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Are You New(s) Here?

Media Relations in a Startup Context

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore how startup organizations use media relations to influence their coverage in news media. Although a vast body of research has unveiled how large organizations and professional PR practitioners engage in such efforts, media relations practices in the context of startups is largely unknown. To address this research gap, we conducted a qualitative study, interviewing thirteen startup representatives responsible for media relations, as well as five journalists from leading news media outlets. Applying a sociologic model on news production and existing theory on media relations, we find that the relationship between startups and the news media is characterized by an asymmetric mutual dependency, where the startup adapts to the practices and preferences of the media. We find that promoting media relations strategies are particularly effective for startups to influence their news coverage. Startups engage in such activities by tailoring news content to individual journalists, contextualizing their news to journalistic newsworthiness criteria, exploiting journalistic source routines and offering stories exclusively. By doing so they can alter their power in relation to the media, get recurring media coverage and influence news content in line with their interests.

Keywords: Startups, Media Relations, Media Coverage, News Production

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Glossary

News	New information about a subject of some public interest that is shared with some portion of the public (Zelifer, 2005).
News Media	The news media are those elements of the mass media that focus on delivering news to the general public or a target public.
Media coverage	Media content where a focal company's name is mentioned, with a focal or peripheral presence.
Media relations	The purposeful relationship between a practitioner and a journalist (Supa and Zoch, 2009) as well as strategic activities with the goal of influencing an organization's media coverage (Supa, 2014).
Media Relations Practitioner	An individual practicing media relations on behalf of an organization, whether as a full-time profession or as part of other duties.
Practitioner	Short for media relations practitioner. Will be used throughout the thesis.
Startup	A young, innovative company, seeking fast growth.
Exclusivity	Agreement where one source grants another a media actor sole rights with regard to a particular news story.

1. Introduction

In most areas of society, the presence and influence of the media is becoming increasingly apparent. The creation of meaning, identity and social relations in everyday life is being reconstructed through the access to media technologies and in the fields of business and politics power have shifted from organizations to the journalistic logic of the media institution (Fornäs & Kaun, 2011).

As news media has become an essential means of communication between corporations and their stakeholders, corporations are adapting to the media's preferences and internalizing the media logic into their everyday practices (Pallas & Fredriksson, 2013; Pallas et al., 2016). Corporate communication departments are increasingly engaging in PR activities in order to gain favorable coverage in news media. Corporations organize press meetings, seminars and corporate training courses to create opportunities to meet with journalists and learn about their preferences and working routines (Pallas & Fredriksson, 2013). Other ways corporations are adapting are by making management available for the media, adjusting the timing of their activities to fit the rhythm of the media, employing former journalists to manage their media relations activities and hiring the services of professional communication consultants (Engwall & Sahlin, 2007; Ihlen & Pallas, 2014).

The relationship between organizations and the media has attracted high levels of scholarly interest (Ihlen & Pallas, 2014; Hepp, 2013) as has the strategies organizations employ to influence the media (Zerfass et al., 2016). One area of research that addresses these questions is that of media relations, one of the most important and visible aspects of public relations (Johnston, 2013). The research on media relations has generally focused on large organizations (Pettigrew et al., 2010) and professional public relations practitioners (Supa, 2014). But how *new firms* can use media relations to influence their news coverage remains a highly unexplored area, even though they can be expected to benefit greatly from such efforts.

Since young firms generally lack the resources to invest in advertising or large-scale communication efforts, the media can serve as an effective way for them to communicate information about their services and activities (Petkova, 2014). Indeed, one of the many challenges faced by new firms is that they often struggle to even get noticed and attract attention from important stakeholders such as potential investors, customers or partners (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994; Petkova, 2014). Research has shown that media coverage can help new firms receive such attention (Kennedy, 2008), build legitimacy (Rao, 1994; Pollock and Rindova, 2003), reputation (Rindova et al., 2007) and improve their access to capital (Petkova et al., 2013).

The antecedents of media coverage for new organizations are however largely unexplored (Mariconda, 2014). Rindova et al. (2007) point out that new organizations are likely to receive little attention from the media. Scholars have further found that unconventional or controversial organizations attract more media attention (Pfarrer et al., 2010) and that a new firms number of market actions (Rindova et al., 2007) or sensegiving activities (Petkova et al., 2013) increase the media coverage they receive. While these studies show that the characteristics of a startup and the volume of communication efforts can influence the amount of media attention they receive, they have not considered the relationship between startups and the media, nor what media relations strategies new organizations can employ in order to influence the news production.

1.2. Purpose and Expected Contribution

The purpose of this study is to explore how media relations can influence the news coverage of a firm in the context of startup organizations. The contribution of the study is twofold. First, we aim to develop the theoretical understanding of media relations in a new context by exploring what strategies new organizations employ in order to influence news content. Secondly, the study will provide practical guidance to media relations practitioners in startups that aim to reach their stakeholders through the media.

1.3. Research Question

This thesis will address the following research question:

How do startups use media relations to influence their coverage in news media?

In order to answer this question, we look specifically at the two main components of media relations – the relationship between startups and the media and the strategies they use to influence their news coverage. Following this reasoning we will seek to answer the following sub-questions:

What characterizes the relationship between startup media relations practitioners and journalists?

What media relations strategies are used by startups and how do they influence their news media coverage?

1.4. Empirical Focus

To answer the research question, we take an explorative approach and conduct a qualitative study consisting of 18 semi-structured interviews. In order to develop a deeper understanding of startup media relations we interview both of the main groups of actors involved in the startup news production process: startup media relations practitioners and journalists. Thirteen practitioners, employees with active involvement in media relations at startups, from eleven different companies are interviewed about their media relations knowledge, goals and practices in order to get an understanding of their experience from media relations. The second interview sample, consisting of journalists with experience from covering startups, provide insights on the same phenomenon from the media's perspective. This counter-design of data gathering allows us to build a strong empirical foundation, upon which we derive conclusions about the practice of media relations in startup companies and their ability to influence the news coverage.

1.5. Delimitations

This thesis is delimited to startups and news media in Sweden. A geographic delimitation is considered necessary since media institutions operate in different ways internationally (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2012) and due to practical reasons in data collection. The Swedish startup and media setting is especially interesting because the high level of entrepreneurial activity and the increasing attention startups receive in Swedish media. There are several news outlets that specifically cover this type of firms such as Breakit and DI Digital. Sweden has a well-established startup ecosystem, ranking among the top 10 countries in the Global Entrepreneurship Index (Acs et al., 2017). The geographical focus of the study might limit the generalizability of the results to other regions but increases comparability between respondents by removing national discrepancies.

This study is furthermore delimited to traditional news media and digital news media, which exclude media that do not have an editorial office or newsroom. Although social media and other new media have become increasingly important for businesses, these operate under different conditions and logics, making media too broad a concept for a purposeful analysis. Social media has been seen as a means of bypassing traditional media, but it has not yet been able to diminish the legitimizing power nor the mediatization effects of the traditional mass media (Hepp, 2012). We are also delimiting our study to earned media coverage, since bought or owned media are the results of different communication efforts than those we intend to study.

1.6. Definitions

In this thesis we will use the word startup to denote the type of organizations we analyze. There is no established academic definition of what constitutes a startup. Davila and Foster (2005) focused on the age and size of the organization when applying the term, limiting the concept to companies with up to 150 employees and an age of less than 10 years. Recent scholars have played down the importance of specific size and age requirements and have instead emphasized the growth ambitions of the firms as a characteristic. Dee (2015) consider startups to be young, innovative and with growth ambitions with regards to employees, revenue and/or customers. For the purpose of this study we draw on the latter definition since it can be considered a more contemporary understanding of the concept and since companies with fast growth ambitions can be expected to seek more media attention. We therefore define startups as: *"young, innovative companies seeking fast growth"*.

1.7. Thesis Outline

This thesis is organized as follows. This introduction is followed by a chapter that reflects the current state of knowledge on media relations as well as theories on media production, the practitioner-journalist relationship and media relations strategies. In the third chapter we explain and motivate the methodology of the study. In chapter four we present our empirical findings, which are subsequently discussed in relation to existing theory in chapter five. Finally, in chapter six we present out conclusions as well as managerial implications, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

2. Theory

In this section we will review existing theories on media relations. Since there is an absence of such theory in the context of new organizations specifically, we will review existing theories from the field that has focused on corporations and professional public relations practitioners. Together with theory from communication research these will provide the structure for our empirical findings and the foundation for our analysis of media relations in the startup setting. After a short discussion on the media relations concept and current theory development (2.1) we will review theories on factors influencing news production (2.2). After that we will examine literature on the relationship between media relation practitioners and journalists (2.3) and provide a framework for analyzing media relations strategies (2.4).

2.1 Research on Media Relations

The term public relations encompasses an extensive list of communication activities including large-scale campaigns, press releases and events. But the practice is most dominated by and sometimes equated with *media relations* — the communication efforts of an organization towards the media (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Zerfass et al., 2016). The practice of media relations involves building relationships with journalists and offering them material that suits their needs, with the goal of generating positive media coverage (Supa, 2014). Supa (2014) proposed that media relations should be considered a strategic function and that the use and impact of communications tools on the relationship between practitioners and journalists defines what media relations really is. There is however no unified agreement of the concept and both practitioners and researchers historically have interpreted it many different ways. Zerfass et al. (2016, p. 500) describe media relations as a "complex process involving an organization's media relations strategy, media relations professionals, journalists, editors, and media enterprises".

Because of the lack of a concrete definition of media relations it is even more difficult to establish a theory on the concept (Supa, 2014). Existing theory development can be categorized into three lines of research. The first concerns practical recommendations for communications practitioners. These include Grabowski (1992), Howard (2004) and Zoch and Supa (2014) who emphasize the need for good understanding of journalistic routines and advocate that communications practitioners should conform their releases to the standards of the receiving medium.

The second line of research is the usage of other established theories to explain processes and outcomes of media relations. Some of the most notable contributions include the application of agenda setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) and framing (Entman, 1993) to describe how communication practitioners try to shape the media agenda (Zoch & Molleda, 2006).

The last line of research is the development of public- or media relations-specific theories. This area has been considered undeveloped although there have been some influential advancements (Supa, 2014). Zoch and Molleda (2006) developed a model focusing on the organizational process of creating media relations programs, but it considers neither the dissemination to, nor the influences by the media sphere. Other specific theories that have been applied to analyze the concept include the Intereffication (IE) model (Bentele & Nothhaft; 2008), Excellence Theory (Grunig, 1984), Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 1995, Relationship

Management Theory (Ledingham, 2003). However, there is still no unifying theory on media relations or on how businesses and media work together to create corporate news (Verhoeven, 2016).

Following from the explorative nature of this study we apply a broad perspective on media relations as encompassing both the relationship between a practitioner and a journalist (Supa and Zoch, 2009) as well as strategic activities with the goal of influencing an organization's media coverage (Supa, 2014). As such we will examine the practitioner-journalist relationship in closer detail and provide a framework for analyzing media relations strategies. We furthermore follow the arguments of Yoon (2005) and Pang (2010), to incorporate media theories in analyzing the influence of media relations strategies and will begin to do so by presenting a model for influences on news production.

2.2. A Sociological Model on News Production

One of the most influential models on how news is produced and the factors that influence its content is the *hierarchy of influences*, introduced by Shoemaker and Reese (1996). The model has been widely adopted by scholars seeking to explain news production in general (Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015), but has also been applied to explain influences on business news in particular (Carrol & Deephouse, 2014) as well analyzing media relations (Pang, 2010, Cornelissen et al., 2010). The model is an extension of the gatekeeping theory of the media (White, 1950) and takes a sociological approach to news production. It incorporates previous findings in media research and considers five factors at different levels that influence media content. The different levels are hierarchically arranged from the macro to the micro level and consist of social systems, institutions, the news organization, media routines and the individual (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014).

2.2.1. Individual

The individual level concerns the characteristics of the individual media worker and how their personal and professional backgrounds, values and beliefs shape journalistic work. While the characteristics of the individual media worker have been shown to influence their professional work (Rodgers & Thorson, 2003), the relationships between personal factors and news reporting has relatively weak (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Weaver et al. (1991) emphasize the importance of constraints and routines imposed by the news organizations and argue that these limits the individual journalist's influence on the news coverage of different subjects.

2.2.2. Routines

The second level concerns the routines of news media, defined as the "patterned, routinized, repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 100). Routines help media organizations and journalists to more efficiently deliver content within time and space constraints and ensure that the media system will respond in predictable ways that cannot be easily violated (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). The importance of routines on news production has been emphasized ever since a number influential ethnographic studies in the 1970's and 1980's (Ryfe, 2017). Even though some authors have argued that the focus on routines in explaining news production have underemphasized the agency of individual journalists (Cottle, 2000), most scholars agree that routines are central to news production, even after the industry changes resulting from the internet (Ryfe, 2017). One routine that characterize news media are deadlines (Ruff & Aziz, 2016) – time constraints that force journalists to stop searching for more information and publish a story. This routine results in that news that fall outside of certain hours are less likely to be reported (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Other routines are practiced in order to avoid criticism from the public or other media workers (Carrol & Deephouse, 2014). One such "defensive routine" is that of objective reporting, which media workers conform to in order to protect themselves and their organizations from criticism (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 107). Media's reliance on external sources of information fills both a function of seeking such objective reporting Tuchman (1972) as well as a necessary means to gather information in an efficient way (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014).

Another important set of routines are the heuristics that journalists use for deciding what constitutes a good news story that caters to the audiences' needs and expectations. These are news values that help time-constrained journalists to predict what an audience finds appealing and important and to make consistent news selections over time (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Starting with influential work by Galtung and Ruge (1965) researchers have investigated these news values, often through content analysis of published news material, and have come up with a broad set of factors that contribute to newsworthiness. While there is no exhaustive list of news values, some patterns have appeared, which have been shown to be consistent over time and across geographical regions (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Zoch and Supa (2014) performed an extensive literature review on previous research done in both journalism and public relations theory and found eight factors that appeared more often than others, arguing that they may be generalizable to what makes any news item newsworthy to a journalist. In the same study the eight factors, displayed in Table 1 below, were confirmed by contemporary journalists and public relationship practitioners.

Newsworthiness factors:
Localness/Proximity
Timeliness
Immediacy
Prominence
Cultural Proximity
Unexpectedness
Human Interest
Significance/Consequence/Importance

Table 1: Newsworthiness factors (Zoch & Supa, 2014)

Localness or proximity refers to the news being of local relevance to the audience of the media outlet, such as local issues or events. Timeliness means that the depicted events occur closely in time, has a new angle or refer to new trends. Immediacy has similarities with timeliness but is more concerned with a greater sense of urgency to get the news published, such as breaking news. Prominence means that the news refers to well known or famous people, events or institutions. News can also be considered prominent if they concern issues that have received media coverage previously. Cultural proximity refers to how well a news story relates to an audience, even if the geographical distance is large (Zoch & Supa, 2014). Cultural proximity has been found to be especially important as a newsworthiness criterion for international news (Östgaard, 1965; Zaharapoulis, 1990). Unexpectedness, defined as "an event out of the ordinary" (Howard & Matthews, 2013, p. 22) has been identified as having a strong effect on the selection of such news (Zoch & Supa, 2014). Journalists have furthermore been shown to select news that contain human interest or events that can be portrayed as the actions of individuals (Howard & Matthews, 2013). Significance and importance are two factors that have been used by different researcher to describe the same basic news value (Zoch & Supa, 2014). These concern events that are likely to have a direct impact or consequences for the readers (Howard & Matthews, 2013). It also includes news that educates and informs the reader about issues the journalists think that their audience "must know" (Zoch & Supa, 2014). While news values provide empirically tested guidelines for what journalists are likely to cover, scholars agree that they can never explain everything. Harcup and O'Neill (2017) emphasize that such criteria can always be contested since news selection is also influenced by practical considerations, subjectivity, serendipity and organizational factors.

Another final journalistic routine is to classify news as either hard or soft news (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). Hard news is more factual and concerns current events that needs to go out quickly in order to not become obsolete (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2012). Soft news is less factual and more of a "manufactured kind" (Herbert, 2000, p. 68), are often referred to as a feature story, and can be scheduled on a slower news day (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). The differences between hard and soft news also have implications for the newsworthiness of the news. Immediacy is central in the selection of hard news while human interest is a more important news value when evaluating soft news (Howard & Matthews, 2013).

2.2.3. Organizational Level

The organizational level considers how the factors related to individual news organizations affect the media content they produce. Such factors include the organizational culture, the ownership structure, and the internal politics within the organizations (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Media outlets generally have an established conformity to authority in the news production process (Pang, 2010). As such, a news reporter has a supervising editor who in turn reports to an overall editor and this chain of command has a direct effect on the news production. An editor for a general newspaper might for example decide that a business news story written for the business section should be published for a broader audience or not to publish the story at all (Shultz et al., 2014). In addition to having such formal control systems in place, news organizations also often exhibit socialization processes that create conformity (Pang, 2010). This form of social control results in self-regulation and self-censorship when journalists try to avoid threatening institutional interest (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014).

2.2.4. Social institutions

The fourth level explains how factors outside the media organization shape the news content. These are a wide variety of factors including government controls, advertisers, the media marketplace and powerful institutional sources that can select which information they provide the media (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996).

2.2.5. Social Systems

The most macro level is referred to as social systems and concerns how ideological factors such as societal norms, values and beliefs reflect what is seen as natural or deviant (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). While this level has often been studied through observing differences between national media systems (Carrol & Deephouse, 2014), Shoemaker & Reese (2014, p. 65) argue that the increased globalization implies an opportunity for considering the "larger planet as a social system".

The theory outlined above provide us with a sociologic perspective of how news is produced and can be influenced across different levels. Having this broader perspective in mind in our analysis, we will next look into another field of research that is of importance in order to understand how news about startups can be influenced, the relationship between media relations practitioners and journalists.

2.3. The Practitioner-Journalist Relationship

Almost all corporations have internal communication departments that deal with their media relations work (Ihlen & Pallas, 2014). Media relations practitioners may go under different titles, such as Media Officer or PR Manager, but typically have the same role as an information intermediary between organizations and the media whom simultaneously keep track of the environment in which the organization operates and relay information about the organization through the media to the outside world.

Although practitioners and journalist tend to share similar news values, many researchers have identified an antagonistic relationship between the two groups (Aronoff, 1975; Cameron et al., 1997). The majority of studies on antagonism between the two professions have been conducted in the context of the United States and the results have been found to be culturally dependent (Neijens and Smit, 2006). Larsson (2009) however found similar antagonism in a Swedish context, where media relations practitioners representing commercial interests were described by journalists as opponents. Cameron et al. (1997) found that although practitioners described similar sentiments they tend to think more highly of journalists than the other way around and have a stronger will to cooperate. Credibility has been at the heart of the problem in these studies, as both parties have questioned the other's ethics and methods (Verhoeven, 2016).

Researchers have discussed the academic and professional backgrounds of individual communication practitioners and how this influence their relationships with journalists. Practitioners with journalistic training are for example viewed as more credible by journalists than those with other educational backgrounds (Sinaga & Callison, 2008). This explains why corporate media relations tend to be practiced by former journalists (Ihlen & Pallas, 2014). Cornelissen et al. (2010) found that "Similar to journalists, communication professionals also tend to be guided by their own professional identity (the constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences with which individuals define themselves in a professional role and by routines associated with their roles" (Cornelissen et al., 2010, p. 137). This professional identity is formed early in the communication professional's career and guides the way he or she engages with journalists. It facilitates their relationship as the communication professional will be able to understand journalistic values and what information journalists deem interesting or necessary.

Although there is a general distrust between practitioners and journalists, both groups of professionals, as well as researchers, agree on the value of a professional working relationship (Cornelissen et al., 2010). The interdependency of the two groups makes media relations an important means to facilitate news production (Cornelissen et al., 2010). The relationship between practitioners and journalists has been described as a mutually dependent exchange relation where communication practitioners provides journalists with news angles, materials and access to sources but do so in ways that serves the sender's own self-interests (Larsson, 2009). Larsson (2009) stresses the importance of continuously building long-term relationships with journalists. "A close and well-working relation with media professionals and an in-depth understanding of journalistic professionalism are, as we have seen, prerequisites of and a basic strategy for practitioners in their aim to set the agenda" (Larsson, 2009, p. 139).

We have now established the difficulties and value of building working practitioner-journalist relationships for both parties that participate in the production of business news. In the following section we will look further into the interaction between corporations and the media by exploring different media relations strategies that corporations pursue in order to influence their media coverage.

2.4. Media Relations Strategies

Journalists and communications practitioners disagree on the level of influence that the latter have on news coverage. In Larsson's (2009) study journalists claimed not to be affected by external influences and rejected the idea that they were providers of publicity, although some admitted that external sources sometimes managed to affect news outcomes. The communications practitioners however claimed that they succeeded in creating publicity through the media in most of the cases, even though they sometimes failed considerably. The suggestion that organizations do affect the news coverage is supported by studies that showed that up to 80 percent of news articles about a company originated from press releases, story suggestions and other forms of news material prepared by the corporations (Cameron et al., 1997; Shoemaker, 1996).

Pallas and Fredriksson (2011) have established a framework for corporate media work that describe three types of strategies that corporations employ to influence news production and interactions with journalists: *providing*, *promoting* and *co-opting*. The three strategies constitute ideal types rather than exhaustive empirical representations and can be used to categorize and analyze the media work of organizations in the mediatized society.

2.4.1. Providing

The first set of strategies, *providing,* is what corporate communication practitioners, especially in publicly listed companies, spend most of their time on. This strategy focuses on the way corporations provide external stakeholders such as the media, investors and government agencies with news material on for example financial status or significant organizational changes. While corporations are often formally required to distribute such news, the way that these media activities are conducted affects the way the organization is evaluated by stakeholders (Pallas and Fredriksson, 2011). Developing this material is furthermore a highly organized procedure, as it often involves sensitive information about the company and must fit the norms and format of the media. Grünberg & Pallas (2012) describe how the news releases go through a formalized process of preparation, release and follow up. The preparation of material for the release is done in cooperation with PR consultants, business analysts and business journalists and is transformed into news material that has been tailored to fit into the news work of the media organizations. Corporations also coordinate their releases to the rhythm of the media in order to maximize or minimize attention to a certain story (Ihlen & Pallas, 2014). This highly organized procedure and its influence has made the work of communication practitioners a widely recognized part of the news production process (Pallas and Fredriksson, 2011).

At the time of the news release, formal arenas for interaction with the media such as seminars and press meetings are organized. Communicators and spokespersons are prepared through media training, production of one-liners and communication guidelines. Through these arrangements corporations not only seek to provide information about the corporation and its activities, but also to create stable routines, procedures and processes in their interactions with the media (Pallas & Fredriksson, 2011).

2.4.2. Promoting

The second set of media strategies, *promoting strategies*, are considered by practitioners to outperform the providing ones in terms of desired results (Pallas & Fredriksson, 2011). Compared to providing strategies, promoting strategies include more informal communication and arrangements with individual journalists (Pallas and Fredriksson, 2011). Promoting strategies furthermore concerns the ability to express the news stories according to journalistic terms values and expectations, as well as challenging the expected or formalized. As such practitioners adapt to- and exploit journalistic news conventions, such as adjusting their communication to fit that fits the newsworthiness criteria applied by the media (Ihlen & Pallas, 2014). Other tactics to receive media attention include the use of pseudo-events such as competitions or celebrations that only exist to generate publicity (Ihlen & Pallas, 2014; Boorstin, 1971), paid advertising (Verhoeven, 2016; Soontae & Bergen, 2007) and exclusive access to news (Shoemaker, 1996).

Promotional strategies do not only help the corporation influence media coverage but can also affect the very norms of the media such as how different issues should be interpreted and reported (Pallas & Fredriksson, 2011). Direct and informal arrangements allow corporations to influence news coverage through the use of power relations or restricted access to news material. Westphal and Deephouse (2011) who investigated the power dynamics of the CEO-reporter relationship found that not only can a top executive use ingratiating behavior towards a journalist to get positive coverage, he or she can also retaliate by ending the relationship with a journalist that publishes a negative story about the company in order to deter other journalist contacts from doing the same.

The dominance aspect of the information asymmetries and mutual dependency between sources and journalists in the news production process has been further explored by Reich (2006). He found that during the initial news-discovery phase, when the journalist is made aware of a potential news item, the source had significant influential power compared to the following news-gathering phase in which the journalist gathers additional data in order to build a story. Most journalists in the study were not concerned by the fact that news ideas come from external sources. Financial and personnel cutbacks in news organizations have increased the pressure placed on journalists and reduced the time available for them to seek out news stories (Larsson, 2009). In the first phase they want to become aware of a potential story as quickly as possible in order to move on to the gathering phase, which requires much more personal control, and which is the phase that they perceive to be closest to the core of their professional identity. Reich (2006) suggested that each party maximize their power and influence during the phase at which it has an advantage. Corporations can utilize this by reducing the time journalists spend on news-discovery by presenting interesting topics or events and thereby put their own stories at the heart of new production (Pallas & Fredriksson, 2011). Also on this topic, Shoemaker (1996, p. 171) mentions that "those with economic or political power are more likely to influence news reports than [those] who lack power" and "Big businesses don't hesitate to use that power to get their side of the story out". This phenomenon is particularly interesting since the companies in our study are small and less known and may have to resort to other tactics in order to get their story out.

2.4.3. Co-opting

The third and final set of strategies involves engaging with bigger issues in the environment in which the corporation operates that are shared by larger group of stakeholders. It can be used to highlight social issues or trends such as topics on infrastructure, public health and the climate. Communication practitioners co-create media material together with for example influential stakeholders, customer groups and industry associations in order to collectively control the agenda of the media. This means it is not the strategy of an individual corporation but rather a process where different actors negotiate the content and distribution of news material. This involves establishing common platforms such as seminars, advisory boards and industry associations. Third-party interactions allow corporations to influence how media receives and interprets the material without direct involvement with individual journalists or news outlets (Pallas & Fredriksson, 2011).

We find that this model of providing, promoting and co-opting not only relate the media activities of corporations to the demands, norms and interests that they face from different stakeholders but also to the levels of influence that corporations aspire to have on news production. By applying the model to startups, we can draw conclusions about similarities or potential differences in their media relations strategies as a result from dissimilar demands, goals and resources.

2.5. Conclusion

To summarize, we have in this chapter presented the current state of research on media relations and three research areas that affect business news production. First, the hierarchy of influences was introduced in order to provide an understanding the of the sociological factors that shape the production of news content. Furthermore, the relationship between practitioners and journalists was explored which demonstrated the importance and complexities of building working relationships. Finally, we presented a model to categorize and explain the processes of three sets of media strategies.

Considering these lines of research, we acknowledge the importance of understanding the media logic for effective media relations. Furthermore, corporate practitioners utilize their relationships with journalists, as well as different sets of strategies in order to influence the media. Considering that startups operate under different conditions and with less available resources, it further prompts the relevance of our research question: How do startups use media relations to influence their coverage in the news? In the following chapter we will describe the methodology we have used to answer this question.

3. Methodology

In this chapter we argue for the choice of a qualitative research design (3.1) and for conducting semi-structured interviews with both startup practitioners and journalists (3.2). Furthermore, we explain our abductive approach in the process of data collection (3.3) and analysis (3.4) and discuss issues of trustworthiness in qualitative research (3.5).

3.1. Research Design

As this study investigates how media relations are practiced in a context significantly different from that of previous research, our research design is of an explorative nature. As Edmondson & McManus (2007) describe, such research is generally performed through a qualitative research design. Furthermore, as media relations involve complex interactions between different actors a qualitative design is suitable when studying such social interactions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Finally, the qualitative design has allowed us to be flexible in our research process and follow an iterative process where we have moved between theory and empirical findings, rather than develop a hypothesis beforehand.

Our qualitative research design is based on semi-structured interviews, which has allowed us to illustrate and reveal processes (Edmondson & McManus, 2007) and examine these from the world view of the participants rather than the researchers (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Examining media relations from the perspective of only practitioners *or* journalists however fail to give a full picture and to truly understand the relationships between the actors (Supa, 2014). Following this argument, we have conducted interviews with both groups, giving our research a counter-design similar to that of Larsson (2009). This design allows us to contrast the perspectives of the different actors and uncover potential differences or similarities with regards to experiences, perceptions or values.

3.1.1. Research approach

Since the aim of this study is to elaborate on prior theory, rather than testing it or building new theory, our research has followed an abductive approach. Through abduction the researcher moves between one's pre-understanding, the empirical data and existing theory to develop the best understanding of the phenomenon that is studied, taking practical issues into consideration (Martela, 2015). As such we have been able to let our empirical findings guide our research, without ignoring previous research, such with a purely inductive approach. Instead we have followed the arguments of Alvesson and Sköldberg (2017), using existing theories as a source of inspiration and a means to interpret our data and detect patterns to forward the understanding of media relations in the context of startups.

3.1.2. Research philosophy

This study follows an interpretive epistemological research philosophy. As such we take an empathetic stance, seeking to understand media relations from the world view of the participants. An interpretative perspective can allow us to understand how the meanings social actors ascribe to their social roles, such as a journalistic identity, influence their actions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This research philosophy is furthermore appropriate in order to understand how social actors use power in social interactions (Saunders et al., 2012). Following from this reasoning our ontological view is constructivist, viewing media relations as a being produced through the social interactions of practitioners and journalists, rather than an entity that can be observed independently of the interpretations of the involved actors.

3.2. Sample Selection

3.2.1. Selection of Companies

The selection of study objects in qualitative studies is highly dependent on the phenomenon or the research question that is being investigated, as selection should be based on the explanatory power of the cases (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Marshall (1996) describes how for simple questions or very detailed studies a single case may be used if it has significantly enough explanatory power but that for more complex questions, such as ours, a larger sample and more advanced sampling can be considered more appropriate. One such technique is purposeful sampling which means actively selecting the sample that best answers the research question (Marshall, 1996). To do this we developed three selection criteria for the sample startup companies: First, since our research involves how startups can influence their media coverage, the companies that we interview must have been in contact with the media in addition to having received media attention to a significant extent. To determine this, we considered both the number of articles published about the startup and the quality and tenor of those articles. As such we only contacted startups that had been featured in over 50 articles and/or featured in prominent media channels. Secondly, they must be Swedish due to our geographical delimitation. Finally, they must operate in the business-to-consumer segment since these are more dependent on – and more likely to acquire – media coverage (Ihlen & Pallas, 2014) and thereby of higher interest for interesting for our study.

A pre-study was conducted to identify a suitable sample of both potential companies and media outlets. The first step of the pre-study consisted of media observations where we searched in the archives of the five largest national newspapers: Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Expressen, Svenska Dagbladet and Dagens Industri (Orvesto Konsument, 2017), as well as the largest digital news media outlets that specifically cover startup companies (Breakit and DI Digital) using the search terms “startup” and “entreprenör” (entrepreneur). We then used Mediearkivet, a database provided by Retriever, to analyze the media coverage of the firms that we had identified during the previous step. If they had received significant levels of positive media coverage, according to our selection criteria, they were selected as potential sample companies. We also conducted an interview with an industry expert to validate the appropriateness of the selected companies as well as receiving contact information and tips on additional firms of interests. The selected sample companies are shown in Table 2 below.

Company Name	Description	Founded	No. of employees
Qasa	Property rental platform	2014	9
Min Doktor	Digital primary healthcare provider	2013	53
Transfer Galaxy	International money transfer	2014	5
Football Addicts	Football live score application	2012	31
Flic	Wireless "smart button" to control devices remotely	2013	15
Asket	Innovative fashion e-commerce	2015	7
Tink	Personal finance application	2012	55
Tiptapp	Rubbish-removal platform	2015	13
Lavendla	Online funeral home	2014	14
Glue	Remote controlled door lock	2013	11
Bzzt	Electric three-wheel taxi service	2014	23

Table 2: Sample 1 – Startup Companies

3.2.2. Selection of Media Outlets

The selection of media outlets also followed a purposeful sampling method. We focused particularly on the national business media outlets that are the most active in terms of publishing news articles about startup companies and have the broadest reach in terms of number of readers (Kantar Sifo, 2018). Our selection purposely included different types of media outlets in order to capture more variety, including general news media, digital news media and one news magazine. This was not to compare different types of media, which would likely require a larger sample, but to create a more complete or nuanced picture of media relations from the perspective of the media. The selected media organizations are shown in Table 3 below.

Media	Media description	Focus	No. of readers Print (weekly)	No. of readers Digital (weekly)	Net no. of readers
Breakit	Digital Newspaper	Industry and Startup News		150 000*	150 000*
Dagens Industri	Newspaper	Industry News	322 000	266 000	531 000
Dagens Nyheter	Newspaper	General	625 000	620 000	1 095 000
Svenska Dagbladet	Newspaper	General	376 000	504 000	785 000
Veckans Affärer	Magazine	Industry News	54 000	99 000	146000

Table 3: Sample 2 – Media Organizations (Kantar Sifo, 2018)

* (Breakit, 2018)

3.2.3. Selection of Interviewees

In order to study media relations of the sample companies we needed to speak to whoever was responsible for media communication within the organizations. In previous studies on media relations, interviewees and survey respondents have generally been professional practitioners holding the roles of PR Managers, Press Officers, PR consultants or similar. Most of the startups in our sample lacked these types of formal roles and professional practitioners. Using Ritchie's (2003) idea of purposeful sampling we identified and interviewed the individuals within each company that worked most closely with media relations and therefore best contribute with information for our study, rather than speaking to a larger number of people within each startup. Since the companies in our sample were all organized differently, the professional roles of the interviewees varied significantly. In the majority of cases the interviewee was the founder or co-founder of the startup, but in the three larger organizations interviewed media relations officers. In the latter cases we also conducted interviews with the founders, in order to get a better understanding about the media relations practices at earlier stages in the startups' history.

Interviewees on the media side were also chosen using purposeful selection. We wanted to speak to journalists that had been in contact with and written about startup companies, as these would best be able to contribute with knowledge for our study. We identified them by tracing the author of articles written about startups and in one case we contacted the news officer at a major Swedish newspaper who directed us to a journalist that had the experience that suited our needs.

To ensure that we would get sufficient data to answer our research question we contacted a large number of potential interviewees. Out of the 17 startups that fulfilled our choice criteria 11 agreed to participate in the study. In two cases, we interviewed two people from the same company. The startups that declined to participate included three larger ones and three very small ones. Journalists from all five media outlets that we contacted agreed to speak to us, totaling the number of interviews we conducted to 18. For a complete list of interviewees see Appendix 1.

3.3. Data Collection

The primary empirical data was collected through semi-structured interviews. The choice of semi-structured interviews allowed us to structure the interviews around relevant topics, while still allowing flexibility and deeper elaborations (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A semi-structured approach is also preferred if different persons carry out the interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011), which was the case for two of our interviews.

The interviews were structured in a similar manner along an interview guide that that would provide answers to our research question, without questions being too specific. We also adapted context-specific questions to explore the interviewee's perception of events that we had uncovered when analyzing secondary data (articles) during the sampling phase. We developed different interview guides for interviewees from companies and the journalists respectively (See Appendices 2 and 3). The interview guides shared themes related to our research questions, but were adapted to the perspectives and different contexts the two different groups acted in.

Before each interview we reviewed secondary data about the interviewee and the organization, in order to be knowledgeable about subjects that might come up. Each interview began with a presentation of the researchers and our research project. A brief description of the scope of the study was provided in order to focus the interview on subjects within our delimitations. Our broad questions allowed interviewees to talk freely about the subjects. The order of the questions could be changed slightly depending on the interviewees answers, and follow-up questions were asked in order to ask the interviewee to elaborate on interesting themes.

The interviews were conducted during February, March and April 2018 and had a duration of between 30 and 70 minutes. The majority of the interviews were conducted at the offices of the interviewees, which provided us with a further understanding of the context the interviewees acted in. Three case companies were located outside of Stockholm. When interviewing representatives for these companies, two interviews were conducted at public spaces when the interviewees were visiting Stockholm and three interviews were conducted through phone or video calls. Both researchers were present during all but two interviews, when only one researcher participated. One researcher was leading the interview, allowing the other to ask follow-up questions or prompts. After being granted permission, all interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. All interviews were conducted in Swedish in order for the interviewees to be able to communicate freely in their mother tongue. The presented data have been translated to English and to ensure validity of the data, all interviewees were asked to approve the translation of their quotes as accurate. All interviewees were offered anonymity, and this was requested by two of the interviewees.

3.4. Data Processing

As a starting point for analysis all interviews were transcribed and then coded. The qualitative data analysis software NVivo was used to facilitate coding and detect patterns. Using Strauss and Corbin's (1990) notion of open coding we identified initial codes that, as we proceeded, were revised, split up and categorized until we could identify a set of themes that would help us describe the phenomenon we were observing. This workable set of themes led through iterations to what Glaser and Strauss (1967) termed "theoretical saturation" since we found that additional data or revisions of codes did not provide further insights. See Appendix 4 for our list of codes and categories.

3.5. Quality of Research

Researchers have been critical to the use of reliability and validity criteria to evaluate qualitative studies as these are derived from quantitative research which attempt to describe a single truth or reality (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Qualitative researchers argue that there can be more than one social reality and that a different set of criteria should be used to evaluate qualitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four criteria of trustworthiness that have had a significant impact on qualitative research. These include credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

3.5.1. Credibility

Credibility concerns the feasibility of the account that a researcher arrives at and whether these accounts represent interpretations that are acceptable to others (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To ensure credibility we used a technique that is called respondent validation. This was used to test if our respondents were able to agree on our interpretations of their statements. This was especially important for our study since we translated all interviews from Swedish to English which increased the risk for misinterpretations. The respondents were asked to read the translations and verify that we had understood them correctly.

3.5.2. Transferability

The transferability of qualitative research to other contexts or participants is a highly empirically dependent issue (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). What the researcher can do is to provide rich detail of the study in order to allow others to make judgements about possible transferability. We did so by providing strong empirical accounts and informative descriptions of our sample companies.

3.5.3. Dependability

To ensure dependability we have adopted what Bryman and Bell (2011) calls an auditing approach which originates from Lincoln and Guba (1985). This means that we have kept and organized all records including notes, audio files, transcripts and coding excerpts from all phases of the research process to allow auditors full access to all material. To further enhance dependability the study was audited by our supervisor who ensured that proper procedures were followed.

3.5.4. Conformability

We took a number of steps to avoid issues regarding the conformability criteria. Both authors were present during all interviews, and the findings were discussed to share and manage individual impressions. For the same reason all interviews were also split in half and transcribed by both authors. Regarding coding, the first interview was coded separately by the two authors and then discussed to get a shared understanding of the material. All following coding iterations were discussed to avoid subjectivity in the coding procedure.

4. Empirical Findings

In this chapter we will present our empirical findings and present the themes that has evolved through constantly comparing and contrasting interviewee accounts. The chapter begins with a short description of the startup companies' media goals, target media outlets and how they organize their media relations internally (4.1). The remainder of the chapter follows the structure of the theory section. We explore media routines directly related to startups (4.2) which is followed by both parties' view on the practitioner-journalist relationship (4.3). Finally, we present data on how startups influence the media through the three sets of strategies providing, promoting and co-opting (4.4). All cited quotes in this chapter have been translated from Swedish to English, which means that some nuances such as slang may have been lost. For the original quotes in Swedish see Appendix 5.

4.1. Background

4.1.1. Media Relations Goals

The startups had different media goals depending on their business idea, growth phase or industry. Most practitioners had a goal of reaching potential customers in order to increase sales or application downloads. They also described the importance of increasing the awareness of their existence, being able to explain their offering and building their brand. Another group that practitioners want to reach is potential investors. They target investors at an early stage as well as during periods when they aim to raise additional investments.

"In the early phase, it's to a certain extent consumers, but even more important are investors. And they're like… If you're visible in the newspapers then suddenly it gets a bit more interesting." (Glue) [1]

Several practitioners described that they also want to reach suppliers or potential partners such as banks or real estate owners. As the startup grows, an increasingly important goal with their media relations strategy is to reach potential employees.

"Then the third part is really employee branding. Like, now for example, on the one hand it is difficult to hire, or rather, attract developers. So we have to show that we have attractive jobs with attractive code. […] Show that we are an attractive employer. (Tink) [2]

An exception from the other startup practitioners is *Min Doktor*. Acting as a challenger in the healthcare industry, an important part of their media relations strategy is to also influence politicians and policy makers within public healthcare. Having been considered as controversial within an industry of high public interest has also resulted in higher levels of media scrutiny that the practitioners respond to reactively through corrections and debate articles.

The practitioners seek exposure in different media outlets depending on what groups they want to reach and how well a certain news item fit the news outlets. The practitioners generally seek internet-based news outlets with a narrower focus on startups, such as Breakit and Di Digital, when trying to reach investors and broader media with a higher reach when targeting consumers. Several practitioners also describe that they produce internal rankings of the media outlets and contact the ones with the broadest reach first.

"One thing about tactics is that we have always focused on tier 1 newspapers first. If you think you have some kind of ability to get something into DN then don't take it to Breakit first." (Flic) [3]

4.1.2. Organizing Media Relations

In the majority of the sample companies one or more of the founders are responsible for the company's media relations. In some cases the work is divided evenly among the founders and personnel and in other cases one individual have the main responsibility. One founder explained:

"We have gone from being four closed fists to a business, so now everyone is not involved. But until now we have all been in it together. CEO and tech-people […]." (Bzzt) [4]

The majority of these startups also lack previous media- or PR experience and a common theme that we found was that most of them learned "*the hard way*" (Min Doktor, 2) rather than through formal media training.

"Considering our background, we didn't have the right strategy. I can understand that now in retrospect, looking back at the emails that I sent to the journalists. The ones I would send today would look different. You learn along the way." (Transfer Galaxy) [5]

The three larger organizations in our sample all have dedicated media relations staff but put forward a number of different spokespersons from within the organization in order to address different questions. One practitioner described this:

"I'm the person in charge but I get help from experts within the organization to get good input on what we communicate with the media" (Tink) [6]

These firms also differ from the rest of the sample because their media relations staff have formal training either as journalists or in PR. In one of these cases this decision was made mainly to strategically invest in media knowledge and strong networks. In the other two there were strong normative influences from the market that made a professional media function a necessity. One startup faced especially harsh criticism early on:

"It became quite urgent to quickly go out and give our view on the matter, because otherwise it would not have been certain that we would could have continued. It's a bit different in health care. There is someone else who can put an end to things." (Min Doktor, 2) [7]

4.2 Journalistic Work and Startups

4.2.1. Covering Startups

The journalists explained that media's reporting on startups have increased significantly, especially during the last years, across different news media.

"It [the amount of coverage of startups] has completely exploded, not least during the last two-three years. […] Even media who don't write a lot about it have a higher interest in startups and those types of issues than they had before." (Dagens Nyheter) [8]

The interviewees further described that several successful Swedish startups have contributed to the interest in startups. One journalist described that by covering these companies they can provide their readers with a picture of the future business environment:

"Our plan is to be one step ahead and show what is the future of trade and industry. What does it look like, what business will be there, where are the opportunities and challenges?" (Veckans Affärer) [9]

Both journalists and startup companies explained however that the barriers to coverage in broader news media is high and that the news needs to be relevant for the news outlets' broader audience:

"We are a very broad newspaper. We will not primarily write about startups, because if you think about where our readers are, well, most of them work at completely ordinary companies. They work in municipalities, they work in county councils, they work at Ericsson or Volvo. Their reality concern a lot of other things than startups." (Svenska Dagbladet) [10]

4.2.2. Finding Stories

The journalists described that the ideas to cover startups come from various different channels. One important source of ideas that all interviewees emphasized are their personal networks with people at companies, business incubators, and venture capital firms. The journalists also visit events to extend their personal networks or to learn about new trends. They emphasize the importance of leaving the news office to meet people physically, explaining that the best news stories often emerge from such meetings.

"You call, you meet people over lunch, you just talk. You often get a good tip when you're at lunch with someone because they talk about something else and say something in a passing. Those kinds of things are usually the best tips." (Dagens Industri) [11]

The journalists also follow what is written in other news media, read industry reports and receive topics to cover from within their media organization.

Another source of ideas are news tips that are received by the news outlet. Swedish media differ from most countries in the sense that individual journalists' email addresses are publicly available and many of them get contacted directly and frequently by both big and small companies that propose ideas for stories they wish to get covered.

"Basically, there are two streams. Either we look for interesting companies to write about. Or they come to us and lets us know that they exist. That's how you find them. But the decision whether or not you write about them, that's a bit more complicated." (Svenska Dagbladet) [12]

4.2.3. Evaluating Startup News

While all journalists described that the traditional newsworthiness criteria apply also to stories about startups, a pattern of more specific factors that journalists use in evaluating this type of stories can be found. These factors were also mentioned in interviews with startup representatives.

4.2.3.1. Business idea

Both journalists and company representatives described that the business idea of the startup is an important factor in determining its newsworthiness. An important aspect that journalists consider is if the business idea is unique or solve an existing problem in a new way.

"If they are disruptive. Like, really innovative. If they do something completely new or if they do something that has been done before but in a new way. That you have a new business model. It doesn't have to be products or services. It can just be that you do things that has been done before in a completely new way." (Veckans Affärer) [13]

They are also more likely to write about a startup if its business idea is related to a current trend on the market or in the society. As such the business idea is often evaluated on the newsworthiness factor of timeliness in both that is new or related to current issues. Another important aspect emphasized by the journalists is that the business idea should have consequences for a broad audience in order to be considered newsworthy.

4.2.3.2. Prominence

The interviewees explained that if a startup has received media coverage previously or is well known it is more likely that they write about it again. They also described that the involvement of famous people in the startup is a strong factor in determining its newsworthiness. Indeed, one of first things the journalists look for when evaluating a story about a new startup is if the company has well-known founders, employees or investors. If famous people are involved, the startup can receive coverage even if they are less newsworthy in other aspects.

"It would be if you have a famous investor. Then even the news chief will be interested. If Carl-Henrik Svanberg [famous Swedish businessman] invests in an ever so small and ever so unknown company it will get publicity." (Svenska Dagbladet) [14]

4.2.3.3. Achievements

The journalists described that they are more likely to write about startups when they are doing well or have achieved something of significance. Since most startups still have low sales common achievements they look for are instead if a startup has received a significant investment, launched a new product or acquired a large customer.

"Then you take a look, is there any hard news in it? Have they signed a large client, or acquired a new company, or received capital, or entered a new market, or appointed a new CEO, or a new board, or a new chairman of the board? It that kind of straight, clear news." (Breakit) [15]

The achievement however needs to be significant in order to be considered newsworthy and the journalists often emphasize that it should concern large amounts of money.

4.2.3.4. Founder Story and Characteristics

The founders of a startup can contribute to coverage, often through the newsworthiness factors of human interest and unexpectedness. The journalists described that they often prefer to frame a story about a startup around the founders rather than the company or its products. When considering the founders they look for something that is unexpected enough to stand out among other news.

"What makes the people behind it interesting is this sort of unexpectedness I would say. Something that stands out. Like leaving a fantastic career as physicist and go start your own business. It's weird. It makes you a bit curious of why someone would do that. What has she thought out? So it's the unexpected things you're looking for. Something that stands out." (Veckans Affärer) [16]

Both journalists and startup interviewees agreed on that the media is interested in founders with characteristics such as gender, age or ethnicity that differs from the industry norm.

"If you were to find, in a completely male-dominated industry, that two sharp girls from KTH [The Royal Institute of Technology] have started a deep-learning company, then you would highlight that for that very reason. Because it's different" (Svenska Dagbladet) [17]

An interesting question to consider here is how much of these factors the startups themselves can affect. They may not be able to attract famous investors and they are unlikely to make major business decisions based only on the interests of the media. Our data indicates that there are several ways that startups can make themselves interesting, whether or not they fulfill the above newsworthiness factors. One of them is building and managing relationships with journalists.

4.3. Relationships in Startup Media Relations

4.3.1. Practitioner-Journalist Sentiments

One of the reasons why the journalists in our sample would decline to go further with stories that startups approach them with is that they approach them in a manner that goes against their journalistic principles. They experience that some startups contact them expecting free marketing without understanding the motives and interests of the media.

"There are companies that can contact us and say 'we would like to publish ourselves with you' or something like that, like it is a transaction, and then I think they have the wrong impression of how media works" (Dagens Industri) [18]

These companies approach the media as if they are a marketing channel or a PR-agency through which they can "publicize" their stories/messages. They are operating under a commercial logic and fail to understand the journalistic purpose – to mediate relevant and unbiased information to the readers. Journalists feel that these actors don't respect their journalistic integrity and they mentioned that the weakening status of the media sector may have increased this problem. They also notice this when companies try to influence *what* they are writing.

"Yes, of course we don't like interference at all. […] it's just not okay to have a lot of opinions about how we express ourselves or write or so. It's our area, so to speak." (Veckans Affärer) [19]

Swedish journalists normally allow interviewees to proofread quotes and sometimes even finished articles before publication in order to avoid misinterpretations. They also often allow companies to make necessary corrections but dislike it when they try to change too much. One company practitioner said:

"It's often factual errors that you can change. There have been a few times when I have written like 'This I would write like this and this'. And put a lot of work into it. That journalist got angry with me for picking at how they expressed themselves." (Flic) [20]

Although these cases are rare they signify some level of hostility when startups overstep the boundaries of what they, as a source, should be doing. It shows that there is a need for startups to better understand the media, or more specifically, the journalistic integrity. As one journalist expressed it:

"The person that think that they can control what we write and how we write and what angles we use has not understood how media works" (Svenska Dagbladet) [21]

So, the startup cannot, or rather should not, tell the journalist what to write and how to write it. But this does not mean they cannot influence their media coverage at all. One thing they *can* do is to try to build a relationship with the journalist in order to better understand his or her interests and indirectly gain some influence over what the journalist writes.

4.3.2. Mutual Benefits of Relationships

Interestingly, although most journalists said they do not allow practitioners to influence what they write both parties agreed that establishing a relationship between the two can affect both the frequency and sometimes even the content of the news published about a company. Furthermore, both journalists and startup communication practitioners expressed a desire to build these relationships with the other party. One journalist at a major newspaper explained:

"So I would say that both sides are dependent on the networks and that both sides, if they work seriously, also work on building and maintaining those network." (Svenska Dagbladet) [22]

For journalists their relationships with startups is an integral part of their work as journalist. Many mentioned that talking to people and building strong networks is what all good journalists do.

"All journalists that have a specialist area knows a lot of people and have contacts. But then again, personal contacts, are they people that I meet with and drink beer with in the evenings? No, it's not. But it's still people that I know fairly well. People that I can call and just bounce ideas off or get information from […]. And all good journalists have large networks." (Svenska Dagbladet) [23]

To them contacts are a source of ideas and information about the topics that they cover. They mentioned for example that having a strong network can give them opportunities to interview certain interesting people or get tips about what is happening in the industries, which enables them to get access to a story before anyone else.

"[…] we identify which people we want to have contact with and meet them regularly to build relationships and get an idea of what is going on. It is like a local newspaper, going out on the town and checking out what is being said, what is going on." (Breakit) [24]

We found that startups benefit from having established relationships with journalists for two main reasons. The first is that they don't have to always initiate contact themselves and proactively sell stories. Having a relationship with a journalist increases the chance that the journalist will come to them for inputs on topics, which allows them to be more reactive.

"You can have a good relationship and they can call and ask if something is going on. 'We have some drought right now; do you have anything to tell us'." (Min Doktor, 1) [25]

The second reason is that having a relationship makes the partner journalist more likely to write about your company. One CEO explained this benefit:

"If you pitch to 10 magazines not all of them will write, but a few might. So therefore, it´s important to build a relationship with the journalists. There are some journalists that will publish even though it's not a hundred percent for them." (Flic) [26]

A journalist explained this from his perspective:

"Let's say that, take Hjalmar Winblad at EQT Ventures, if he calls me and wants to pitch a new company. Considering that I know him and have met him a couple of times, I have followed his career for a very long time, I listen to him. If instead some random person calls and is also pretty bad at understanding my conditions, and wants to pitch me the exact same company, then the probability is a lot bigger that I hang up in two seconds because I don't have time. So already there, there is value in that he has my attention. My line for what I write is still drawn in the same place but at least he has my attention for a while. I will listen and try to understand if this is worth writing about." (Svenska Dagbladet) [27]

4.3.3 Building Relationships

Both parties seemed to agree on the difficulty for startups to build relationships with journalists. Many of the interviewees found that the first contact with the media did not lead to anything since they lacked credibility and had no performance record. The journalists agreed and said that small startups should not have too high expectations in beginning.

"Another thing that you could possibly say about that is that I think the companies need to think more long-term. Have more patience. Make contact and share that they exist. Don't have higher ambitions than that we speak for three minutes. Try to listen to what I might be interested in. And then come back when you have something along that line." (Svenska Dagbladet) [28]

At the same time other interviewees stressed the importance of the first media coverage and that the company's existence in itself is news only once and that the subsequent media coverage is the bigger challenge. They further stressed the importance of building media relationships from the start. One company mentioned how the launch itself can be used in to bond with a specific journalist:

"A simple thing in the beginning is this launch story. 'We are launching now'. It's a good opportunity to package a story and bond with a journalist, because they were first at discovering a new company that has been launched." (Glue) [29]

Involving a journalist from the start makes that person engaged in the company's journey. This increases the chances that the same journalist will write about the startup again as he or she will feel involved in the growth of the company. One journalist expressed that the chance that they would contact a founder for additional interviews increased if they "*grow with a company*" *(Veckans Affärer)* [30]. The journalist would keep reaching out to the startup for interviews, updates and new stories.

As mentioned not all startups manage to get media coverage early on. But this does not mean that they cannot start building relationships with journalists during this time. We found that the fact that a journalist declines to write something after the first contact does not necessarily mean that he or she is not interested. The timing might be wrong, or the startup might not yet, due to its lack of track record, qualify as a credible business or source. What they can do at this point is to reach out to journalists that they believe could be interested and let them know who they are and what they are doing. It is also an opportunity to ask the journalist what he or she may be interested in so that the company can be better prepared next time it has a story. If they are able to do this and get a good response from the journalist, they have already lowered the barriers for the next time they reach out since the journalist will already consider them to be sensible and professional actors.

"[...] if you leave the conversation on some sort of good note, the chances are that the next time they call they have already passed the first obstacle, since they are seen as serious actors" (Dagens Nyheter) [31]

Another aspect that is important in relationship building is again the fact that journalists don't want to be used simply as a channel for firms to fulfill the company's commercial interests. They expect a mutually beneficial two-way relationship and reciprocity. Journalists want sources to be available not only when the company wants something from the journalist but also when the journalist calls and wants input on more general stories. They contact company sources to ask for quotes and also to just get tips and references on where to find additional material. This means that the respondent startups may not even be featured in the resulting article. One journalist explains:

"But it's still people that I know fairly well. People I can call and just bounce ideas off or get information from and who know that 9 out of 10 times there will be no quote. But the 10th time maybe there will be." (Svenska Dagbladet) [32]

This means that building relationships is not only about being persistent. It is also important to be available and offer one's time when others might not. If a startup is open and generous with information the media will continue to call. This will continue to build the relationship between them, which can lead to more requests and ultimately more media coverage.

Important to note is that among the companies in our study few had strong relationships with journalists. The question about whether they had any relationships with the media initially surprised many of them. Although some had both close and more professional relationships with journalists, most clarified that the journalists they had been in contact with were simply just contacts, nothing more, of which some were recurring and others were not. This means that they had not moved beyond some initial phase of relationship building. So even if they understood the importance of building relationships with the media, few had the time and resources to actively pursue it. As one practitioner put it:

"[…] since no one has worked one hundred percent with this, it is difficult to get that level of continuity in the networking." (Asket) [33]

Since all our sample companies have achieved relatively high levels of media coverage there must be additional factors that have contributed to their success. The lack of long-term relationships in some cases means that they must be more proactive in their approach towards the media and use different methods to influence what and how much media coverage they get.

4.4. Media Relations Strategies

4.4.1. Providing

From our interviews we found that, although the startup companies preferred to speak about their products and vision, much of the media coverage they received was focused on hard news such as how much capital they raised in their latest funding round or which famous investors invested in the company. Practitioners also noted that these stories tended to focus on the larger partner or investor rather than the company. The journalists agreed that hard news such as winning new high-profile clients, receiving capital, entering new markets and appointing a new CEO or board member were of great interest to them and that they actively searched out this type of information through for example "Bolagsverket" (the Swedish Companies Registration Office) and network sources. One startup CEO said:

"We don't actually want to talk about funding round as such, but rather about the change that we can make. And that's not usually what the journalists want to talk about. They want to talk about 'They received this much money. This is the valuation. These are the new owners. This is what the board will look like'." (Lavendla) [34]

Although the startups do not find this type of news to be very beneficial in terms of customer acquisition or cash flows they agreed that it is better than not receiving attention at all. Since journalists tend to reach out to the companies for comments on this type of news it gives them an opportunity to add their own input to the story and try to push the topics that they rather talk about. They also said that it can help the company gain initial attention and credibility, if not among the public then at least in the media sector.

The startups' routines around this type of news do not follow some standardized procedure and tend to vary greatly. Respondents have for example different methods for contacting journalists such as using emails or telephone calls or both in varying order. The content of pitches also ranges between full press releases including quotes to simple "blurps" or bullet points including only the most important information. Their practices also tend to evolve over time. One practitioner said:

"So it's a bit of trial and error, testing a couple of times. Three emails per journalist is the maximum you can send before you get blacklisted. We learned that the hard way." (Flic) [35]

Almost all interviewees claimed that they are open and transparent in their communication with the media with the rationale that they believe in what they are doing and have nothing to hide. Their communication with journalists also tend to be relatively informal. In only four out of eleven of our sample startups have the spokesperson had some sort of media training or prepared a communication strategy before speaking to the media about a certain news release.

We could see one clear example however of a formal activity that the startups practice as a response to journalistic requirements which is the presence of online pressrooms on the companies' websites with catalogues and press kits that include for example press releases, reports, images and previously written articles about the company. These are used by seven out of eleven startup companies. One practitioner explained their particularly well-developed routine for interactions with the media:

"We have built a press-kit of industry standard [...] It's because they want it, not because we think it's the best way." (Asket) [36]

4.4.2. Promoting

We noticed a number of different promotional strategies that the startups employ to influence their media coverage. These include for example tailoring communication to the interest and style of individual journalists or media, adapting to criteria which journalists' use to evaluate news stories and utilizing journalistic routines to be able to, if not set the agenda, at least influence it.

4.4.2.1. Understanding journalists' interests and tailoring content

Many respondents discussed the importance of understanding what different types of media and individual journalists are interested in in order to be able to tailor pitches and news releases and increase the chances that a story would become published. Both parties discussed different means to "get to know" journalists.

One phenomenon that we found was that journalists and their sources are able to find a company's news value together, through direct communication and interaction. In these cases, the startups approach the journalists with a basic idea for a news story which then evolves through a discussion between the two parties. One journalist explained that being flexible and adapting to a journalist's interests could be just as successful as delivering a well-developed pre-packaged story. One practitioner also described this:

"[…] listen more than you talk yourself. Not just shout out your message but listen first. […] start by listening and understanding where their interests lie and then adjust yourself to that." (Qasa) [37]

Another journalist further explained that such collaborative news production tends to result from more informal communication with businesses, as compared to interviews where the direction of the conversation has already been predetermined. It can be a conversation where one goes a bit off topic and trigger something that none of the parties had considered earlier but that the journalist in that moment find intriguing.

Many of the startups said that an important activity to understand journalists is to simply read the news. This allows them to identify which journalists write about the topic they are interested in and to get familiar with their writing. It helps them in the next step to directly target the right journalists and tailor a pitch to his or hers interests and style. What is considered news or not also depends on the media one turns to. One practitioner said:

"[…] if you want to get covered in DN [Dagens Nyheter], then buy a DN and look what they write about. They write about a certain number of things and if you want to reach out there you need to adapt to that. If you write about anything else, you cannot count on getting coverage. […] So it's a lot about adjusting to the conditions if you want to maximize your chances of getting coverage." (Lavendla) [38]

Most of the respondents described that they adjust their communication to different types of media in one way or another. Some do this by only targeting the media that is likely to be concerned with a specific news item, whereas others adapt the news item itself to fit the target media outlet or journalist. One practitioner said:

"Then we tried to write customized press releases for each media category. So we had a startup-angle for the tech-medias, like DI Digital and Breakit, and then we had a slightly more personal angle when we turned to local medias related to us. For example 'Ludvig from Lidingö is going to decrease the housing shortage'." (Qasa) [39]

4.4.2.2. Standing out

Two very different, yet complementing, strategies that emerged during the interviews, which take advantage of journalistic newsworthiness criteria, were *being different* and *capturing trends*. The first includes understanding what makes one's business or product unique. The journalists said that one of the most common reasons why they do not cover the startups that contact them is that what they do – their business idea – is just not interesting enough. They said that startups must identify what makes them special. Many of our respondents have done exactly that. One startup said that the main focus of their pitches is how they differentiate themselves:

"That's probably 99% of what we're pitching. We usually make bullet points of what makes us different to really push that we're not just one of many. Because our products themselves are not that different. They are good products, but it's just a white t-shirt. It doesn't get interesting unless there is something else around it. So that's absolutely the most important thing we try to communicate when we contact someone." (Asket) [40]

The companies that we spoke to have many different strategies for standing out from the crowd. Some stress the unique attributes of their products or service and others use their unusual founder stories. One is building attention around their CEO who lived with monks for a week. We also saw examples of the use of PR-stunts where the company tries to build attention around marketing activities. Another startup managed to attract attention by going against the norm of external funding and expressing their dislike for venture capital firms. When others pitched about how much money they were raising, they emphasized how *little* money they took in.

"They like writing about those who get VC [Venture capital] funding. Alright, we hate VCs, let's talk about that instead." (Football Addicts, 2) [41]

4.4.2.3. Connecting to Trends

Both journalists and startups agreed on the importance of understanding and exploiting trends in order to be considered more newsworthy. Connecting themselves to a trend was the most recurring tip that the journalists had for startup companies who want to arouse interest. By connecting their business ideas to trends, hyped technologies, or societal problems startups are putting themselves in into an arena that is in the public's interest.

"Those who are good at attracting attention, they have their service or product and manage to connect it to a larger course of events or a general trend. For example, digitalization is a big trend, or AI or similar." (Dagens Industri) [42]

This allows them to put themselves in a perspective where they increase their relevance and become something bigger than themselves. Often inspiration comes from abroad where technological developments and trends have come further. This can be used to show what similar changes are taking place in Sweden, what it may lead to and that a particular startup is leading that change.

Some issues that our interviewees have actively connected themselves to are digital health, housing shortages, work permits for immigrants and the new PSD2 bank directive. These are all current trends that affect a lot of people and have thereby garnered much media attention.

"Then it's when something happens in our environment, like now for example with PSD2 [a new bank directive]. A lot of newspapers have written about what PSD2 means for banks or consumers, and I realized that DN had not written about it. So I asked them 'Will you write anything about PSD2? We would be happy to give comments'." (Tink) [43]

Being aware of and utilizing trends was found to require some skills, as well as a great deal of luck. If a company has a story they think is interesting they must consider *when* it is interesting. Journalists for example explained that they had sometimes received tips that would not have been publishable if they had arrived two weeks earlier or two weeks later. Stories have to be relevant in the current situation. Journalists also noticed that often when they had written about a topic they received several new tips about similar companies or stories. But by that time, it was already too late. They would not write a similar story twice.

"[…] because people make the mistake that if it is International Women's Day, then they pitch entrepreneurs who are two women. And that's not enough because everyone is calling about that at that time. So, you have to be a bit realistic. Does my news stand out right now or not?" (Svenska Dagbladet) [44]

The startups that we talked to that had done well in regard to capturing trends where those who had a proactive approach and were able to contribute with new solutions or inputs to larger phenomenon at exactly the right time.

4.4.2.4. Gathering and Presenting Data

Several startups described that they gather internal data that they can send to different media outlets and in order to receive media coverage. One startup explained how they first considered what unique data they have access to and then created reports that could be of interest to news outlets.

"We work a lot with data. We handle payments, meaning that we have extensive knowledge of statistics on market trends and rent levels. Journalists love to write about the housing market. They love being able to quantify it with numbers. So we have developed a report that we can distribute." (Qasa) [45]

While the startup is generally not the main focus of the media coverage resulting from this strategy, they always get mentioned as the source of the data and often with a short description of their product or service. Another benefit is that serving journalists with such data can be a strategy to get continuous coverage over time. Many journalists question the validity of the data during the first contact, but once it has been published in one news outlet others are likely to include it in their coverage without much questioning. Some of the startups are implementing data gathering and analysis as an ongoing activity and are using this to become an important source of information on topics directly related to their business. Other practitioners inquire what individual journalists are interested in to see if they can provide information on those specific topics.

"I can say to a journalist 'what are you writing about? Should I create a survey for our users?'" (Football Addicts, 1) [46]

4.4.2.5. Achieving Expert Status

The interviewees described that another method they use to get media coverage is to profile their themselves as experts within a certain field. By being outspoken in areas where the startup is knowledgeable, the spokesperson can become a source that journalists seek out when writing about that particular topic. The startup employees can therefore spend less efforts to actively pitch news to journalists, since journalists instead contact them.

"It's about claiming an area as ours. So that if someone need a reference point on a statement, from an expert on the area, they call us." (Glue) [47]

The interviewees describe that one benefit of this is that they can influence the framing of the issue to their advantage. The method however requires the startup employees to continuously give their expert information to the journalist, even on occasions when it is unlikely to lead to media coverage.

"Even though they don´t always cite you in the media, you can always be generous with information, because then they continue to call you. That way you build the relationship and you build an awareness that you are knowledgeable within this area. And then you get requests and that way you also get more media coverage in the end." (Min Doktor, 1) [48]

4.4.2.6. Offering Stories Exclusively

The strategy that the majority of our startup interviewees said to use the most was exclusivity. Both practitioners and journalists agreed that exclusivity was important for a number of reasons. They explained the competitive nature of the media:

"So if DN and SvD get the same news at the same time, then they will either want to shoot it out [publish it] as fast as possible in order to get ahead of the other, or not publish it at all because the other got there first" (Qasa) [49]

Both parties also noted that this competitiveness is particularly evident among web-based media since their business models are built on being able to release news first. The larger paper-based media described that they work more thoroughly to deliver full stories with complete backgrounds and that their own angle on stories is more important than being first. Racing to be first only reduce the quality of their work and does not give any value to their readers. That does not mean however that they are not interested in exclusive stories. On the contrary, since they put a lot of work into researching and writing they do not want to waste time on a story if they know the competitors are doing the same thing. One journalist said:

"It´s just that it's a pity to invest a lot of work on an interview or article and then see the same thing elsewhere. It is more fun to conduct an interview when you know that you have it exclusively" (Veckans Affärer) [50]

The journalists also pressed the importance of startups being clear when a story is offered to them exclusively. If a startup sends out a press release the journalists automatically assume that it has also been sent to everyone else which greatly reduce their interest. Larger corporations do not have this problem and can go more broadly since their releases tend to have greater news value and will be published by everyone anyway. Startups don't have that luxury. For them, sending pitches to multiple medias can increase the risk that they do not receive any publicity at all.

"Because then it is similar to when you flirt with a girl. Bad analogy, but you understand, you should feel exclusive. Or I don't have to feel exclusive, rather it is pure business. We want to be first with the news, so that is the first priority, we have to be first with the news." (Breakit) [51]

For startups exclusivity is a means to firstly build relationships with the media and secondly influence the power balance in that relationship. The majority of the startup interviewees said that they use exclusivity to build relationships with journalists. They use it to offer journalists "something extra" (Tink) [52]. For example, of the two main media outlets focusing specifically on startups, Breakit and DI Digital, they tend to choose either one or the other and always pitch their news exclusively to that outlet. They also explained that the contact initiation changed after this so that journalists increasingly contacted them instead of the other way around:

"And they have my private number, they notice that they can call once a month and ask if we have any news within the company that we want to communicate, 'can we be the first to have exclusivity?'" (Transfer Galaxy) [53]

The exclusivity strategy is a way for startups to change the power dynamics in their relationship with the media. Half of the startups described that they are able to make demands in exchange for exclusivity. One company said that the bigger the news, the more the story is worth in terms of prestige for the journalist and the higher demands they, as a company, can make. For one major release they wanted to ensure that the journalist got a clear understanding of how the company was working and therefore demanded that the journalist personally came to visit them in their office outside Stockholm. The interviewee said that the journalist would not have taken that time if the story was not exclusive. Another company made a demand as to where the story would be published. The most commonly used demand however is the timing of the release as many of our interviewees said that they give full access and exclusivity only if the media outlet releases the news at a specific time.

Some also found that exclusivity facilitated getting news published regardless of the content.

"[Exclusivity is effective] In the way that they write even though it's not the most interesting story. But you have entered into their news feed and they can push it into in an empty slot they have just because of that." (Flic) [54]

A very clear case of utilizing the power dynamics and interdependency between the journalist and the practitioner was one startup that actively *rewarded* and *punished* journalists. Over time as they reached out to journalists they deepened the bonds with and provided more stories to those who wrote more about them and refrained from contacting or gave less to those that did not treat them as well.

"And then, the ones who wrote good things and frequently, they received more stuff [news material]. And the ones who were less interested, they received less. So it comes down to promoting the ones who treat you well and not calling the ones who are unfair." (Football Addicts, 2) [55]

4.4.3. Co-opting

The majority of our interviewees do not engage in media activities that could be considered co-opting, indicating that such strategies are relatively uncommon for startups. Two startups however use such strategies.

The two interviewees from Min Doktor described that an important part of their media strategy is to highlight serious issues with the current healthcare system and how they can contribute to reducing these problems. By participating in seminars, panel debates and by writing debate articles their aim is to influence policy makers' and the public's perceptions of the digital healthcare industry.

"So I figure out what we need to do, what activities we need to engage in, what statements we need to communicate in order to influence the decision makers to create better conditions for digital health to provide benefits for more people"(Min Doktor, 1) [56]

As a part of this strategy they also cooperated in a study by a researcher from a large Swedish University, who performed an analysis of potential cost benefits of implementing digital healthcare.

"He called us and offered to conduct a study with us, where he compares the costs for society. What savings can be made by using digital healthcare if it replaces physical appointments, what can the savings for the society be then? And then he compares that." (Min Doktor, 1) [57]

Through their co-opting media strategy, Min Doktor seeks to collaborate with other actors in the industry to forward the development of digitalization of healthcare while positioning themselves as a responsible actor in the field.

A second example of an activity resembling co-opting was implemented by the startup Tiptapp. They developed a collaboration with two Swedish charity organizations and could thereby communicate their role as a responsible social actor. Through their collaboration with such prominent organizations they also received significant media coverage.

"It has been convenient and pretty easy for media to pick up. The fact that it is the Red Cross and Myrorna who collaborate with a startup and that it is an exciting model on how to solve this thing about being able donate things." (Tiptapp) [58]

The categorization of media strategies into the three sets of strategies presented above demonstrates the diversity of startup media relations practices and the different demands and ambitions that lie behind them. In the following section we will return to our theoretical framework to discuss our empirical findings.

5. Discussion

In this section we analyze our empirical data following a similar structure as above. First, we look again at the practitioner-journalist relationship and link back to theory to explain our findings (5.1). Then we analyze the three sets of strategies providing (5.2), promoting (5.3) and co-opting (5.4) by drawing from theories on both news production and media relations.

5.1. The Startup Practitioner-Journalist Relationship

One issue that was repeated in many of the interviews was the importance of forming relationships with journalists. We found that the startup practitioner-journalist relationship differs significantly from the traditional corporate practitioner-journalist relationships as described by for example Verhoeven (2016) and Ihlen and Cornelissen et al. (2010). The first difference was related to the practitioner itself. Cornelissen et al. (2010) found that the practitioner's understanding of the media is important for the effectiveness of a firm's media relations. This is why corporations tend to hire practitioners that have a background in media or PR. For small startups this is often not possible due to limited resources, and they are unlikely to have a separate role or department responsible for media relations. In eight out of eleven startups someone with a broader area of responsibility, such as CEO or Marketing Manager, handled the company's media relations. This means that they have to handle many conflicting interests and may not be able to fully prioritize efforts towards the media. Cornelissen et al. (2010) discuss this problem and the difficulty for people with non-media-related backgrounds to internalize the skills and attitudes associated with the professional identity of a communications practitioner. Even though the startup practitioners said that media relations is a prioritized issue, most of them spend the large majority of their time on other activities such as sales, operations or business development.

The lack of media experience and the presence of conflicting interests should, from a credibility point of view, mean that there are higher levels of antagonism between startup communication practitioners and journalists compared to that between corporate practitioners and journalists according to Cornelissen et al. (2010) and Larsson (2009). This was not the case however. Although the journalists described situations where they had reacted negatively to startup practitioners who had approached them with the wrong expectations, it was not a common occurrence.

On the contrary we found that there was very little antagonism between the two groups. Most practitioners had a good understanding of what the media could and could not do for them and were happy with the coverage they managed to get. Also, the journalists were more understanding towards startup practitioners compared to corporate practitioners or PR consultants from whom they expected a higher level of professionalism. They were for example willing to help and educate the startup practitioners that they came into contact with in order to improve the quality of future interactions. The practitioners were able to gain an understanding for the media through trial and error, thereby improving their ability to establish good working relationships with journalists. This shows that the background of the practitioner is not the most important factor affecting the startup practitioner-journalist relationship. Instead it is the lenience of the journalist as well as the practitioner's ability to learn and adapt that influences their attitudes towards each other.

We also found, similarly to Larsson's (2009) study on corporation and the media, that the relationship between journalists and startup practitioners were that of mutually dependent co-creators of news. There was a difference however in the power balance in the relationship compared to corporations. One reason for this is that news about large corporations generally have much higher news value compared to news about startups. Using the concepts from Zoch and Supa (2014) corporate news releases for example almost always fulfill the newsworthiness criteria of prominence since they tend involve large sums of money and well-known people or the company itself is well known. Corporate news also tends to affect a larger number of stakeholders which fulfills the significance criteria, as this news are more likely to have an impact on the journalist's audience. This higher level of newsworthiness means that access to news about corporations is critical for many journalists. Startup news stories are less likely to fulfill these newsworthiness criteria, which means that journalists are less dependent on them for stories. Startups on the other hand are more dependent on the media for exposure compared to corporations since they are less known and have less resources to spend on other marketing activities (Petkova et al., 2008). As a result, the mutual dependency between journalists and startups was found to be very asymmetric. The startup practitioner holds significantly less power compared to the corporate practitioner in the relationship with journalists and is therefore less likely to be able to use this relationship to get media coverage or to influence the news. As we have seen they need to take a more long-term approach to relationship building and find ways to make themselves valuable to the media. They must increase their newsworthiness and power in the practitioner-journalist relationship using other tactics.

5.2. Providing Strategies

As mentioned above, our data suggest that startup companies, compared to corporations, face significantly lower demand for news stories from the media. As Pallas and Fredriksson (2011) describe, corporations, especially listed ones, are often formally required by its stakeholders to publish news that involve financial results, partnerships, market developments and investments. This news also tends to concern a large number of readers and involve high amounts of capital, making media consider them more newsworthy and scrutinize their activities more closely. Startups do not draw this type of attention since they have fewer stakeholders and are largely unknown. Not only is the demand for news about startups different from those of corporations.

The practice of producing them differs as well. Pallas and Fredriksson (2011) and Grünberg and Pallas (2012) describe the very formalized process of corporate news production, where the corporation coordinates its activities together with the media and other stakeholders. As such it can be viewed as a formal process of co-creation of news with high levels of involvement of the different actors. We did not find the same type of formality or involvement, in startup news production using providing strategies. Instead we found that startups media relations were quite different both compared to corporations and often between each other. Informal communication was common and the use of for example press releases and other news material varied greatly. We also found that startups' media relations routines where changing over time. This can be explained by the fact that the startups practitioners initially did not have much media knowledge and were slowly adapting to the requirements of the media as their experience increased. By providing news about their activities, investors, or large customers, startups can get media coverage, but the resulting coverage tend to consist primarily of so-called hard news where the communication practitioners have few opportunities to influence the focus or framing of the content.

5.3. Promoting Strategies

Our data shows that startup practitioners put large efforts into promoting activities. Large organizations that already have the attention of the media can rely on formalized media practices and distribute their news broadly to several media channels. Startups on the other hand are generally not considered as newsworthy and have to focus more on promoting tactics in order become part of journalists' news production.

One such promotion tactic they use is to adapt to journalists' individual preferences. By reading newspaper articles, the practitioners can identify which journalists are most knowledgeable in the field in where they act and adjust their communication content and style to fit to that of the individual journalist. Since journalists are influenced by personal interests, the startup practitioners are thereby taking advantage of the individual level of influence on news production as described by Shoemaker and Reese (2014). Furthermore, since journalists were found to sometimes take a supportive role and develop a newsworthy story together with the practitioner, direct and informal contact with a journalist benefits the practitioner.

A common promotion activity that startup communicators use is to contextualize their news to fit the newsworthiness criteria applied by the media. Startups often have unique business ideas, founder stories or practices and they emphasize this uniqueness in their media communication. In addition, the practitioners described that they had few restrictions on their communication and can therefore express themselves in more unexpected and informal ways compared to corporations. By communicating how they differ from the norm, they connect their story to the newsworthiness criteria of unexpectedness and thereby increase their likelihood of media coverage (Zoch & Supa, 2014), which was also confirmed by the journalists in our study.

A second way that startups adjust their stories to fit the newsworthiness criteria of the media is by connecting themselves to a current trend. By doing so startup practitioners can increase the significance of their story (Zoch & Supa, 2014), as a societal trend is likely to affect a larger and broader audience. In addition, this strategy incorporates the newsworthiness factor of timeliness to a story, even if the story in itself does not qualify as new. This promotion strategy however requires the practitioner to monitor societal trends as well as timing the communication at an appropriate moment.

As described by Pallas & Fredriksson (2011), an important part of promotion activities is to help the media to save time, money and resources in their news production and thereby influencing their coverage of the organization. Corporations perform this function by producing customized news material and arranging press meetings and events. Through our analysis we found that startup communicators also engage in such efforts, mainly through adapting to and exploiting the source routines of the media. Since journalists are constrained by both time and resources they routinely rely on information from external sources in their news production (Yoon, 2005). Startup communicators consider what type of information they have unique access to that can benefit media actors in their news production. The startups also put efforts into gathering such information and present their data as news material that would fit in the production of individual news outlets. Our data shows that such information create mutual benefits, as the journalists save time in their news production and the startup receive media coverage as they are visibly credited as the source. A related promotion activity that we found startup communicators to employ, is to actively pursue the strategy of becoming perceived by journalists as experts within a certain field. As such they can become part of a journalistic source routine: the use of expert sources as "the person relied on by journalists to put events into context and to explain the meaning of news" (Shoemaker & Reese, 2014, p. 189). Through their role as expert sources the startups can receive broad media coverage over time as journalists continuously seek them to comment on topics. Another benefit for the startup, characteristic for promotion strategies, is that that the spokesperson can influence the interpretation of topics in which the startup has their own interests.

Finally, as startup communicators have little power in relation to the media, they apply promotion strategies in order to influence the power balance in the relationship. An effective way to do so is offering certain media organizations or journalists exclusivity to a news story. This tactic takes advantage of journalists' dependency on sources for news ideas as well as the competitive nature of the media industry to be first with a story. Exclusive stories are highly desirable for journalists and give the startup the opportunity to build long-term media relationships and increase its dominance towards the media. Corporations use power relations to control the agenda of the media (Pallas & Fredriksson, 2011). They are able to impose their own news criteria and thereby control journalists' news selection and influence the way different issues are interpreted and reported. Our findings showed that the power that the startups managed to build through the use of exclusives had similar effects. Firstly, they were able to use the power dynamics of their relationships to lower the barriers to get coverage, since journalists published stories with less news value. Secondly, they were able to influence the coverage they got by making demands that forced the journalists to become more actively involved and become better familiar with the company. While the use of exclusivity is a common and effective method to influence a startup's media coverage, it however still requires a good practitioner-journalist relationship or a somewhat newsworthy story in order to attract the interest of the media to begin with.

Our findings suggest that startup communicators, although lacking resources and extensive media knowledge, use promotion strategies similar to those performed by corporations (Pallas & Fredriksson, 2011). Startup communicators perform promotion tactics by tailoring news content to individual journalists and news outlets, contextualizing their news to appear more newsworthy, exploiting journalistic source routines and offering stories exclusively. We argue that startups can benefit such from promotion strategies in order to be considered more newsworthy, create mutually beneficial relationships with journalists, influence the interpretation of topics in line with their interests and altering their power in relation to the media.

5.4. Co-opting Strategies

Our empirics show little evidence of startups using co-opting as a strategy. According to Pallas and Fredriksson (2011) co-opting focuses on creating common platforms such as seminars and advisory boards that can reflect the interests of different societal actors. Startups may not have the resources to create these kinds of platforms themselves but should be to participate. However only a very small number of startups participated in any sort of joint news material production or frame negotiation with external parties and none of them did so to a degree that can be considered a calculated media strategy. This was despite them acting as disruptors in industries such as public health, finance and public transport, where driving changes through the media is likely to require more coordination and cooperation between stakeholders.

One possible explanation why we found little evidence of startups engaging in co-opting is that that they generally lack the credibility the be considered as potential partners in such efforts by established societal actors (Pollock & Gulati, 2007). Their relationship with other stakeholders can as such be seen as similar to their initial relationship with the media. They need to be perceived as credible and trustworthy in order to be considered relevant partners for established institutions and this can take time to achieve. Another possible explanation why few startups engage in co-opting strategies is that they are less scrutinized by the media than corporations. Pallas and Fredriksson (2011) describe co-opting to be a strategy for building an image as a responsible and knowledgeable social actor by focusing on the collective good rather than the firm's own commercial interests. Indeed, the two startups who had in co-opting activities were the ones who had received negative media scrutiny and can therefore be argued to have a higher need for improving their public image.

To conclude, co-opting is not a widely used strategy by startups. As most startups can focus on their commercial interests without receiving critical media scrutiny, they have less incentives to prioritize co-opting strategies over promoting ones.

6. Conclusion

This study explores how the media relations practices of startups can influence their news coverage. More specifically it studies the relationship between startup communication practitioners and journalists and the different strategies that startup companies use to influence their media coverage.

In this thesis we extend the application of the practitioner-journalist relationship to a setting where the practitioner of the source company has limited communication resources and media experience. We discover the mutual dependencies between practitioners and journalists and how these affects, not only the relationship between the two groups, but also the production of news content. Although startup communication practitioners and journalists share a mutually dependent relationship, there is a significant power asymmetry between the two groups. Because of this, the startup practitioners have to adapt to the requirements and preferences of the media. The power asymmetry in the relationship and adaptability of practitioners can explain why there is surprisingly little antagonism between the two groups, despite them having different backgrounds and often conflicting interests. Also, since both parties seek to build mutually beneficial relationships they adjust their expectations and demands over time. This enables startups to gain an understanding of the media and build working relationships with journalists despite not having the experience of professional media relations practitioners.

Applying a framework of media relations strategies developed by Pallas and Fredriksson (2011) we find that startups often receive their initial media coverage through providing strategies. While the resulting media coverage can build credibility and awareness, startups have low influence over the framing of such content.

In order to receive continuous media coverage over time, or to have more influence over their media coverage, startups mainly rely on promotion tactics. By gaining an understanding of newsworthiness criteria applied by journalists, startup practitioners can adapt their media communication to fit these criteria. Recognizing that different journalists and media organizations have different interests and audiences, startup practitioners also selectively choose whom they target, and do so with content tailored to fit individual journalists or media outlets. As such they can increase the attention given to their organization by the media and the likelihood that the news they communicate will receive coverage. Another promotion strategy startup practitioners use, is to place themselves in the news production process by providing internally generated data and acting as expert sources, thereby taking advantage of the media's source routines. Through these strategies startups can get regular media coverage over time and influence the public interpretation of topics in line with their organizations' interests. Finally, startups can increase their power in relation to the media by offering stories exclusively to individual journalists or media organizations. Using this strategy startup practitioners can increase their chances of getting a story covered, and make demands that influence the content, placement or timing of a story.

To conclude, our study shows that the relationship between startups and the media is characterized by an asymmetric mutual dependency. Startups strive to increase their relevance and create news value by understanding and adopting the logic of the media. By building long-term relationships with journalists, adapting their communication to fit journalistic preferences and routines, and increasing the newsworthiness of their stories startup practitioners can affect the power dynamics of the startup-media relationship and become an influential part of the news production process.

6.1. Practical Implication

This study has practical implications for communication practitioners of startups who seek to influence how they are covered by the media. The finding suggest that startup practitioners do not need prior knowledge of media relations in order to be successful in building relationships with journalists or influence their news coverage. The practitioner should however acknowledge that the startup is likely to have low power in their relationship with the media but can alter this by employing media relations strategies. Furthermore, they can influence the amount and content of media coverage they receive by tailoring stories to individual journalists or media outlets, adapting news to the newsworthiness criteria applied by the media and exploiting journalist source routines.

6.2. Limitations

In order to answer our research question, we used a purposeful sampling method to increase the probability that the interviewees had sufficient experience of the phenomenon under study. While this gave us rich empirical data, it also implies that our sample of startups consist of organizations who have prioritized media relations and have succeeded in receiving media coverage. As a result, the findings might have been different with another sample including startups with less emphasis on media relations or that had failed to receive media attention.

The study is limited to representatives from Swedish startups and media organizations, which limits the generalizability of our findings to other regions. While journalistic newsworthiness criteria have been found to be largely consistent across regions, the relationship between media organizations and external actors vary significantly (Shoemaker & Cohen, 2012). Swedish journalists are publicly accessible to a larger higher extent than internationally, indicating that the formation of practitioner-journalist relationship and media relations strategies across regions could differ from our findings.

6.3. Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study open up several paths for future research. Knowing that media organizations and their interaction with practitioners vary across regions, an interesting area of future research would be to investigate media relations of startup practitioners in other countries. Such research studies could explore if our findings on the relationship between practitioners and the media, as well as the strategies employed by startups are consistent across other regions.

While this study focused on investigating the complex interactions between practitioners and journalists and how startups' media relations strategies can influence media coverage, a detailed analysis of the actual media coverage they received was outside the scope of the study. Future researchers could conduct a content analysis of the media coverage of participating organizations, which could provide further insights into the outcomes of different media relations strategies. Finally, because of the limited the time frame of this study, it could only capture the interactions between practitioners and journalists in retrospect, through the recollection of the participants at one point in time. A future research project with a longer time frame could benefit from a longitudinal design in order to investigate how the relationships and practitioner strategies develop over time.

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Appendix 1 – List of Interviews

Company	Interviewee	Position	Sample	Date	Mode	Duration
Asket	Jakob Dworsky	Co-founder	Startup	2018-02-28	Face-to-face	55 min
Min Doktor, 1	Petronella Warg	COO	Startup	2018-03-07	Face-to-face	70 min
Transfer Galaxy	Yosef Mohamed	Co-founder & CEO	Startup	2018-03-07	Skype	65 min
Tink	Julia Levander	PR Manager	Startup	2018-03-12	Face-to-face	50 min
Qasa	Mattia Tosti	Co-founder & Market Director	Startup	2018-03-13	Face-to-face	45 min
Bzzt	Per Nyrenius	Co-founder & Market Director	Startup	2018-03-14	Face-to-face	35 min
Football Addicts, 1	Johanna Garå	Head of PR and Media	Startup	2018-03-15	Face-to-face	40 min
Football Addicts, 2	Anonymous	Anonymous	Startup	2018-03-15	Telephone	30 min
Flic	Pranav Kosuri	Co-founder & CCO	Startup	2018-03-20	Face-to-face	50 min
Min Doktor, 2	Magnus Nyhlen	Founder & Board Member	Startup	2018-03-21	Telephone	40 min
Glue	Carl Johan Grandinson	Co-founder & CEO	Startup	2018-03-23	Face-to-face	55 min
Tiptapp	David Höök	Co-founder	Startup	2018-03-27	Face-to-face	45 min
Lavendla	Jakob Nordström	Founder & CEO	Startup	2018-03-27	Face-to-face	60 min
Svenska Dagbladet	Mikael Törnwall	Journalist & Author	Media	2018-03-09	Face-to-face	65 min
Veckans Affärer	Jill Bederoff	Journalist	Media	2018-03-16	Face-to-face	55 min
Breakit	Stefan Lundell	Co-founder & Content Manager	Media	2018-03-16	Face-to-face	35 min
Dagens Industri	Anonymous	Journalist	Media	2018-04-04	Face-to-face	40 min
Dagens Nyheter	Thomas Frostberg	Editor	Media	2018-04-05	Face-to-face	55 min

Appendix 2 – Interview Guide: Startups

Background

- Can you tell us about your background and role at the company?
- Do you have experience do you have of media or PR?

Goals

- How interested have you [the company] been in acquiring media coverage?
  - Has it been prioritized in the organization?
- Why have you wanted to reach out through the media?
- Who do you want to reach?
- Which media outlets have you targeted?

Media relations activities

- Who are involved in your communication with the media?
  - Who makes decisions about media relations in your organization?
- Can you describe your contact with the media?
- Do you have personal connections that have led to media coverage?
- What tactics have you used to get media coverage?
- Do you keep track of what is being written about you?
- Have you noticed if different media make different demands?
  - How do you handle this?
- Do you know how media/journalists work?
- How do you find out what journalists are interested in?

About the coverage they have received

- What did you do to receive media attention the first time?
- Do you think the media coverage you have received reflects what you have aimed to communicate?
- Have you received media coverage without proactively seeking it?
- To what extent have you been able to influence the content or message of news stories?
  - How have you been able to do so?
- Have you done something that did not work in terms of getting media coverage?
- Have you done something that worked very well?

About the media's expectations

- What do you think is important in order for the media to write about a startup company?
- What do you think is important in order for the media to write about your company?
  - Has this affected your media strategy? How?

Concluding question

- Do you have any advice for startups that want to get media coverage?

Appendix 3 – Interview Guide: Media

Background

- Can you tell us about your professional background?
- What do you typically write about?

Finding stories

- How do you find topics to write about?
- How do you identify startups that fit a certain story?
- How often are you contacted by startups?
- What happens when an unknown startup contact you?
    - What do they do?
    - How can they create/arouse interest?
- How do you learn about new startups?
- Do you have any personal relationships/contacts in startups?

The media organization

- Who in your editorial office receives the most calls or emails from startups?
- How do you decide whom to write about?
    - Who decides what you write about?
- How do you handle news materials for example press releases that you receive?
- Do you have any system to organize and save news material from companies?
- How do you use pre-written material from companies?
- How does your reporting on startups differ from your reporting on established businesses?

Startups' newsworthiness

- What makes startups interesting to write about?
- What makes a specific startup interesting to write about?
- What makes a startup uninteresting?
- Is there something that makes you say no to a company?
- What factors are most important for the evaluation of news value when it comes to new organizations?

The startups' media abilities

- How important is it that startups that contact you understand your work? (how you work, what information you need)
- How important is their ability to pitch an idea?
- How much can startups influence what you write?

Concluding question

- Do you have any advice for startups that want to get media coverage?

Appendix 4 – Coding of data

Categories	**Codes**	
Media Practices and Principles	Finding News Journalistic Principles Journalistic Schedule	Newsworthiness Criteria Selecting News Source Credibility
Startup Media Relations	Media Relations Goals Media Experience Media Knowledge	Goals Organization
Contact	Content, Message Individual	Initiation Method
Tactics, Influencing Media	Cooperation Creating newsworthiness Data Exclusivity	Expert Standing Out Tailoring Content Trends
Relationships	Building Relationships	Benefits from Relationships

Appendix 5 – Original Quotes in Swedish

[1] *"I den tidigare fasen, så är det till viss del konsumenter, men ännu viktigare är investerare. Och dom blir såhär... syns man i tidningarna så blir det lite mer intressant helt plötsligt." (Glue)*

[2] *"Sen är det tredje benet egentligen employee branding. Som till exempel nu dels att det är väldigt svårt att anställa, eller attrahera snarare, utvecklare. Så då är det att visa at vi har attraktiva jobb med attraktiv kod. […] Visa alltså att vi är en attraktiv arbetsgivare." (Tink)*

[3] *"En sak med taktiker är att vi alltid har fokuserat på tier 1tidskrifter först. Alltså om du tror att du har nån slags förmåga att få ut nåt i DN att inte gå med det till Breakit innan. Det är väl en taktik. Att jobba med de största tidskrifterna först. För då kommer det automatiskt tas in i de andra. Och inte ofta tvärtom." (Flic)*

[4] *"Vi har gått ifrån att vara fyra knutna nävar till ett företag så nu är väl inte alla involverade längre. Men fram till nu har vi suttit allihopa. VD och teknikmänniskor […]." (Bzzt)*

[5] *"Med tanke på våran bakgrund så hade vi inte den rätta strategin. Jag kan förstå det nu efterhand när jag kollar tillbaka på de mail som jag skickade till journalisterna. De jag skulle skicka idag skulle se annorlunda ut. Man lär sig längs med resan." (Transfer Galaxy)*

[6] *"Jag är huvudansvarig men tar jag hjälp av olika experter inom organisationen för att få en bra input på det vi kommunicerar till media." (Tink)*

[7] *"Det blev ganska bråttom att snabbt komma ut och ge vår syn på saken, för annars hade det inte varit säkert att vi kunnat fortsätta. Det är lite skillnad med vård där, det finns ju nån annan som kan sätta stopp för saker." (Min Doktor, 2)*

[8] *"Asså den [bevakningen av startups] har ju fullständigt exploderat, inte minst de senaste två-tre åren […] Även de som inte skriver så jättemycket om det har ett större intresse av startupbolag och den typen av frågor än de hade tidigare. (Dagens Nyheter)*

[9] *"Vår tanke är ju att vi ska ligga steget före och visa vad är framtidens näringsliv, hur ser det ut, vad är det för affärer som kommer att finnas där, var finns det möjligheter och hur ser utmaningarna ut?" (Veckans Affärer)*

[10] *"Vi är en väldigt bred tidning. Vi kommer inte att i första hand skriva om startups, därför att om man tänker på var befinner sig vår läsekrets nånstans, jo, dom flesta jobbar på helt vanliga bolag, dom jobbar i kommuner, dom jobbar i landsting, dom jobbar på Ericsson eller Volvo. Deras verklighet är väldigt mycket annat än startups." (Svenska Dagbladet)*

[11] *"Man ringer, man träffar folk på lunch, man pratar bara och sådär. Ofta får man ett bra tips när man är på lunch med nån för nån pratar om nåt annat, och sen säger dom något i förbifarten. Så ofta såna grejer är ofta dom bästa tipsen". (Dagens Industri)*

[12] *"Men i princip så är det två strömmar. Dels så är det när vi letar intressanta bolag att skriva om. Eller de kommer till oss och berättar att de finns. Det är så man hittar dem. Men så beslutet om man skriver eller inte det är lite mer komplicerat." (Svenska Dagbladet)*

[13] *"Om de är disruptiva. Liksom verkligen nyskapande. Om de gör någonting helt nytt eller om de gör någonting som är gjort tidigare fast på ett nytt sätt. Att man har en ny affärsmodell. Det behöver inte vara produkter eller tjänster. Det kan ju bara vara att man gör saker som har gjorts förut fast på ett helt nytt sätt." (Veckans Affärer)*

[14] *"Det skulle va om du har en känd finansiär. Då kommer även nyhetschefen vara intresserad. Om Carl-Henrik Svanberg investerar i ett aldrig så litet och aldrig så okänt företag så kommer det få publicitet." (Svenska Dagbladet)*

[15] *"Då tittar man, finns det någon hård nyhet i det? Har man fått en stor kund, eller har man köpt ett bolag, eller har man fått in kapital, eller går man in på en ny marknad, eller får man en ny VD eller ny ledning eller styrelseordförande? Det är såna raka, tydliga nyheter." (Breakit)*

[16] *"Det som gör personerna bakom intressanta, är ju det här lite oväntade skulle jag säga. Någonting som sticker ut. Som att man lämnar en fantastisk karriär som fysiker och sätter sig för att starta eget. Det är konstigt. Då blir man lite nyfiken på varför gör man det. Vad har hon kommit på? Så det är liksom de här oväntade grejerna man letar efter. Nåt som sticker ut." (Veckans Affärer)*

[17] *"Om man skulle hitta en i en totalt mansdominerad bransch att två skarpa tjejer från KTH startat ett deep learning-företag, det skulle man kanske lyfta fram just därför. Att det bryter." (Svenska Dagbladet)*

[18] *"Det finns företag som kan kontakta och säger att 'vi vill gärna publicera oss hos er' eller nåt sånt, som att det är en transaktion, och då tycker jag att dom har fel syn på hur media funkar." (Dagens Industri)*

[19] *"Ja, vi gillar inte inblandning förstås över huvud taget [...] det är liksom inte okej att ha massa åsikter om hur vi uttrycker oss eller skriver eller så. Det är vårt område så att säga." (Veckans Affärer)*

[20] *"Ofta är det faktafel som man får ändra. Det är några gånger som jag har skrivet typ såhär att det här skulle jag skriva på det här och det här sättet. Och la jättemycket tid på det. Den journalisten blev arg på mig för att jag petade på hur de uttryckte sig." (Flic)*

[21] *"Den som tror sig att de ska kunna styra vad vi skriver och hur vi skriver och vad vi vinklar på har ju inte alls förstått hur media fungerar." (Svenska Dagbladet)*

[22] *"Så jag skulle säga att båda sidor är beroende av nätverken och båda sidor, om de jobbar seriöst, jobbar också med att bygga och upprätthålla nätverket." (Svenska Dagbladet)*

[23] *"Alla journalister som har ett specialområde känner ju väldigt mycket folk och man har kontakter. Sen personliga kontakter, är det människor jag umgås med och dricker öl med på kvällarna? Nej, det är det ju inte. Men det är ju ändå människor jag känner rätt väl, människor jag kan ringa och bara bolla idéer eller få information av […]. Och alla bra journalister har stora nätverk." (Svenska Dagbladet)*

[24] *"[...] vi identifierar vilka människor som vi vill ha kontakt med och träffar dom regelbundet, för att bygga relationer och få koll på vad som händer. Det är som en lokaltidning, ut på byn och kolla snacket, vad är det som är på gång." (Breakit)*

[25] *"Man kan ha en bra relation och de kan ringa upp och fråga om det händer nåt: 'vi har lite torka just nu, finns det nåt att berätta?'." (Min Doktor, 1)*

[26] *"Pitchar du på 10 tidskrifter så är det inte alla som skriver utan ett fåtal kanske. Så därför är det viktigt att bygga en relation med journalisterna. Det finns vissa journalister som kommer att publicera fast det inte är helt hundra för dem." (Flic)*

[27] *"Låt oss säga att, ta Hjalmar Winblad på EQT Ventures, om han ringer mig och vill pitcha på mig ett nytt företag. I och med att jag känner honom och har träffat honom ett par gånger, jag har följt hans karriär under väldigt lång tid, jag lyssnar ju på honom. Ringer i stället en random människa som dessutom är rätt dålig på att förstå mina villor, och vill pitcha på mig exakt samma företag så är sannolikheten mycket större att jag slänger på luren på två sekunder för jag har inte tid. Så redan där finns det ju ett värde i att han har min attention. Min ribba för vad jag skriver är ju fortfarande på samma ställe, men han har i alla fall min uppmärksamhet under en tidsperiod, jag kommer att lyssna på honom och försöka förstå, är det här värt att skriva om." (Svenska Dagbladet)*

[28] *"En sak till som man möjligtvis kan säga där är att jag tror bolagen måste vara mer långsiktiga. Ha mycket mer tålamod. Ta kontakt berätta att de finns. Ha inte mer ambitioner än att vi har pratat i tre minuter. Försök lyssna på vad jag skulle vara intresserad av. Och sen försöka komma tillbaka när de har någonting åt det hållet." (Svenska Dagbladet)*

[29] *"En enkel grej i början är ju den här lanseringsstoryn. Nu lanserar vi. Det är ett bra tillfälle att paketera en story och bonda med en journalist sådär för att de var först med att upptäcka ett bolag som lanserats." (Glue)*

[30] *"växer med ett bolag" (Veckans Affärer)*

[31] *"[…] har man väl lämnat samtalet en gång liksom i nån slags god anda så ökar det chansen för nästa gång de ringer så har de redan passerat det första hindret i och med att de är betraktade som vettiga aktörer." (Dagens Nyheter)*

[32] *"Men det är ju ändå människor jag känner rätt väl, människor jag kan ringa och bara bolla idéer eller få information av, och som vet att 9 av gånger av 10 så blir det inget citat. Men den 10onde gången så blir det kanske det." (Svenska Dagbladet)*

[33] *"[...] i och med att ingen har hundraprocentigt jobbat med det här så är det svårt att få den typen av kontinuitet i nätverksbyggandet." (Asket)*

[34] *"Vi vill ju egentligen inte prata om nyemissionen som sådan utan vi vill ju prata om den förändringen som vi kan åstadkomma. Och det vill oftast inte journalisterna prata om. De vill prata om liksom 'Såhär mycket pengar tog de in. Det här är värderingen. De här är de nya ägarna. Såhär kommer styrelsen se ut'." (Lavendla)*

[35] *"Så det är väl lite sån där trial and error, testa några gånger. Tre mail per journalist är max man får skicka annars blir man lite svartlistad. Det fick vi lära oss den hårda vägen." (Flic)*

[36] *"Vi har byggt upp ett presskit med branschstandard liksom [...] Det är ju för att dom vill ha det så, inte för att vi tycker det är det bästa sättet." (Asket)*

[37] *"[...] lyssna mer än man själv pratar. Inte bara skrika ut sitt budskap utan att lyssna in först. […] börja med att lyssna in och förstå var deras intressen ligger och sen anpassa sig själv efter det." (Qasa)*

[38] *"[...] vill man nå ut i DN så köp en DN och se vad de skriver om. De skriver om ett visst antal saker och om du då vill nå ut där så måste du anpassa dig efter det. Skriver du om nåt annat så kan du inte räkna med att du kommer att synas. […] Så det handlar mycket om att rätta sig efter förutsättningarna om man ska maximera chanserna att man får utrymme." (Lavendla)*

[39] *"Och sen försökte vi skriva anpassade pressreleaser för varje media-kategori. Så vi hade väl en såhär startup-vinkel för techmedierna, typ DI Digital och Breakit, och så hade vi en lite mer personlig vinkel där vi vände oss till lokalmedier som hade någonting med oss att göra, till exempel 'Ludvig från Lidingö ska bidra till att minska bostadsbristen'." (Qasa)*

[40] *"Det är nog nästan 99% av vad vi pitchar. Vi brukar ställa upp i bullet-form vad som gör oss annorlunda, för att på nåt sätt verkligen trycka på att vi inte bara är en i mängden. För våra produkter är ju i sig inte så annorlunda. Det är bra produkter men det är en vit t-shirt liksom. Det blir inte intressant om det inte finns något annat kring det. Så det är absolut det viktigaste vi försöker få fram när vi kontaktar någon." (Asket)*

[41] *"Dom gillar att skriva om såna som tar in riskkapital, okej vi hatar riskkapital, låt oss prata om det i stället." (Football Addicts, 2)*

[42] *"Dom som är bra på att väcka intresse, dom har sin tjänst eller produkt och så lyckas dom koppla det till ett större skeende eller en allmän trend. Till exempel, digitalisering är en stor trend, eller AI eller liknande." (Dagens Industri)*

[43] *"Och sen så är det när det händer någonting i vår omvärld, som nu till exempel med PSD2. Det har många tidningar skrivit om vad innebär PSD2 för banker eller konsumenten, och då märkte jag att till exempel det hade inte DN skrivit om. Så då frågade jag dom 'kommer ni skriva någonting om PSD2? Vi uttalar oss gärna'." (Tink)*

[44] *"[…] för det gör ju folk misstaget att är det till exempel internationella kvinnodagen, då säljer de in entreprenörer som är två kvinnor. Och det räcker inte för alla ringer om det just då. Så man måste ju själv vara lite realistisk. Står min nyhet ut just nu eller inte." (Svenska Dagbladet)*

[45] *"Vi jobbar väldigt mycket med data. Vi hanterar betalningar, det vill säga vi har stenkoll på statistik om marknadstrender och hyresnivåer. Journalister älskar att skriva om bostadsmarknaden. De älskar att kunna kvantifiera det med siffror. Så vi har tagit fram en rapport då som vi kan få ut." (Qasa)*

[46] *"Jag kan säga till en journalist vad är det du håller på och skriver om? Ska jag göra en enkät med våra användare?'" (Football Addicts, 1)*

[47] *"Det gäller det att muta in ett område som är vårt. Så att om man behöver en referenspunkt på ett utlåtande, från någon expert inom området, så ringer dom oss." (Glue)*

[48] *"Även om dom inte alltid citerar dig i media, så kan man alltid vara generös med information, för då fortsätter dom ringa dig. Då bygger man relationen och man bygger en awareness om att man är bra på det här området. Och då blir man också tillfrågad och så får man också mer media i slutändan." (Min Doktor, 1)*

[49] *"Så om DN och SvD får samma nyhet samtidigt, då kommer dom antingen vilja skjuta ut den så snabbt som möjligt för att hinna före den andra eller inte skjuta ut den alls för den andra har kommit först." (Qasa)*

[50] *"Det är just det att det är tråkigt att lägga ner en massa jobb på en intervju eller artikel och sen så ser man samma sak någon annanstans. Det är roligare att göra intervju när man har det exklusivt." (Veckans Affärer)*

[51] *"För då är det ju lite som när man raggar på en tjej. Dålig liknelse men ja du fattar, man ska känna sig exklusiv. Eller jag behöver inte känna mig exklusiv, utan det är rent affärsmässigt. Vi vill vara först med nyheterna så det är prio ett, vi ska vara först med nyheterna." (Breakit)*

[52] *"nåt extra" (Tink)*

[53] *"Så dom har ju mitt privata nummer, så märker dom att dom kan ringa en gång i månaden och fråga om det är någon nyhet inom bolaget som du vill kommunicera utåt, 'kan vi vara dom första som får exklusivitet" (Transfer Galaxy)*

[54] *"Just såhär att de skriver fast det inte är den roligaste historien. Men du har kommit in i deras nyhetsflöde och de kan pusha in det i nån lucka de har bara för att." (Flic)*

[55] *"Och sen dom som skrev bra och mycket, dom fick mer grejer. Och dom som inte var så intresserade, dom fick mindre. Så det handlar om att promota dom som är schyssta mot en och inte ringa dom som är oschyssta liksom." (Football Addicts, 2)*

[56] *"Så där funderar jag ut vad vi behöver göra, vilka aktiviteter vi behöver utföra, vilka utspel behöver vi göra kommunikativt för att påverka beslutsfattarna att skapa bättre förutsättningar för digital hälsa att göra nytta för fler" (Min Doktor, 1)*

[57] *"Han ringde upp oss och erbjöd oss möjlighet att han skulle utföra en studie, och där han jämför då vad det kostar för samhället. Vad man kan spara på att använda digital vård om det ersätter fysiska möten, vad sparar samhället då? Och sen jämför han det" (Min Doktor, 1)*

[58] *"Det har varit tacksamt och ganska enkelt att för media att plocka upp. Att det är Röda Korset och Myrorna som har ett arbete med en startup och det är en spännande modell på hur man löser det här med att kunna ge saker" (Tiptapp)*