purposes are questionable, the smaller the risk to the relationship.

Gilson (2003:1454) refers to voluntary trust and dependency to conceptualise trust. He argues that the search for an understanding of trust must be based upon a relationship between two individuals who are known to each other. Trust is a "psychological state". To trust somebody else is a voluntary action based on expectations of how others will behave in relation to yourself in the future. These expectations may be disappointed and might generate negative outcomes. Trust involves an element of risk derived from one individual's uncertainty about the motives, intentions and future actions of another on whom they depend. The types of expected behaviours that generally underlie trust include technical competence, openness, concern and reliability.

Gilson (2003:1455) also argues that trust offers both micro-level and macro-level benefits for the parties involved in a relationship. At a micro-level, trust benefits people by establishing stable relationships, while macro-level benefits of calculative trust, include the overall efficiency gains resulting from reduced monitoring of transactions.

3.3.2   Different approaches to the conceptualisation of trust

According to Swift (2001:19), there are generally two approaches to conceptualise trust in various disciplines. The first deals with *predictable behaviour* and conceptualises trust

as occurring between two parties in a transaction. It is based upon the predictability of another party's behaviour "that one's interests will not be harmed or put at risk by the other". The second concerns the *confident expectation*, "based upon the other party's goodwill, that one's interests will be protected". According to the second approach, confidence in the other party's reliability and integrity is important.

3.3.3   Different forms of trust

Gilson (2003:1455) argues that trust is manifested in two forms, namely *voluntary* and *impersonal trust*. *Voluntary trust*, which has different forms, refers to a person voluntarily trusting another. Voluntary trust takes on the forms of strategic trust, namely moralistic or altruistic trust. *Strategic trust* means that somebody is prepared to make himself or herself vulnerable, and to run a risk that he or she will be exploited by the other partner, and to build up credit by doing more than the minimum. This perspective of trust argues that it is calculated and a cognitive phenomenon based on judgements about the circumstances surrounding the trust relation.

However, Gilson (2003:1456) also explains that trust involves more than calculation. He refers to Giddens (1990) who suggests that trust is more a form of faith and an expression of a commitment to something that goes beyond cognitive understanding. Strategic trust therefore is also affective and refers to emotional bonds and obligations because of interaction, empathy and identification with the other's desires or intentions, or the desire to treat the other as I would wish to be treated myself.

Moralistic or altruistic trust argues that trust is rooted in expectations about how people should behave. It is based on a belief in the goodwill of others. *Impersonal trust* refers to trust between entities unknown to each other and has two forms, namely trust in strangers and trust in social systems. Trust in strangers (cognitive trust) can be extended to strangers when the trustor has adequate information with which to judge that the trustee is likely to take account of his or her interests.   Such information can be derived from the trustee's reputation or from shared norms. Trust in strangers can also be rooted in institutions that lower the risks in trusting them and allow *delegated* or *fiduciary* trust to develop.   These institutions provide the basis for judging whether their contact persons share or do not share their customers'/publics' interests based on, for instance, their

technical and professional knowledge. Institutions have different levels of trustworthiness and levels of trust vary between societies because they not only act as a guarantor of interpersonal trust but also as the foundation of trust "as a property of the overall system, playing a critical role in the preservation of social order" (Gilson 2003:1456).

3.3.4   Sources of trust

Moore (1999:82) suggests a general framework to conceptualise trust in terms of two distinct sources of trust, namely character assessment and incentive assessment. Character assessment refers to judgements about a person's likely behaviour formed on the basis of some assessment of his or her past or typical behaviour. Character assessment is subdivided into two categories, namely generic character assessment and specific character assessment. Generic character assessment refers to a person's mistrust or trust in another on the basis of his or her understanding of the generic characteristics of the person and how trustworthy this person is in general. Specific character assessment refers to a person's mistrust or trust in another person on the basis of the specific information the former has about the latter. Incentive assessment refers to a person's judgement about the likely behaviour of another person in particular contexts on the basis of assessments of the incentives the person faces to honour or break implicit or explicit commitments. The trustor will be influenced by the extent and quality of information he or she believes he or she has about another person.

The concepts of trust and reputation are also interrelated. According to Herbig and Milewicz (1995:5), for a reputation to be established, transactions between the entity and other parties must have occurred. Reputation is also built up primarily through market signalling[40]. An organisation will lose its reputation if it repeatedly fails to fulfil marketing signals.

Table 3.3 below summarises the various dimensions of trust and their relevance to MPR.

Table 3.3: Dimensions of the concept of trust

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[40]A market signal is a marketing activity that provides information beyond mere form and alerts another firm to its intentions, commitments or motives (Herbig & Milewicz 1995:5).

DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
No sense of risk	When the organisation breeds trust in its product(s) and/or service(s) through visibility, response and commitment, consumers will experience a feeling of no sense of risk.
Confidence	Because the organisation's product(s) and/or service(s) are known, consumers have confidence about their dealings with it.
Predictability	Because the organisation is visible and known by its customers/publics, they can predict its actions in terms of their dealings with its product(s) and/or service(s).
Ability	Because of the organisation's visibility and strong financial position, its customers/publics trust its ability in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s).
Expertness	Because the organisation and its staff are visible, its customers/publics trust its expertness in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s).
Competence	The organisation is regarded as competent in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s) because of its visibility.
Intentions or motives	When the organisation breeds trust in its product(s) and/or service(s) through visible actions and direct involvement, consumers will be convinced of its good intentions or motives.
Benevolence	The organisation's direct involvement with its customers in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s) is indicative of its benevolence.
	Because the organisation is visible and known

Motivation to lie	by its customers/publics, they can predict its actions in terms of its honest dealings in its product(s) and/or service(s).
Altruism	The organisation's corporate identity creates a feeling of kindness in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s).
Loyalty	The organisation's direct involvement with and commitment to its customers, generates loyalty towards its product(s) and/or service(s).
Integrity	The organisation's direct involvement with consumers and its responsible conduct are indicative of its integrity with regard to its product(s) and/or service(s).
Congruence	Because of the visibility of the organisation and its commitment to its customers, customers can relate to its product(s) and/or service(s).
Consistency	Because the organisation is visible and known by its customers/publics, they can predict its consistent actions in terms of their dealings with its product(s) and/or service(s).
Fairness	Because the organisation is visible and known by its customers/publics, they can predict its fairness in terms of their dealings with its product(s) and/or service(s).
Character	The organisation's corporate identity is indicative of its truthfulness in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s).
Openness of management	Because of the organisation's visibility in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s), its management is known and respected.

Liking	Because the organisation is visible and known by its customers/publics, they like conducting business with it.
Respect	Because the organisation is visible and known by its customers/publics, they have respect for and value its product(s) and/or service(s).
Faith	Because the organisation is visible and known by its customers/publics, they have faith in its product(s) and/or service(s).
Acceptance	Because the organisation is visible and known by its customers/publics, they accept its product(s) and/or service(s).
Security	When the organisation breeds trust in its product(s) and/or service(s) through visible actions, commitment and direct involvement, consumers will experience a feeling of security in their dealings with it.
Honesty	Because the organisation is visible and known by its customers/publics, they can predict its actions in terms of its honest dealings with its product(s) and/or service(s).
Dependability	Because the organisation is committed to its customers, they feel that they can depend on it when it comes to their dealings with its product(s) and/or service(s).
Responsibility	Because of the openness of the organisation, customers perceive it as being responsible in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s).
Accountability	The provision of reliable information to stakeholders and society is indicative of the

	organisation's accountability in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s).

Sources: Delgado-Ballester & Munuera-Aleman (2001:1241); Svensson (2001:431); Swift (2001:17)

3.4   LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

Kandampully and Duddy (1999:316) explain that customers become more important to organisations as they adopt strategies developed in the concept of market orientation[41]. They refer to Gummesson (1996), who states that the shift of focus from the organisation to the customer has been evident both in practice and research. Gummesson (1996), for instance, argues that an organisation's customer focus forces management to realise that the organisation's primary responsibility to serve the customer is essential in order to achieve market orientation. As a result, numerous studies of customer-related issues such as customer satisfaction (for instance, Churchill & Surprenant, 1982) and customer relationships (for instance, Jackson, 1985) contributed to the body of knowledge on customers (Kandampully & Duddy 1999:316). Wyners (2001) adds that in this new customer approach, customers are treated as "holistic[42]" rather than "narrow", "active[43]" rather than "reactive" and "long-term[44]" rather than "transactional".

Studies indicate that an organisation's competitive advantage manifests itself through the establishment of long-term relationships to bring about customer loyalty. Meeting the customer's needs is essential in building long-term relationships and falls within the

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[41]See section 2.2.2.3 in chapter 2.

[42]The holistic view creates a complete portrait of a customer characterised by attitudes, behaviours, competitive perceptions and economic value. It considers the environment in which products are purchased and used as an integral part of the overall customer experience. All these elements can play a role in acquiring and retaining the right customers (Wyners 2001).

[43]Customers have access to more information about products and prices and have more buying alternatives than ever before. They are also more selective and demanding (Wyners 2001).

[44]In the new marketing environment, customers need to be managed rather than being the target of promotion (Wyners 2001).

relationship marketing paradigm[45].   Since the 1980s there has been an increase of literature on relationship marketing. There are also arguments that the concept of trust is central to the idea of relationship marketing because it influences the quality of interactions and the commitment of the buyer to the relationship (Sheedy 1997:23).

Relationship marketing provides an approach that will assist organisations to establish long-term relationships with customers and other parties involved in the business process (Kandampully & Duddy 1999:317). The strength of the relationship can be enhanced through the customer networks that the organisation is able to develop. An organisation's employees play a vital role in this process because the customers' interaction with them provides the ideal platform to develop a relationship with them (Gummesson, 1996 in Kandampully & Duddy 1999:316).

Relationships are also built through one-to-one interaction with the organisation's customers/publics. Goldsmith (1999:179) postulates that long-term relationships are built as a result of personalisation where some customers are targeted individually in a set of one-to-one relationships. Personalisation stems from a gradual move in marketing thought and practice from mass marketing to one-to-one marketing. In addition, Jüttner and Wehrli (1994:54) argue that long-term relations are built through interaction with the customer. This interaction is based primarily on the customer communicating his or her needs to the organisation and building up a customer network.

Literature on long-term relations also indicates that communication with the organisation's customers is essential to build permanence. Wells and Spinks (1999:108) contend that an organisation cannot survive without "a body of satisfied customers who return for repeat purchases".

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[45]See section 2.2.2.6 in chapter 2 for the theoretical underpinning of the concept of relationship marketing.

The concept of long-term relationships and reputation are interrelated. Herbig and Milewicz (1995:5) state that reputation depends on a user's initial beliefs and his or her observations of an organisation's past behaviour. An organisation with a good overall reputation owns "goodwill" and understanding on the part of the public. This goodwill and understanding are manifested in distinguished-known brand names, corporate logos and customer loyalty. The better an organisation's reputation, the higher its chances are of receiving favourable reaction when a new product is launched. To remain successful, organisations must have many satisfied customers. The organisation's reputation should therefore also be favourable. Favourable relations with the community can play a critical role in the organisation's success and reputation and are just as important as audiences such as customers, clients and employees. In this regard, public relations attempts to develop, influence, shape and modify public opinion.

Table 3.4 below summarises the dimensions of the concept of long-term relationships and their relevance to MPR.

Table 3.4: Dimensions of the concept of long-term relationships

DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
Fulfilling the needs of the customer	Constant feedback and interaction between the organisation and its various customers/publics can result in better knowledge in how to better fulfil customers' needs in terms of it product(s) and/or service(s).
Developing of customer networks	Constant feedback and interaction between the organisation and its various customers/publics with regard to its product(s) and/or service(s) can result in the building up of customer databases and continuous contact with the organisation's

	customers.
Customer service	Interaction and response to customers' needs with regard to the organisation's product(s) and/or service(s) are indicative of effective customer service.
Commitment	The organisation's commitment to its customers in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s) is expressed in its quality products, services and interaction.
Personalisation	A set of one-to-one relationships in which some customers are targeted individually with regard to the organisation's product(s) and/or service(s) can build an enduring relationship with the organisation.
Interaction	Constant feedback and interaction between the organisation and its various customers/publics, including the community in terms of its product(s) and/or service(s), can result in enhanced knowledge on how to better fulfil customers' needs and establish a favourable reputation.
Differentiated products and services	The needs of the organisation's customers are fulfilled through product(s) and/or service(s) with a difference, which will retain them.

Sources: Gummesson (1996) in Kandampully & Duddy (1999:316); Goldsmith (1999:179); Jüttner & Wehrli (1994:54); Wells & Spinks (1999:108)

3.5   SUMMARY

From this discussion it is clear that the concepts of credibility, trust and long-term relationships comprise of numerous dimensions and that in some instances, unanimity still has not been reached among theorists about what these dimensions should entail.

This chapter explained the various dimensions of the concepts of credibility, trust and long-term relationships and their relevance to MPR. The statements for the empirical part of this study were selected in accordance with these dimensions (see chapter 6).
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The next chapter, chapter 4, conceptualises and contextualises corporate online communication.