

**A VICTIM OF SUCCESS?  
INCREASING CLASSIFIEDS  
REVENUE IN A DECLINING MARKET: A CASE STUDY IN  
BARBADOS**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of  
Liverpool for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)  
by Chay A Davis**

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**A Victim of Success?**  
**Increasing Classified Revenue in a Declining Market:**  
**A Case Study in Barbados**

**Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**University of Liverpool Management School**  
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## Author's Declaration

I declare that the work of this thesis was prepared in accordance with the regulations of the University of Liverpool, which formed part of its requirement for the Doctor of Business Administration. The study represents the original work of the author, except where cited by specific references in the text. The study, which was supervised by Dr. Lucia Morales, principal supervisor for the research, has not been submitted to any other academic institution for a qualification or award. There was no funding for the study from my practice, which represents the organisation under review. However, the author of the study is employed by the organisation.

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Date:** Friday March 29, 2019

## **Dedication**

Two teachers at my secondary school in Coventry, England, cautioned me against pursuing an academic course of study, since they deemed me 'unsuitable material' for university. Today, I have earned degrees from The University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, where I graduated with a BA in History and Political Science (2:1); The University of Stirling, where I graduated with an MSc in Public Relations Management (merit); and the University of Liverpool, where I completed the coursework stage of its doctoral programme in Business of Administration. My thesis is dedicated to my mother and stepfather, who by their unwavering guidance, encouraged me to reach the pinnacle of my academic journey. I also dedicate my thesis to the same two teachers, whose advice in some strange way, invigorated me in my resolve to achieving a doctoral qualification.

Finally, I also dedicate my thesis to my supportive wife, who made unprecedented sacrifices for me to pursue my DBA. Rochelle Davis, I am eternally indebted to you. I look forward to returning the same level of support when you take the next step of your academic career.

## Acknowledgments

My study was made possible with the immeasurable contributions of my classified advisors, who generously gave of their time and energy to participate in my research.

Since embarking on this research, I have seen each of them blossom in confidence, where they cultivated the delivery of their customer service skills. I am equally appreciative of my advertisers, who took their time and effort to complete my questionnaire.

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**A Victim of Success?  
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## **Abstract**

### **Main purpose**

This action research study investigates the extent to which a classified advertising manager at a leading newspaper publisher in Barbados sought to grow advertising revenue in an anemic economy by US\$50,000 in 2015, and 2016. The manager sought to achieve this growth by transitioning his sales team from a state of ad-taking, which is associated with 'passivity', 'poor customer engagement' and a 'paucity of sales', to one of adaptive selling, which is more 'proactive', 'probing' and 'pioneering' in both nature and scope.

### **Research approach**

The researcher utilises a multi-method approach, which comprises a dominant quantitative paradigm and a supportive qualitative paradigm, where the former enabled the researcher to quantify the views among his classified advisors and advertisers to understand whether they were receptive towards adaptive selling practices, while the latter paradigm, helped shed light on anomalous data. Other supportive designs included document analysis, which gave the researcher voice and meaning into the phenomenon under investigation.

### **Review of outcomes**

The findings of the study confirms that adaptive selling in the department under review helped its classified advisors increase their sales in an anemic economy during the periods 2015 and 2016. However, when an economy experienced severe contractions, coupled with an aggressive Government austerity programme, the data revealed that adaptive selling in itself was unable to increase sales among classified advisors, since advertiser spending was significantly restricted.

The data from classified advisors reveals that commercial advertisers were more receptive to engaging adaptive selling, because it enabled them to fully capitalise on their advertising investment; while private advertisers, who placed obituary and in-memoriam notices were equally receptive to adaptive selling, because it enabled them to honour the legacy of their deceased relatives. These advertiser preferences helped to accrue incremental revenue for the department under review.

**Keywords:** Adaptive selling, upselling and cross selling, worded and display advertisements, classified advisors, customised selling, anemic economy, and coaching.

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## **CHAPTER 1.0 – INTRODUCTION**

## 1.1 Introduction

As an action researcher and scholar practitioner at a leading newspaper publisher in Barbados, holding responsibility for increasing its advertising classified revenue, I have observed that my department is in the 'eye' of a 'perfect storm'. This 'category five system', the highest rating of any hurricane, has also created unprecedented turbulent conditions for publishers in North America, Europe and Australasia. These forces are characterised by heavy falloffs in global advertising revenue, which decreased on average in "54 countries from US\$140 billion in 2011 to US\$125 billion in 2016, which is forecast to decline further to US\$120 billion by 2020" (Bothun, 2016, p.6). These falloffs were due to the rapid advancement in digital technology, which facilitated the free placement of competing advertising on web and social media platforms.

These pressures have also borne heavily on my practice, a publisher and distributor of a daily newspaper, which has a local readership share of 83 per cent (Systematic Media Limited, 2018, p. 1). The Company is one of three principal subsidiaries owned by the largest media group in the Caribbean, a publicly listed entity. The Group, which is domiciled in another regional country, owns 23 media companies in four Caribbean jurisdictions. I envisaged that my research can help my practice increase revenue by changing the selling practices of its classified advisors, so that they can customise advertising content, which not only meets the needs of advertisers, but also exceeds their expectations whenever and wherever possible. When my sales team can realign their products to the needs of advertisers, they would not only retain their loyalty, but also help to increase revenue in my practice through the process of upselling and crossing.

Given that the publisher forms part of a public company, which is mandated to provide a fair return to its shareholders, it is imperative that my classified advisors transition from a state of passively facilitating the placement of advertisements to one of proactively adapting their products to suit the expectations of advertisers. If my classified advisors continued to facilitate a passive approach to selling, then my practice will continue to earn minimal revenue, which would impact on its shareholder value. Should shareholder value become abraded, my parent company will have little option, but to terminate staff, so that it can reduce its expenditure and mitigate the risks to its shareholders.

## 1.2 Research background

This thesis entitled, *A Victim of Success? Increasing Revenue in a Declining Market: A Case Study in Barbados*, investigates the extent to which classified advisors in my department can enhance their selling practices, so that they can help grow revenue in an anemic market. The classified department, which represents my professional practice, contributed 20 per cent of revenue to the entity under review, while the Retail and Circulation Departments contributed 70 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. In keeping with global trends of declining newspaper advertising, revenues in my department fell from US\$4.5 million in 2009 to US\$3 million in 2017 (Marshall, 2018 p.2). This falloff was attributed to three elements: anemic economic conditions in Barbados, which significantly restricted advertiser budgets; increased competition in the form of social media technology, which enabled consumers to advertise for free; and the ad-taker practice of selling among my classified advisors, which provided advertisers with minimal value and my practice with minimal revenue. These elements have led to staff separations in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017

and 2018; decreased staff morale; and lowered shareholder value for my parent company. However, should these effects worsen, my practice could record a further loss, which would redound in more job losses, while eroding shareholder confidence.

In my quest to address my work based problem, I was conscious that I faced insurmountable challenges as an action researcher, since the very essence of my study attempted to defy the laws of economics, which dictated that when an economy is hit by a recession, businesspersons can expect their revenues to decline. My work based problem became even more acute, when global trends revealed that traditional newspaper entities – like mine - were highly vulnerable to economic shocks, since advertisers during a recession tended to reassign their budgets to more critical operational areas such as the payment of salaries, utility bills or rent. Against this background, I sought to create new knowledge, which showed how my classified advisors can weather this storm by replacing their ad-taking practices with adaptive selling practices. This transition enabled my advisors to ask the right type of questions, to create the right type of product, so that they can create the right type of results for their advertisers. Dohrn (2013) observed the need for newspaper publishers to hire salespersons that have the ability to advise advertisers, which type of content worked best for them. He maintained, “New products come out every day and they need to be able to teach people about them” (Dohrn, 2013, p.48). Communication plays a big part, but Dohrn (2013) said salespersons should also “listen more and talk less” in order to find what advertisers need” (Dohrn, 2013, p.48). Rickun (2012) made this distinction more vivid with his analogy, where he described salespersons as falling into two categories: a ‘bartender’ or a ‘sommelier’. He stated that a bartender (like an order taker) waits behind the bar for customers, and fulfills requests for drinks on demand. However, a sommelier is more consultative in nature, where he or she asked questions of their customers, and made a final recommendation based on their customers’ responses. A sommelier blended their product knowledge with their ability to uncover buying motives. This analogy crystallised the essence of my work based problem, because it centred on transitioning my classified advisors from adopting a ‘bartender’ orientation, which provided minimal value to clients and my shareholders, to a ‘sommelier’ orientation, which offered them maximum value.

In my role as an action researcher, I am employed as the classified advertising manager at the newspaper entity under review, where I am responsible for growing its revenue in line with sales targets, which were approved by my parent company. Given the contraction of the Barbadian economy, many of our worded advertisers have defected to social media sites, where they can advertise for free. Consequently, this has led to an approximate 10 per cent drop every year over a five year period for worded advertising. To confront this issue, it is necessary for me to transition my classified advisors from facilitating client orders to creating content, which resonated with them and their target consumers. Other forms of adaptive selling include converting worded advertising to display advertising and selling added features such as full colour, photos and logos (Please refer to Appendix G). These collaterals provide added value for advertisers, while providing added revenue to my practice. Conversely, I am also charged with engineering new products, which can help accrue additional revenue for my practice. With these duties, I need to review the current systems in the Art Department, so that they can evolve with the needs of discerning advertisers, who expect higher returns for their advertising dollar. Although I understand the need for desired change in my practice, my challenge lies in encouraging my staff to adopt a similar mindset.



### A victim of success?

The publisher under review has not only resonated with Barbadians from every socio demographic, but also engrained itself into their psyches, where it has become eponymous with breaking, balanced, and credible news in the same way that 'Pampers' is not only identified as a brand, but also as a misnomer to describe an actual diaper. So entrenched is this phenomenon that whenever a Barbadian consumer asked for a newspaper, the retailer would hand them a newspaper produced by my practice rather than its main competitor. Conversely, when our newspapers were sold out, retailers contradictorily responded to their customers that they have sold out of 'all newspapers'; even though there were other newspapers still offered by my competitor.

Given the insatiable demand for my newspapers, it is unsurprising that they remain Barbados' market leader – both in terms of its readership and advertising share. Of the three newspapers in Barbados, our publication maintained a readership share of 81.3 per cent, while its two competitors record a market share of 11 per cent and 7.4 per cent respectively (Systematic Marketing and Research Services Inc. November, 2018). Unlike many newspapers globally, my fleet of newspapers are the most widely read among every age and socio economic demographic in Barbados (Systematic Marketing and Research Services Inc. 2018). Similarly, my newspaper's dominance has also transcended to the Internet, where it is ranked as the number one local website in Barbados – attracting 10,345,525 unique visitors from March to September 2017 (Systematic Marketing and Research Services 2018).

Although my practice may not be deemed a monopoly in the strictest sense, it can be defined as a competitive monopoly, due to its dominant market share. Lambert and Kwon (2015) found monopolies by their very nature are "characterized by a certain degree of inefficiency wherein firms earn economic profits and operate at average total costs (short run and long run) higher than the minimum possible average costs" (Lambert, and Kwon, 2015 p.537). The authors maintained that in these types of organisations, staffers tended to be very much underutilised, since there is less of a need to maximise resources. They argued that these "resources are in unproductive activities, which adds little to no output" (Lambert, and Kwon, 2015 p.537). Conversely, when a company is exceeding its sales targets, they often tended to overlook areas of inefficiency and unproductivity. To a certain degree, the same theory can be applied to my practice, because when it was over performing, potential deficiencies were often masked, but were exposed during times of economic uncertainty. Some of these deficiencies comprised a causal mode of selling among my classified advisors, which can be compared to that of the 'bartender', who provided a canned service delivery.

Another deficiency of competitive monopolies is that they avoided competing on a price basis, which could adversely impact on their revenue (Lambert and Kwon, 2015, p.539). A parallel can also be drawn with my practice, since its advertising rates were significantly higher than its two competitors. For instance, the price of a full colour half page advertisement in the Sunday newspaper, cost US\$2,500.00, while the same advertisement with my competitor cost US\$750.00. This differential is justified because the newspaper of my practice printed 48,000 copies, while my competitor printed only 7,800. Consequently, advertisers were willing to pay significantly higher rates to reach a significantly higher portion of their market. However, with the recession, coupled with widespread use of cheaper or even

free advertising on competing social media sites, the premium rates of my practice have led to a 50 per cent decline in revenue for worded cash advertisers from 2012 to 2017 (Marshall, 2019, p.2).

Despite two periods in 1991 and 2001, where there were pockets of economic instability, the sales representatives of my practice experienced a relatively easy time sourcing business. During these periods, sales representatives only functioned as 'ad takers', since business was very plentiful and there was a need to expedite the processing of high volumes of advertisements. As a result, sales representatives worked relatively effortlessly to achieve their sales targets. Paradoxically, it was this prosperity that led to my practice being a victim of its own success, because its salespersons continued to adopt a passive orientation towards their sales in this new dispensation, where advertisers expect to receive more value for their investment. However, research has shown that this phenomenon is not unique to my practice. Peck (2015) confirmed that during times of 'plenty', the job of newspaper advertising managers was far simpler and easier. He recounted:

*'...phones rang off their hooks; display space was popular and coveted. Classified teams fielded calls and checked fax machines for incoming copy bound for sections that thrived. Sunday circulars and weekly magazines were must-haves for subscribers, so advertisers clamored for a presence there. The ad director noted that back then, advertising sales were largely comprised of "taking orders" and coordinating with production. Sales and rhetorical acumen (Peck, 2015, p.43).*

Consequently, when the revenue of my practice declined by 30 per cent, due to the global economic crisis of 2008, many of its sales representatives found it difficult adjusting to the realities of their new ecosystem. For example, in May 2014, I observed that more than half of my sales team focused solely on selling traditional worded classified products, which was done at the exclusion of magazine and digital products, depriving my practice of incremental revenue.

For the retail advertising part of my practice, the problem became so acute that in 2014 the Head of Advertising hired three additional sales representatives to help restore business for the company. Although these salespersons accrued over US\$172,500 per annum in new revenue, it was still woefully insufficient to compensate for the significant shortfall in revenue, which was down by US\$600,000 per annum. Given this variance, it is critical for me to enhance the selling practices of my classified advisors, so that they can fill this void. I sought to effect this transition by engaging in insider action research, where I viewed my phenomenon through three research constructs: first person, second person and third person researcher (Atienza, 2017, p.573). As a first person researcher, my study helped me to grow personally and professionally, where I became more aware of my strengths and limitations as a manager. As a second person researcher, I learned how to collaborate more closely with my senior management, staff and advertisers, so that I can create a plan of action, which would yield higher dividends for my shareholders. Finally, as a third person researcher, I was able to generate new knowledge, which could be utilised by scholars and other newspaper publishers, particularly those in small island developing states such as Barbados.

### 1.3 About the newspaper publisher

The newspaper under review launched its 16-page tabloid on November 23, 1973, to provide more local news, which resonated with ordinary Barbadians. The newspaper's most defining differentiator has been its ethos of *fearlessly* identifying, gathering and publishing hard news stories, which are keeping with the global tenets of journalism: *accuracy, balanced* and *fairness*. Prior to the launch of the newspaper, its rival placed a preponderant emphasis on covering international news events over local issues, which impacted ordinary Barbadians. According to Mayers (1998) the managing editor of the rival publisher avoided controversial stories, so that his company can maintain the support and favour of local corporate advertisers. Given this void, the Barbados Press Association convened their first meeting in 1973 to launch a daily newspaper, which "...should aim at raising the standard of journalism in the country and act as a means of informing, educating and helping people to understand the issues that confront them" (Mayers, 1998, p.24). The Association agreed that the publication "...should be an in-depth one, giving frank and forthright analysis of problems confronting the people of the country" (Mayers, 1998, p.24). These tenets have served to differentiate my practice from its competitors.

Historically, Barbados has always been a perilous market for newspaper publishers, where many of them had an ephemeral lifespan. Since the inception of newspaper publishing in 1792, only two of the 17 publishers survived: my practice and its competitor, where the latter is the longest serving newspaper in Barbados, established in 1895 (Mayers, 1998, p.24). This resiliency is testament to the quality and consistency of their products, particularly the newspaper under review, which has distinguished itself as a competitive monopoly in the local market. This dominance has achieved a two way effect: its editorial content appealed to a mass readership, which in turn resonated with corporate and private advertisers.

With the advent of social media, many of our advertisers aged 25 to 34, which represented the third most lucrative demographic after those aged 35-44 and 45-54, have defected to advertising on social media, where they received free advertising or exceptionally low rates, which were 20 times lower than those offered by my practice (Systematic Marketing 2018). Consequently, my practice loses US\$5,000 to US\$7,500 every month in worded advertising revenue. To address this issue, my classified advisors need to learn how to sell more bundled digital and newspaper products, rather than only print, so that they can offer advertisers more value, while providing additional revenue for my practice.

### 1.4 My role as an action researcher

While I have little control over the state of the economy and competition in the form of free social media sites, I can address my work based problem by changing the selling practices of my classified advisors, so that they can engage more in upselling and crossing advertising products, which can generate incremental revenue for my department. I propose to transition my classified advisors from a state of ad-taking, which provided little revenue for my practice, to one of adaptive selling, which centred on providing advertisers with maximum returns for their advertising dollar. My role as classified advertising manager is to meet my monthly sales targets, which has proven very arduous in an austere economy. To achieve this objective, I innovated new advertising packages, which can help increase revenue in my practice. However, if my staff continued to adopt an ad-taker approach to selling, they would deprive my practice from achieving its revenue targets. This shortfall has serious implications for my career progression, since

a falloff in revenue will adversely impact the profitability of my company and by extension its parent company, which requires increased revenue to optimise shareholder value. If my sales continue to decline, senior management will have to retrench more staff to rationalise on its expenses, which would reduce staff resources, morale, and productivity. Conversely, as a sales manager, if my revenue continues to decline, it will affect my ability to earn a monthly commission, which is paid on achievement of reaching 85 per cent or more of my monthly sales target. This commission normally represents 25 to 50 per cent of my base salary – depending on the percentile of my sales. Whenever I miss my target, it affects the quality of life for my dependents and me. A further consequence of continuously falling short of my targets is that it could increase the likelihood of my termination, since my parent company may deem me ineffective in my role and scope of an advertising manager. These risks have motivated me to determine whether adaptive selling practices can improve the viability of my practice.

## 1.5 Research aim and objectives

The aim of my research seeks to answer the core question: can classified advisors of the publisher under review, apply adaptive selling to increase revenue in a declining economy? By answering this question, I would at best be able to grow future advertising revenue or at worst stabilise it in an anemic economy. If I am successful, I would not only be able to engage in viable selling practices, but also to share this capability with managers in other revenue departments. With this intelligence, I could protect and secure jobs in my practice, while improving overall staff morale. Conversely, as an action researcher, I can also make a contribution to the classified publishing trade, particularly in western hemispheric markets, where classified departments underperform financially.

### Research objectives

Out of this question, I endeavored to improve the competitiveness of my practice by seeking to achieve the following objectives:

- i. *Transposing the selling practices of my six classified advisors from ad-taking to adaptive selling;*
- ii. *Utilising adaptive selling practices to innovate new advertising products, which provided additional value to advertisers; and*
- iii. *Utilising adaptive selling practices to increase revenue in line with my monthly and yearly sales budgets*

Each objective attempted to address the specific question of my research, which centred on employing adaptive selling to increase advertising revenue in a stagnated economy by US\$50,000 in 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018.

## 1.6 Research framework

My chosen research framework comprised a multi-method paradigm, where I gathered both quantitative and qualitative data, which provided me with a panoramic and detailed view into my work based problem. The quantitative data enabled me to draw a clearer understanding about my subject matter. With this

data I was able to analyse and compare it with similar studies on adaptive selling practices. This paradigm helped me to distance myself from my findings and analyse them with minimal personal bias, which may potentially skew my findings. The qualitative method provided me with a lens to clarify any unexplainable data, which related to my work based problem. Although these methods are polarised in nature, they still served to complement each other, since each limitation and strength was compensated by the next.

## **1.7 Limited literature on improving classified advertising**

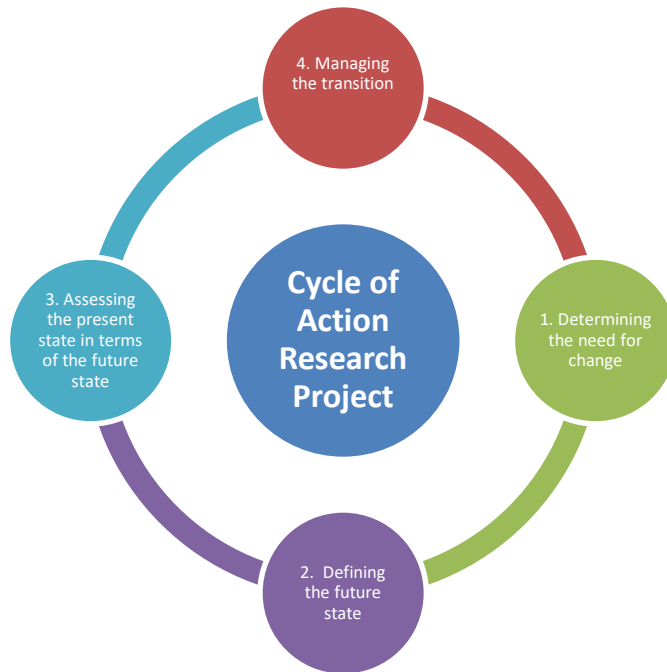
Although extensive research has been conducted on change management, only a few studies detailed how traditional newspaper publishers can change the selling orientations of their sales staff. A few of these authors comprised Zentner (2012), Benavide and Leiva (2014) and Sridhar (2015). However, an exhaustive review of literature revealed that Betancourt (2014) was the only author, who showed how this change can be inculcated in classified departments. This dearth of literature may be attributed to the specialised niche area of classified sales, particularly since classified departments were often construed by scholars as the second 'cousin' to retail advertising, which may be due to retail often generating more revenue than classified departments. Lorimor (1977) posited, "...classified advertising is largely regarded with condescension by the trade and virtually ignored by academia" (Lorimor 1977, p.17). Similarly, Write (1971), observed while "Classified advertising is an important source of revenue for newspapers ...display advertising is of greater interest to most local merchants and national or regional distributors" (Write 1971 p.234). Interestingly, nearly three decades later (up until the time of conducting this research), a paucity of research still existed on this subject. Betancourt (2014) urged newspaper publishers, who wanted to increase revenue to engage in positivistic research, so that they can realign their products to their target market. Although the author underscored the need for market research, she did not identify how managers can effect this change among their sales staff. However, if limited information existed on effecting change in newspaper entities, even less existed on classified departments, particularly in micro vulnerable economies like Barbados.

## **1.8 Justification and motivation for my research**

Currently, the selling ethos of my six classified advisors conformed to that of 'bartenders' rather than 'sommeliers', where they tended only to facilitate the requests of clients, rather than engage them in a consultative capacity. This dissonance was revealed in June 2014, when I contracted the National Initiative of Service Excellence (NISE), an independent Barbadian training agency, to audit the service delivery skills of my sales team. This audit, which was conducted in the form of a Mystery Shopper exercise, assessed my team on their individual and collective selling practices. The audit was disturbing, since it revealed that while my staff scored highly for their attitude and customer care delivery, which totaled 79 per cent, they only achieved 27 per cent and 54 per cent for their selling skills and overall customer service respectively (NISE, 2014 p.2). The results confirmed that there was a need for the selling practices of my staff to conform to a single standard, which would enable them to deliver a consistent service to every advertiser.

My research attempted to gather, analyse and implement actionable knowledge to transition my classified advisors from a state of disengagement with advertisers to one of full engagement. My action research was predicated on the cycle of Coghlan and Brannick (2013), which is illustrated in Figure 1:

**Figure 1 - Action research cycle for effecting organisational change**



Source: Coghlan and Brannick (2013)

The first step of the process involved understanding the rationale for my desired change. A review of my phenomenon reveals that a change in the selling practices of my classified advisors was necessary if my department was to remain competitive in an anemic economy. As an action researcher, I identified the salient changes required in my practice, so that it can return to a state of financial viability. Coghlan and Brannick (2013) pointed out that there is a need for action researchers to address the chief internal and external forces, which impact on their organisation. They maintained, “These forces for change have to be assessed, so that major change forces are distinguished from the minor ones” (Coghlan and Brannick, 2013, p.66). With this intelligence, I determined whether I should orchestrate a first, second or third order change, where the first order involved organisational improvements, and the second and third required extensive systemic and structural changes. Coghlan and Brannick (2013) acknowledged, “While there may be no control over the forces demanding change, there is likely to be a great deal of control over how to respond to those forces” (Coghlan and Brannick, 2013, p.66). By applying this construct to my research, I determined the degree of change necessary to realign my practice to the realities of my changing environment.

The second phase involves reimagining what my practice should look like after the proposed change, where I articulated this image to my classified advisors, so that I can attain their support for my vision. Coghlan and Brannick (2013) advised, “This process is critical as it helps provide

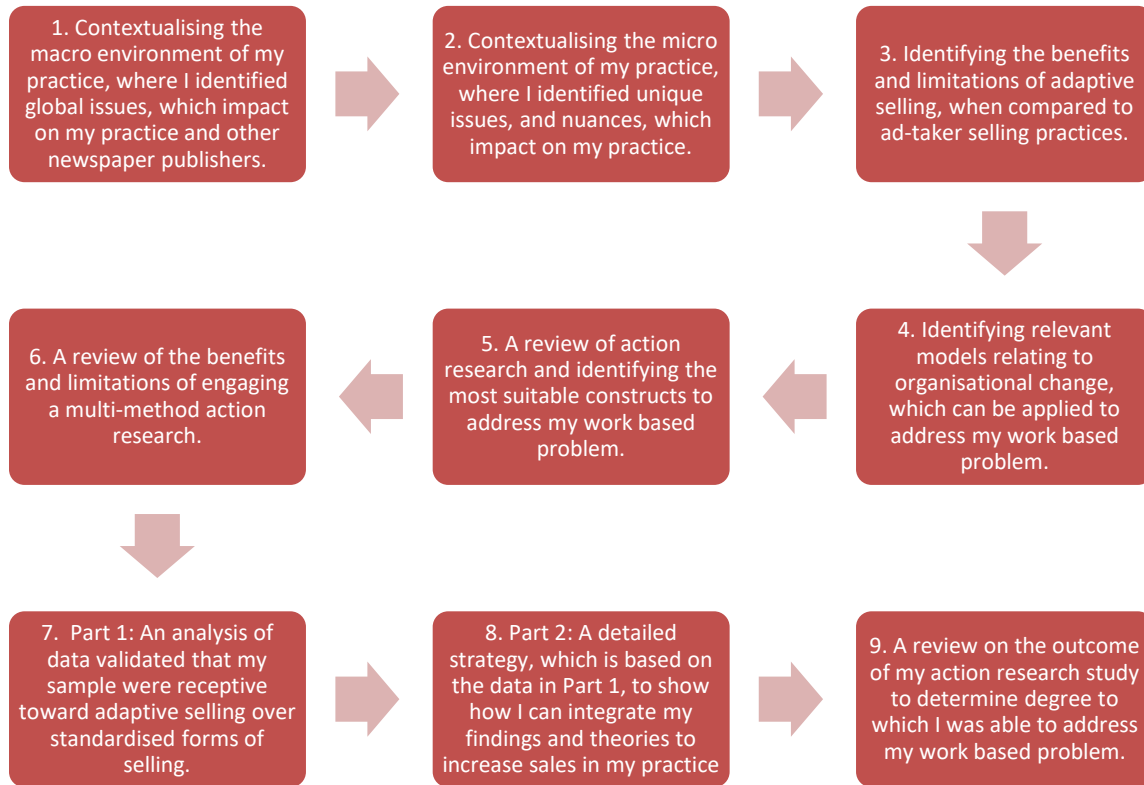
focus and energy, because it describes the desires for the future in a positive light” (Coghlan and Brannick, 2013, p.67). They also maintained, “Working at building consensus on a desired future is an important way of harnessing the political elements of the system” (Coghlan and Brannick, 2013, p.67).

The third stage necessitates a holistic view of my phenomenon, where action researchers gauged the readiness and capability of their staff and other agents to effect desired change in their practice. Coghlan and Brannick (2013) viewed readiness and willingness as the motivations for staff and agents to achieving desire change; while capability referred to their expertise, experience and psychological condition to effect desired change.

The final phase generates and applies data from staff and stakeholders to devise a strategy, which identifies goals, new projects, and systems to achieve desired change. Under this construct, Coghlan and Brannick (2013) found that when action researchers attempted to facilitate change, it placed them in a nascent state, since the past is construed as “defective and no longer tenable and the new state has not yet come into being” (Coghlan and Brannick, 2013, p.68).

A limitation of Coghlan and Brannick’s (2013) action research cycle is that they deemed change as finite, where it moved from a current to a desired state. An alternative perspective is espoused by Greenwood and Levin (2007), who viewed action research as an ongoing process, where change has a starting point but no absolute ending point. This paradigm has relevance for my research, since my goal is not to reach a destination, but to embark on an endless journey, where my team and I commit ourselves to infinite learning, which would enable us to continuously perfect our craft. A summary of these processes are depicted in Figure 2.

**Figure 2 - Flow chart depicting the stages of my action research**



Source: Author's own model (2018)

The flow chart depicts the various stages of my research, which sought to transition my classified advisors from engaging in a standardised form of selling to one of adaptive selling. The first and second stages of the chart have value for my study, since they identified both the universal and unique issues, which impact on newspaper publishers and my practice. These observances show the type of actions I need to consider when addressing these issues. It also helped readers appreciate the environment, which my practice operated in. The third stage explored the benefits and limitations of adaptive selling practices and how they can be employed to facilitate the process of upselling and crossing in my practice. The fourth stage outlined models and theories, which supported the transition from standardised selling to adaptive selling. These models also addressed the unique nuances, which were peculiar to my practice. The fifth



stage explored a range of competing definitions on action research. Out of these definitions, I identified the most appropriate, which conformed to the distinctive culture of my practice. The sixth stage looked at the benefits of applying a multi-method research to investigate my work based problem, since it enabled me to make general inferences from my data, while explicating any anomalous data. The seventh stage analysed the data to determine whether my staff and advertisers were more orientated towards a standardised or adaptive form of selling. Out of these findings, I developed a strategy, which sought to realign the customer service delivery, standards and systems of my practice to the realities of its evolving environment. The final stage provided an update on the outcomes of my research and identified a range of recommendations, which should be considered by senior management to optimise the performance of my practice.

## **1.9 Summary**

A review of the chapter confirms that the newspaper under review is vulnerable to a range of economic and technological shocks, which impacted on its revenue. The first shock was in the form of Barbados' contracted economy, which saw the imposition of increased taxation. These measures have depressed advertiser confidence and spending, particularly classified advertisers, who are tremendously price sensitive; while the second variable was in the form of social media advertising, which offered significantly lower rates or even free advertising to my clientele. These sites have rendered my rates uncompetitive. These situations were made dire when my sales staff only facilitated the requests of advertisers rather than engage them with the view of adapting their product to meet their needs.

## **1.10 Overview of chapters**

My study comprises six chapters, which framed my work based problem and sought to address how I can change the selling practices of my classified advisors, so that my professional practice could become more competitive in an austere market.

The first chapter contextualises the nature of my work based problem and explained why it was worthy of investigation. The chapter traced the history of newspaper publishing in Barbados and how my practice became the leading newspaper publisher in Barbados. In the next part, I provided an overview of how adaptive selling can help address my work based issue.

The second chapter reviews the core literature, which explained the global phenomenon of declining newspaper revenues. In the first part of my review, I explained why newspaper publishers lost over US\$30 billion in revenue over an 11-year period. This loss has been attributed to a range of factors such as the global economic recession of 2008, cannibalisation of digital media on printed newspaper revenue, and the unprecedented competition posed by other classified websites and social media platforms, which offered advertising rates 20 times lower than my practice.

The next part of my review draws on a range of theories, which related to organisational change. These theories were in the form of several metaphorical images, which depicted different types of management styles to effect change. Upon analysing each image, I selected the most suitable ones, which addressed my work problem.

The third chapter traverses competing definitions on action research. I analysed each definition according to their inherent strengths and weaknesses. Out of this analysis, I identified the most applicable definition, which best laid the groundwork for my ontology. My chapter then explored the benefits of engaging in a multi-method research epistemology, where I detailed how it provided me with both a detailed and panoramic view of my work based problem.

The fourth chapter reveals the findings of my data, which relate to the preferences of my classified advisors and their advertisers. The data affirms that both sets of respondents were supportive of adaptive selling practices, since it provided them with additional benefits, when compared to standardised selling practices, which offered minimal value. Based on these findings, I created an action plan, which sought to increase revenue of my practice in a downward economy.

The fifth chapter details a strategy, which comprised my preferred frameworks, which related to organisational change, coaching and product innovation. The strategy explained how these frameworks were applied to precipitate desired change among my classified advisors, so that they can provide added value to advertisers, while helping to increase the sales in my practice.

The final chapter traces my exposure to doctoral action learning and action research and how these practices contributed to my personal and professional development as a scholar practitioner. In this chapter, I identified further research opportunities, which I can pursue to improve revenue in my practice. The chapter culminates by exploring the extent to which my practice was impacted by my research and whether adaptive selling helped it increase revenue in a downward market.

## **CHAPTER 2.0 - LITERATURE REVIEW**

***If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading.***

By Lao Tzu, circa 600 BC

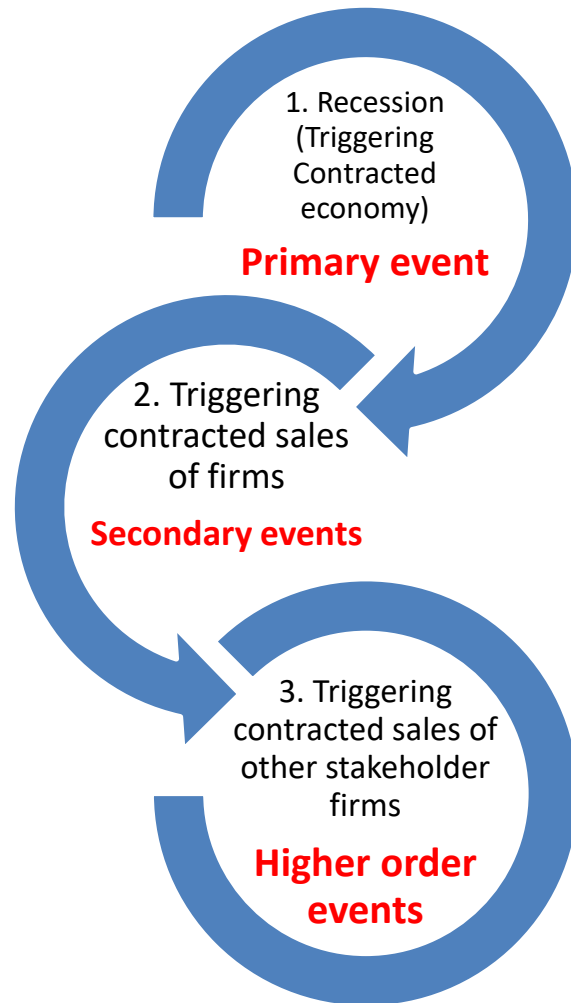
## **2.1 Introduction**

Inspired by the above quotation, this chapter explores a range of competing frameworks that centred on effecting attitudinal and behavioral change among my classified advisors. My core framework was drawn from Palmer and Dunford's (2008) metaphors of change, which provided me with a range of options, which I could apply to transitioning my classified advisors from a state of ad-taking to one of adaptive selling. Each metaphor was assessed by discussing its suitability to addressing my work base problem. The next part of my chapter critically reviews Wong et al's (2015) model on adaptive selling practices and its suitability of applying each of their constructs to addressing my work based problem. My chapter also reviews perspectives offered by Deleersnyder et al (2002) and Wunsch (2010) on the degree to which traditional newspaper publishers can tackle their vulnerability with the view of remaining viable in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The chapter explores three competing perspectives on motivation in the workplace, which incorporated models by Vroom (1964), Weiner (1980) and Deci and Ryan (2005). Finally, I drew on Siles and Boczkowski's (2012) model to underpin how overly dependent newspaper publishers are on their advertisers. These perspectives yielded both rigorous and rich insights into the new ecosystem of my practice, which has spurred my need to precipitate desired change.

## **2.2 Justification for change**

Drawing on my work based issue, I reflected on the extent to which I can engage my classified advisors to increase their sales in a downturned market. Within this context, I ruminated on three questions: can salespersons increase revenue in a downward market? Is it possible for managers to change the traditional selling practices of their sales team? To what extent can managers leverage the selling practices of their sales team, so that they can revive the revenue of a dying company? These questions deserve an explanation, particularly in the context of how salespersons can change their selling practices in the face of severe contracted market conditions. However, at a cursory glance, the whole notion that sales representatives can improve their performance during an economic downturn may at best appear problematic or at worse contradictory, since the very idea of a recession would dictate that a business will decline – whether it is at the macro or micro level. According to Srinivasan et al (2011) there is an expectation that a company's revenue will decrease during a recession, since much of its customer base would have experienced a similar reaction with their customers. The authors posited, "Recessions entail a significant contraction in the demand for goods and services, lowering sales, cash flows and profits" (Srinivasan et al., 2011, p.49). Goodman (2009) pointed out, "...a marginal shrinking could significantly depress demand for goods and services..." (Goodman, 2009, p.A1). Similarly, Akyuz and Ercilasun (2014) observed, "During an economic downturn, it may seem logical for organizations to cut off expenses. In those times, saving is much more important than spending" (Akyuz and Ercilasun, 2014, p.3). These mainstream perspectives supported the notion that recessions precipitate what may be construed as a domino effect, where primary events escalate and trigger other secondary or higher order events (Khakzad et al., 2014, p.1128). An application of this theory is illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 - Khakzad et al's (2014) concept of a domino effect



Source: Khakzad et al's (2014)

This domino effect can be paralleled to my work based issue, since a contracted economy, normally contracted the spending of advertisers, which in turn contracted the revenue of my practice.

### 2.3 Over dependency on advertisers

Drawing on the above model, my practice fell in the higher order category, since a decline in the economy would trigger a decline in the earnings of consumers, which would trigger a decline in the earnings of advertisers, which in turn would trigger a decline in the earnings of my practice. This model revealed that a recession has a linear effect on sales, since the decline of one consumer group would precipitate the

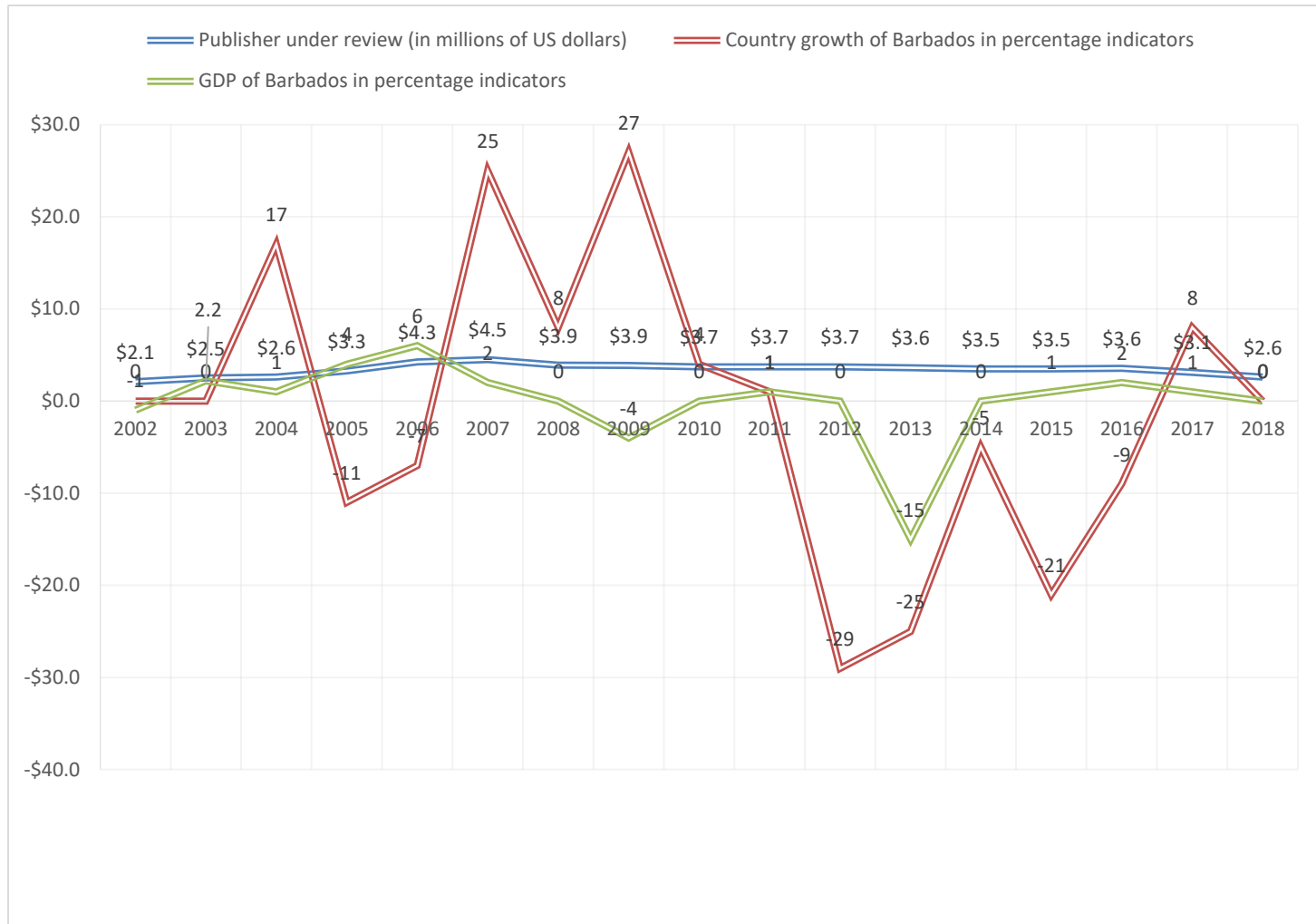
decline of another, where the latter is dependent on the former. A closer review of this model showed that my practice is virtually dependent on advertisers for its survival. Siles and Boczkowski (2012) pointed out that most newspaper publishers were over reliant on advertisers to the extent where they were at their mercy. Given that newspaper publishers are highly dependent on their advertisers, particularly in a market, where advertising revenue is rapidly declining, it is even more vital that classified advisors not only meet, but also exceed the expectations of their advertisers. Even when a classified advisor functioned 'satisfactorily', they still would have functioned unsatisfactorily, since they would have failed to differentiate their services from other competing media, which may offer advertisers exceptional service.

The dependency of my practice on advertisers is illustrated by the fact that 70 per cent of its revenue is generated by retail and classified advertising, while circulation contributed approximately 30 per cent. According to Picard (2008) this percentage reflected the global revenue trends for newspaper publishers. He found that on average advertising accounted for two-thirds or 75 to 85 percent of newspaper income in North America and Europe (Picard, 2008, p.704). These percentile ranges represented a similar correlation with my practice. Given the dependence that newspaper publishers have on advertisers, any loss of revenue over a sustained period, could result in their eventual demise. A symptom of this decline is evident when advertisers reduced the size and frequency of their advertisements. For instance, prior to the global recession of 2008, commercial banks booked display vacancy advertisements to run Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays during a seven day period. These advertisements would appear in full or spot colour either as a full or half page. However, during the recession, these advertisements were reduced to a black and white quarter page, where applicants were invited to visit the company's website to receive more details about the position. This reference enabled corporate entities to spend significantly less on their advertising, since they posted most of their content online. Conversely, prior to the economic crisis of 2008, many subscribers and individual newspaper purchasers bought a newspaper every day. However, after the recession, they only purchased on high circulated days such as Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. These dynamics have contributed to a five per cent fall in circulation revenue from 2008 to 2015.

## **2.4 Vulnerability to economic shocks**

As with many commercial entities, newspaper publishers are highly vulnerable to the vicissitudes of their economy. A synergised relationship is identified by Picard (2008), who found that newspaper advertising fluctuates when "...those who purchase retail advertising (department stores, furniture stores, etc.) and classified (especially employment, automobile, funerary and real estate advertising) are affected by economic changes and they adjust their advertising spending accordingly" (Picard 2008, p.705). These fluctuations are summarised in Figure 4.

**Figure 4 - Correlating how an economic recession impacts on advertising revenue**



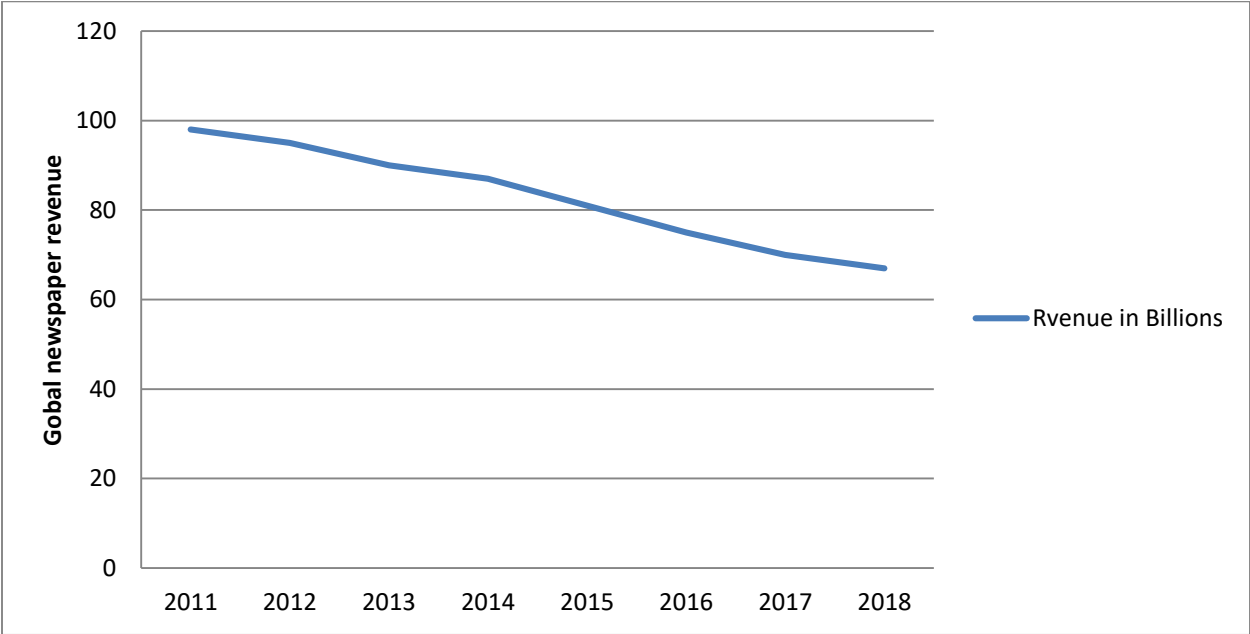
Sources: “World Integrated Trade Solution: World Bank” *Barbados Trade Statistics* and Nation Classified Revenue from my practice 2002 to 2017

Although displaying a more subtle decline when compared to the Barbadian economy, the above graph depicts how recessions impact on the revenue of my practice, where its revenue fell by nearly \$1 million (US dollars) over a five year period.

However, a review of literature showed that this symbiotic fluctuation is not unique to Barbados. Chang and Chan-Olmsted (2005) identified correlations between the two indicators in 70 markets from 1991 to 2001, where newspaper publishers declined in nine major markets in North America, Europe, and Asia, which were in recession during the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Chang and Chan-Olmsted, 2005 p.354). Although these economies are significantly larger and more affluent than Barbados, research showed that these trends are a global phenomenon. Prior to the global financial crisis of 2008, PriceWaterHouseCoopers, a multinational professional services provider, identified that 24 of the world’s leading newspaper

companies recorded varying degrees of losses, which were a result of the crisis. These losses are summarised in Figure 5:

**Figure 5 - Global newspaper revenue 2011 to 2018**



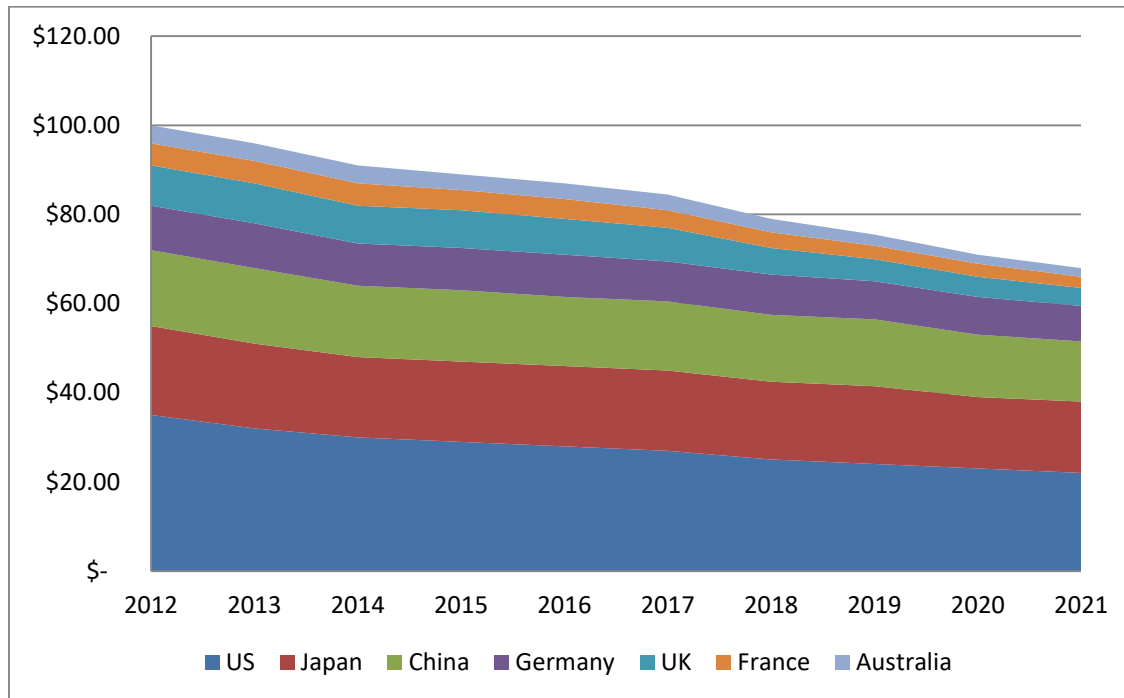
Source: PwC Global Entertainment and Media Outlook: 2017 p.2

According to the graph (Figure 5) global newspaper revenue is forecast to fall by US\$23 billion between 2011 and 2018. This figure equated to a 28 per cent decline in revenue.

The graph in Figure 6 illustrates a more detailed breakdown of the world's developed markets, where newspaper advertising was on course to lose approximately US\$23.8 billion between 2012 and 2021. This decline has been shown to be more acute in the UK, France and Australia, where revenues were expected to fall by 50 per cent by 2021.



**Figure 6 - Newspaper revenue (Circulation and advertising in billion US dollars 2012-2021)**



Source: Global entertainment and media outlook (2017) PwC

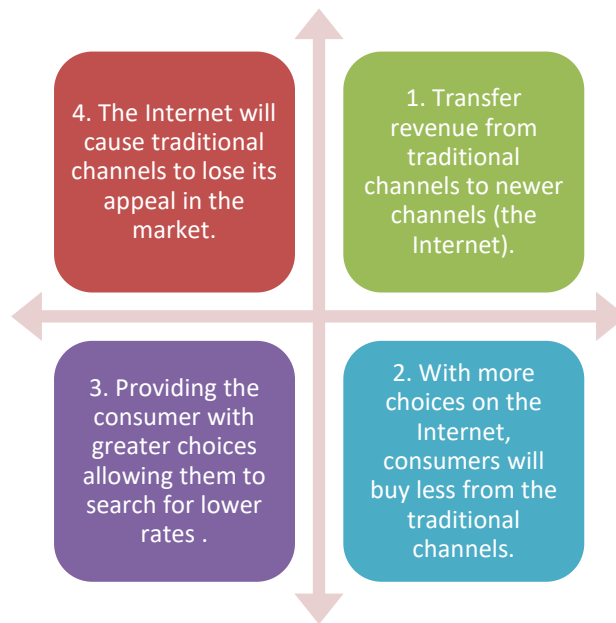
According to PwC (2017) global newspaper publishers were aware of the ongoing marginal shrinkage during the past five years. However, PwC (2017) pointed out, “forecasts for that shrinkage are increasing as the rate of decline begins to exceed expectations” (PwC 2017). These Figures have relevance for my practice, because in Barbados, like in the metropolitan markets, it has a capitalist economy, where consumers, particularly those under the age of 35, are technologically savvy and have access to digital local media platforms. Consequently, many of them read competing digital newspapers, which are issued free of charge, when compared to my practice, where readers are charged on average US\$1.25 per issue. As in the metropolitan markets, newspapers of my practice declined in readership from 977,400 in 2013 to 722,800 in 2016, whereas my digital competitor increased from 44,200 in 2013 to 134,400 in 2016 (Systematic Media, 2016, p. 1). From December 31<sup>st</sup> 2010 to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016, the newspaper in my practice recorded a 15 per cent decline in advertising revenue, which was attributed to the contracted economy and unprecedented competition from social media.

## 2.5 An unfriendly ally?

Another issue facing newspaper publishers is the advent of digital media, which has resulted in a catch 22 situation for publishers: on one hand it enabled them to cost effectively reach more readers without necessarily spending exorbitantly on raw materials such as ink and paper stock, while on the other, it forced them to lose revenue by placing news content for free. Although there are tremendous benefits to

be derived from new media, it has actually served to cannibalise on their revenue, because most readers not only refuse to pay for their digital service, but also pay for their printed newspaper, since the news is available for free online. According to Belch and Belch (2003) consumers are unwilling to pay for printed newspapers, because they are unable to “perceive enough of a difference to pay for something they can get for free” (Belch and Belch 2003 p.428). Deleersnyder et al., (2002) referred to this aberration as ‘survival by suicide’, while Fitzgerald (2009) likened it to exchanging ‘print dollars for digital dimes’, since many publishers embraced technology to remain current, but do so at their peril. The authors explain these paradoxes through the quadratic model, which is summarised in Figure 7.

**Figure 7 - Deleersnyder et al (2002) cannibalisation of newspaper revenue by the Internet**

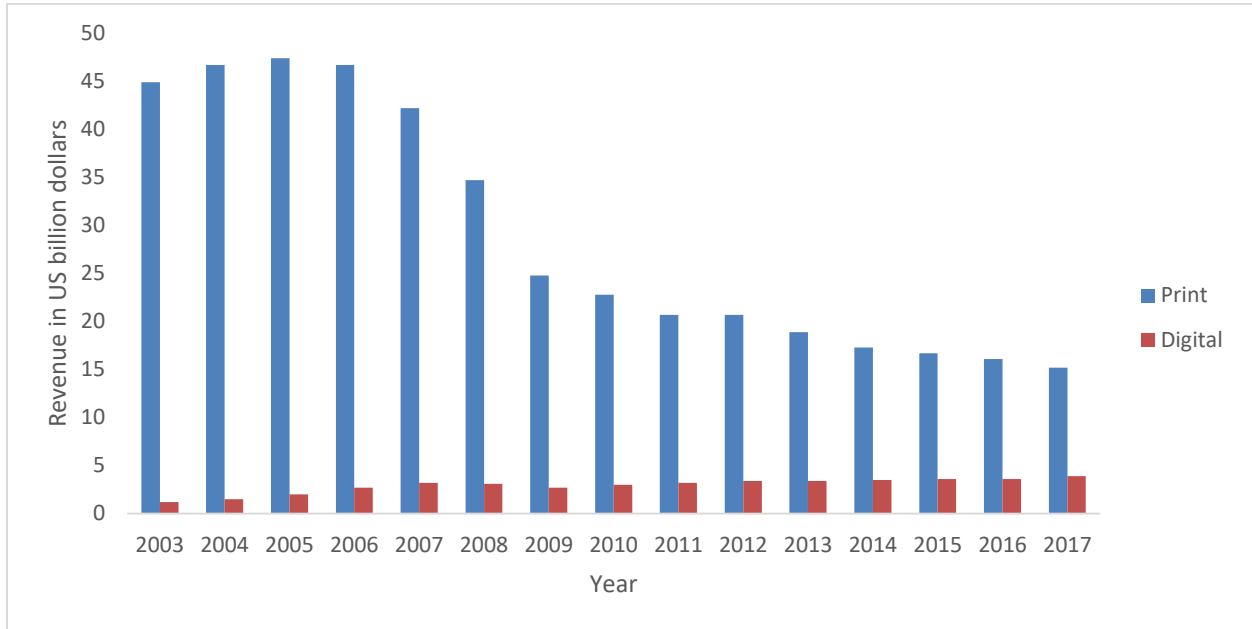


Source: Deleersnyder et al., (2002) p.339

Drawing on the above model, a correlation was drawn with each quadrant on how the Internet has eroded newspaper revenue. In the first construct, cannibalisation occurred when a newspaper placed its stories online, which led publishers to charge less for their e-newspaper subscriptions. In the second construct, consumers tended to buy fewer printed newspapers, since they received free content online. The third construct, shows how readers can access lower rates through other competing e-newspapers, which further eroded the revenue of newspaper publishers. The final construct, reveals how the print media is eventually rendered passé, since it became less popular among future generations. The authors reveal that cannibalisation existed in two principal areas: circulation and advertising (Deleersnyder et al 2002 p.342). However, there were some publishers that contradicted this analysis. For example, the *New York Times* recorded on average a weekly printed circulation of 650,000 in September 2014, compared to its digital placement of 54 million unique readers. Unlike most newspapers with digital content, the *New York Times* generated its revenue through paid subscriptions from digital media. However, this example maybe

considered an anomaly, since the publisher served a highly sophisticated and cosmopolitan market, where its target readership were not only highly technologically savvy, but also possessed the disposal income to pay for their subscriptions. Deleersnyder et al's (2002) quadrant model explicated the dichotomous trajectories of print and digital newspaper revenue in the United States, which are summarised in Figure 8.

**Figure 8 - Trajectory of printed newspaper revenue vs. digital revenue in the United States**



Source: Newspaper Association of America (2014)

These Figures bore significance for my study, since they typified the meager contributions that digital advertising contributed to the overall advertising revenue in developing countries. For instance, in 2018 digital media generated US\$178,500 compared to the overall advertising and circulation revenues of US\$12,283,000 and US\$7,172,000 respectively (Marshall 2019).

As with the United States, digital revenue of my practice also increased very marginally, but to the extent that it contributed even less revenue than its counterparts in the Newspaper Association of America, which totaled 0.3 per cent per annum. Similarly, the Association revealed that classified revenue dropped by three quarters from 2000 to 2013 (NAA 2014). Fitzgerald (2009) attributed this decline to competing online classified platforms such as Craigslist, which enabled advertisers to place more personalised and dynamic content for free. A harrowing prospect revealed that if the decline of advertising continued on its current trajectory, then in 10 years, its total revenue base would have been halved; while in 20 years, it would have been totally expunged.

## 2.6 Newspaper resiliency

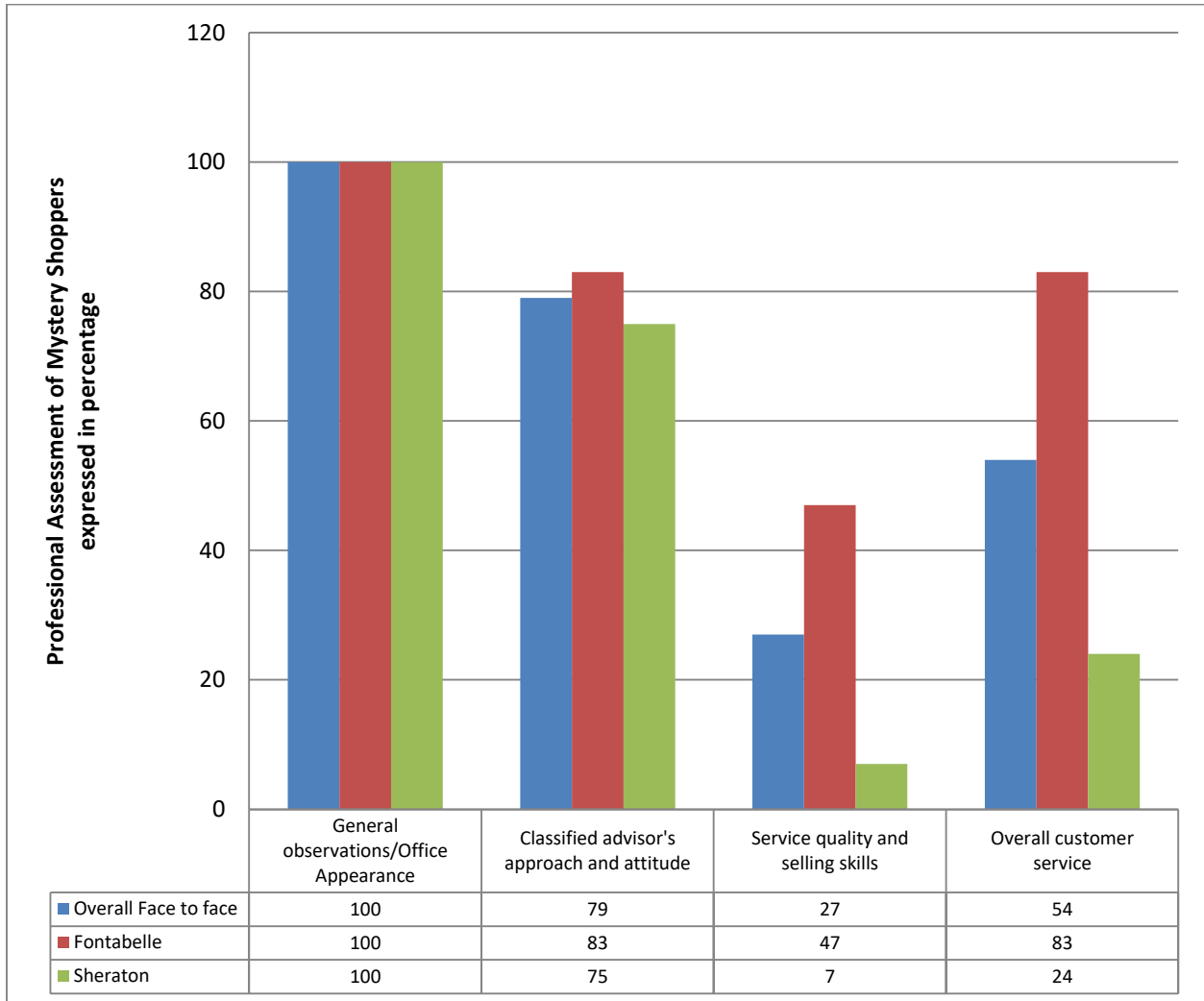
However, an alternative paradigm dictated that newspaper publishers can successfully weather the economic storm, since many already exhibited their resiliency in overcoming adversity. This view is espoused by van der Burg et al (2017), Mantrala et al., (2010), and Picard (2004), who argued that newspaper publishers have survived and even thrived successfully during several dispensations of recessionary periods. Picard (2004) described the newspaper industry as one of the most lucrative of all sectors prior to 2000. The author found that newspaper publishers regularly achieved returns on sales in the 15-20 percent range. He explained, “These compare to returns of 9 percent in the pharmaceutical industry, 7 to 8 percent in the metals industry, 6 percent in the aircraft industry, 2-4 percent in the auto industry, 4 percent for department stores, and 2-3 percent for grocery stores” (Picard 2004, p.57).

Traditional newspaper publishers have also overcome varying incarnations of technological revolutions, which threatened their very existence. For example, the first threat occurred during the 1930s, with the advent of radio, which offered much lower advertising rates than newspaper publishers. The second threat arose during the 1950s with the introduction of television. Although the rates for television were much higher than those of newspapers, the novelty value of the small screen significantly decreased the market share of newspaper publishers. The final threat was characterised with the introduction of Internet technology, which came on stream during the mid-1990s. The Internet offered news content for free, while cannibalising on traditional print revenue. These dispensations revealed that the current financial and technological crises were not new phenomena for newspaper publishers. They revealed that newspaper publishers must remain resilient if they are to survive quantum shifts in their marketplace. Against this backdrop, it is therefore reasonable to argue that some local publishers can successfully weather this economic storm. Wunsch (2010) posited that with the recovery of the global economy in the post 2013 period, the overall outlook for traditional advertising newspaper revenue appeared very promising. The author pointed out that print still remained ‘king’, particularly among consumers aged 35-plus. She forecast that this medium will reign into the foreseeable future, since its content is more trustworthy and credible, when compared to content on social media platforms. The author asserted, “The Internet may be a platform for a cacophony of the voices, but the latter [print] leaves the reader in no doubt about the accuracy and the interpretation of the information” (Wunsch 2010, p.59). Alternatively, Wunsch (2010) observed that newspaper publishers are experimenting with new e-commerce models, which included paid newspaper subscriptions, video news podcasts, and online news aggregators. Others included e-ticketing services for concerts, video classified, online services, online bookings for holidays and direct submission for job applications.

## 2.7 Changing selling practices of classified advisors

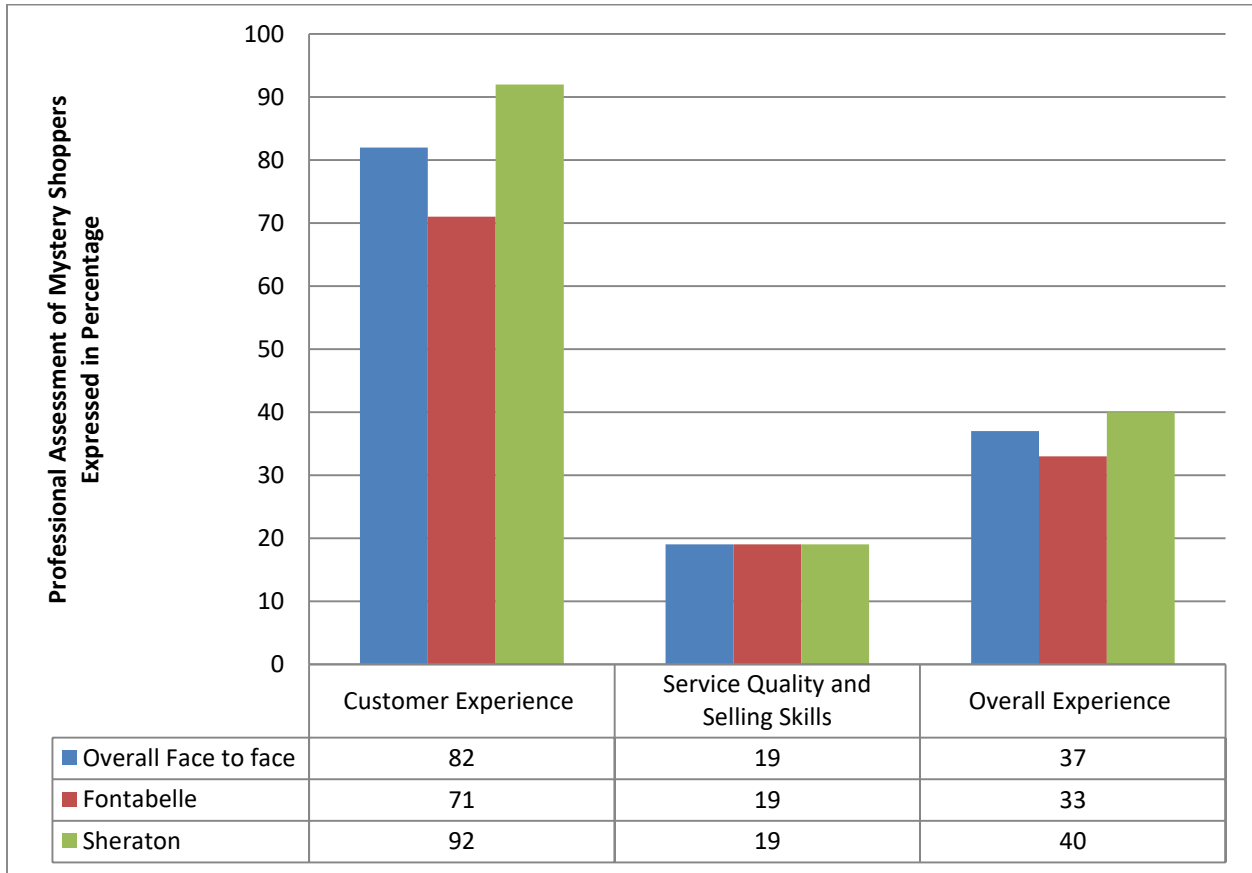
A mystery shopper exercise conducted in April 2014 on my classified advisors revealed that their ad-taker practices have a negligible impact on consumers. The exercise, which was spearheaded by the National Initiative of Service Excellence (NISE), a local agency established to improve the competitiveness of Barbadian companies, rated the service delivery of my team at 27 per cent. The following results are tabulated in Figures 9 and 10.

Figure 9 - Face-to-face overall score by category



Source: National Initiative for Service Excellence Mystery Shopping Assessment 2014)

**Figure 10 - Telephone overall score by category**



Source: National Initiative for Service Excellence Mystery Shopping Assessment 2014)

These Figures represented the professional perspectives of customer service assessors, who were certified to evaluate the quality of customer care in an organisation. These assessments bore meaning for my study, since they showed that advertisers were less inclined to maximise their purchases when sales representatives failed to adapt their selling practices to their customer’s needs. To correct these deficiencies, it is critical that they undergo a change in their thought processes, attitudes, and practices, so that they can be realigned to the shifting realities in the new marketplace. Agbim et al., (2013) pointed out, “for organisations to equip themselves for the future, they will not only need to completely transform themselves into something radically different, but they must also understand that their survival and desired change outcome depends on their vision” (Agbim et al., 2013, p.1). These viewpoints have application for my study, since it showed that if my practice functioned the same way, it will receive the same results or worse. Without this intervention, my practice would have continued on its course of decline.

## 2.8 Change management

To stymie this decline, I reviewed a range of competing perspectives and models, which relate to organisational change. I analysed the strengths and limitations of each concept, so that I can determine the degree to which they can be applied to my practice.

A review of Palmer and Dunford (2008) conceded that given the inexhaustible ontological and epistemological assumptions on organisational change, it may prove problematic for action researchers to prescribe the right remedy to effect the right change at the right time. (Palmer and Dunford, 2008 p.521). Due to these dynamics of organisational change, Dooley (1997) found that the only true statement about the nature of change is that it assumed a dichotomous pattern (Dooley, 1997, p.89). He pointed out, "Change may occur rapidly or slowly; it may accumulate linearly or non-linearly; it may be constant or have bursts of punctuated equilibrium; it may be resisted or encouraged; it may take little or many resources; it may have a profound or no effect on system outcomes" (Dooley, 1997, p.89). Under this orientation, change is construed as inhomogeneous, since it may give rise to an unpredictable outcome.

According to Fayol (1949) change management should be confined exclusively to the role and scope of management practice, where any form of resistance must be eradicated if desired change is to be achieved. Reinforcing this view is Frohman (1997), who confined organisational change to the role and scope of senior management, where they effected change through the introduction of new policies, structures, and processes (Frohman 1997, p.52). Under this orientation, change is dictated along vertical lines, which maneuvered strictly from top to bottom. These leadership frames, were characterised by 'planning', 'organising', 'commanding', 'coordinating' and 'controlling'. Blake and McCause (1991) contended that managers, who adopted this orientation tended to "have great concern for production and little concern for people" (Blake and McCause, 1991, p.29). The authors maintained, "People are seen as 'tools' for production, demand tight, unilateral control in order to complete tasks efficiently" (Blake and McCause, 1991, p.29). Although this paradigm is rooted in classic management theory, which may be viewed as passé by some leadership scholars such as Caldwell (2003) and Raelin (2010), it still has relevance for current management practice. However, this orientation is beneficial if an organisation needed to expedite vital changes that can determine its very survival. If the organisation adopted a more "*laissez faire*" management style, it would be very challenging effecting change within the allocated time frame. A limitation of this paradigm is that change is only one dimensional, since it excluded non-managers, who are critical to achieving the intended change outcome. Drawing on my work based problem, this framework is applicable to effecting change among my classified advisors, since I needed to use it to direct the first stage of my vision – improving the way my classified advisors interfaced with their advertisers. Dooley (1997) identified that change goes through a state of three incarnations: first order change, where an organisation gets better at what it already does; second order change, where an organisation changes what it does; and third order change, where an organisation persisted or died (Dooley, 1997, p.89).

### Team agents

An alternative perspective to Fayol (1949) and Frohman (1997) is posited by Caldwell (2003), who argued that organisational change can be effected through a team based approach, where managers, employees,

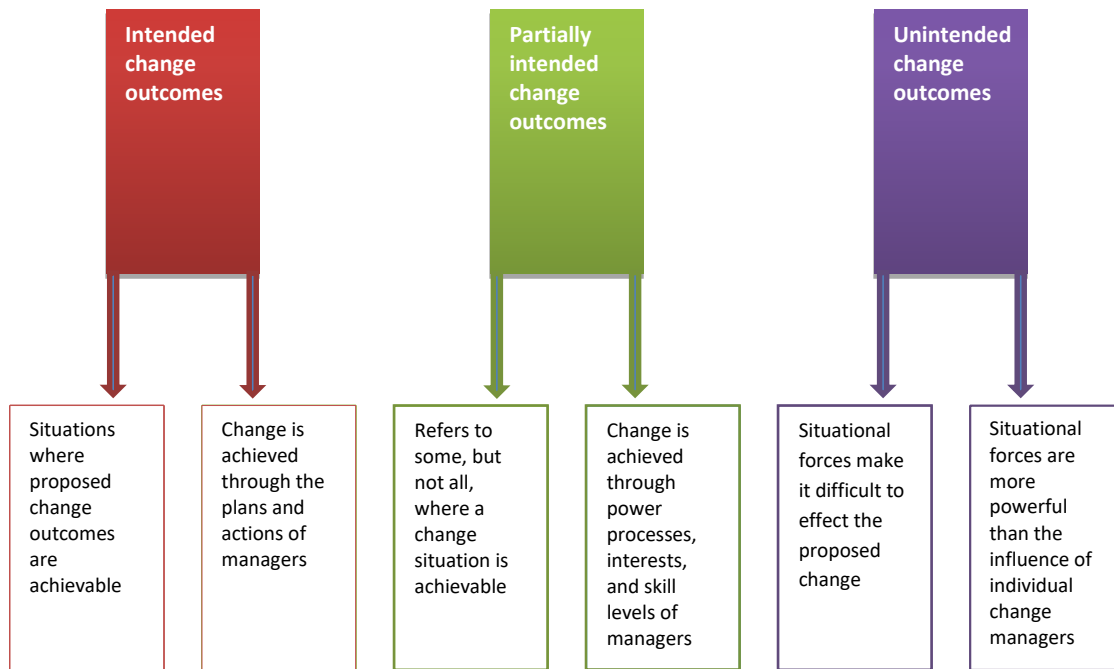
and consultants functioned at an operational, task, processual and strategic level. Caldwell (2003) pointed out that a benefit of employing team agents is that they were better positioned to effect change in large-scale organisations, particularly with issues that were deemed too complex and high risk for any one individual to lead or direct them, even when there is a strong sense of vision and direction (Caldwell, 2003, p.138). This view is espoused by Hock (2013), Bergman et al. (2012), and Erkutlu (2012), who found that shared leadership was positively related to innovation, since team members were predisposed to contributing ideas with each other, which fostered high degrees of creativity and idea generation. Another advantage of using group agents as identified by Caldwell (2003) is that their combined knowledge and experiences have a more effective way of precipitating a desired change outcome, when compared to an individual, whose knowledge is often limited in implementing the proposed change. Senge et al (2007) found that group agents can draw on their collective organisational intelligence, which can be applied to a more extended application and testing. Finally, team agents can be used to decentralise hierarchical control in organisations, where the change process moves along horizontal lines, which span across organisational divisions, units and work processes (Caldwell, 2003, p.138). The soft attributes of team agents is that they adopt propulsion to drive change, willingness to engage in lateral thinking, and debate issues to facilitate desired change. However, from a professional perspective, these groups collectively possess greater tacit and explicit knowledge to precipitate change in their organisation. A limitation of this agency is that there is scope for in group conflict, which can impede or complicate how they effect change. Another weakness of using this agency is that confidential information can be subject to internal or external leaks.

Tsoukas and Chia (2002) explored the concept of organisational change from a different perspective. Unlike mainstream academic and practitioner researchers, which viewed change as effected by intentional endogenous and exogenous variables, these authors argued that organisations are in a perpetual state of involuntary flux. The authors found, "...change in organisations occurs without necessarily intentional managerial action as a result of individuals trying to accommodate new experience and realize new possibilities" (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, p.579). They observed that organisations naturally adjusted to external stimuli through "Competitive pressures, takeovers and mergers, government regulations, technological changes, personnel turnover or members personal trajectories" (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, p.578). Correspondingly, Kotter and Amelin (2019) posit that organisations will be forced simply by their external circumstances to change or become irrelevant. They define irrelevance as "no-growth, shrinkage, and getting chopped and pushed out of existence" (Kotter and Amelin, 2019, p.112). This paradigm underscored the need for my staff to adapt to the exigencies of a dynamic and changing market. Although this perspective may have little applicability to my strategy, it underscored the need for my staff to adapt to the exigencies of a dynamic market. A critique of this paradigm is that while managers may not necessarily influence certain change processes, they can still create an enabling environment by modifying structures, processes or policies, which may help foster 'involuntary' change.

Unlike the previous classic frameworks, Harrison and Shirom (1999) designed a more symmetrical concept, which created an overarching paradigm that characterised change outcomes as *intended*, *partially intended* or *unintended*. These outcomes are illustrated in Figure 11.



**Figure 11 - Harrison and Shirom (1999) different types of outcomes for organisational change**



Source: Harrison and Shirom (1999)

This diagram illustrated that there are situations, which have high change outcomes, since a dominant mindset can be replaced by the proposed mindset; other situations may have moderate change outcomes, since the process can be very difficult, but yet achievable; while other situations may be impossible, since the proposed mindset is unable to change the dominant mindset. Harrison and Shirom (1999) pointed out, 'unintended change outcome' is due to forces that are more powerful than the influence of individual change managers. However, he did not mention that the problem may also lie with management's insufficient abilities to effect positive change outcomes. Drawing on my practice, the construct that best represented my work based problem is the 'intended change outcomes', where this process entailed managers devising and implementing plans to effect desired change. Although I envisaged some difficulties in implementing my plan, I am confident that I can bring about an intended outcome in my practice.

Bridging on the framework of Harrison and Shirom (1999), Palmer and Dunford (2008) developed a comprehensive model, which simplified the complexities of managing different types of organisational change situations. Referring to their model 'Organisational Change and its Embedded Assumptions', the authors identified six images of managing change, which were predicated on the propositions of achieving a *vision*, *communicating* with key stakeholders and overcoming *resistance*. These propositions are discussed by drawing on the images below:

i. Directing

Under this image, if change agents are to elicit an intended outcome, it is necessary that they first articulate a clear and unambiguous *vision*. To achieve this vision, it is necessary for change agents to “create dissatisfaction with the status quo, a sense of distress, and a desire for change among followers” (Shamir and Howell, 1999, p.261). According to Palmer and Dunford (2008) the “creation of this vision produces a crisis effect through rhetorical skills rather than waiting for one to appear” (Palmer and Dunford, 2008, p.S24). It is imperative that change agents’ also communicate succinctly, clearly and unambiguously, so that they can avoid overloading or distorting their messaging. Messages are predicated on the 5Ws: ‘why’, ‘what’, ‘who’, ‘where’ and ‘when’ questions. A defining proposition of this image is that resistance must and can be overcome to effect desired change. A critique of this metaphor is that while it offered limited latitude for resistance, it could cultivate the very same conditions, which it tried to address, where staff ‘agree’ to the directive in principle, but may resist it in practice. This dissonance could circumvent the change process.

ii. Navigating

Unlike the directing image, change agents are unable to impose their *vision* due to divergent opinions held among management or third parties. Under these conditions, Kanter et al (1992) found that change agents must engage in debate with diverse groups, so that they can assuage tensions. With this metaphor *communication* is treated as a form of negotiation, where change agents listened critically to stakeholders, so that the former can *tell* and *sell* change upwardly, downwardly, and horizontally along the hierarchical structure. Unlike the directing image, change agents adopted a more empathetic approach towards *resistance*, where they weighed the pros and cons of the proposed change and the capacity of stakeholders to effect it. A limitation of this image is that while negotiation may appease certain groups, it may lead to a partial intended or unintended change outcome, which could work to the detriment of the organisation.

iii. Caretaking

In contrast to the directing and coaching images, under this orientation change agents maintained a limited degree of control over their *vision*. This control often succumbed to the prevailing internal and external forces, which are influenced by the developmental cycles of an organisation. This metaphor challenged the classic view that senior management remained in control of their destiny. Anderson and Anderson (2001) observed that organisations can enter the unknown without identifying the outcome in advance. *Communication* under this image assumed a reactive form, which focused on explaining to stakeholders the inevitability of the change. Since change is imminent, any form of *resistance* would be deemed ineffective and would eventually decline. Unlike the preceding images, any resistance will at best be ephemeral or worse ineffective (Jick and Peiperl 2003). While this image may accept a probable outcome, it has a minimum chance of achieving an intended or partial change outcome.

iv. Coaching

Under this image, change agents achieved their vision by facilitating the transfer of new skills to management and staff, which enabled them to shape their intended change. Communication under this metaphor is about attaining buy-in among stakeholders through consistent messages, practices and values. Guaspari and Band (2003) found that these shared meanings and behaviours precipitated

new practices, which created a new culture and an intended change outcome. It is this culture, which enabled change agents to realise their future. Under this proposition Agbim et al. (2013) posited that resistance is reduced when new work practices enabled management and staff to function in their new environment. A drawback of this image is that it presupposed an organisation may possess the requisite resources, finances and expertise to facilitate the transfer of new skills. Without these resources it would be very difficult for change agents to achieve their intended outcome.

v. Interpreting

Under this metaphor change agents articulate their vision to their management and staff by drawing on the inner voice of their organisation. This vision must go beyond superficial mission and vision statements, where it “confronts the lack of integrity, which exists in the system” (Quinn, 1996, p.210). The inner voice must reconcile divergent opinions among stakeholder groups to establish the vision. Change agents communicate by articulating a narrative, which makes sense about emergent and adaptive changes. With this understanding management and staff are better able to respond to unfolding dynamics. Weick (2000) observed that interpreters recognise “the power of conversation, dialogue, and respectful interaction to reshape ongoing change” (Weick, 2000, p.237). Resistance is addressed by replacing negative memories with a positive change outcome. An implication of this image arises, when stakeholders assume that the change agent has made a correct interpretation of change events. If his or her interpretation is incorrect, it could impact the wellbeing of everyone involved.

vi. Nurturing

Finally under this image change agents encounter difficulties articulating their *vision*, due to unpredictable and chaotic external forces, which impact change outcomes. Thietart and Forgues (1995) noted that these forces make predicting a vision unlikely, since change agents have little control over their environment. Lichtenstein (2000) likens these dynamics to a parent raising a child, where future outcomes are nurtured or shaped, due to the exogenous chaotic forces, which significantly restricts their ability to produce intended change outcomes. The authors point out only when chaos in an organisation returns to a state of stability, is it possible to develop a vision. Change leaders employ *communications* to articulate positive messages to management, staff, and their stakeholders, so that they can feel a sense of reassurance and realise new possibilities. As with the caretaking image, change agents encounter minimal resistance, since it only had a negligible effect on the change outcome. A limitation with this metaphor is that change leaders may

A review of these images revealed that the first three conformed to the ontology of controlling change, while the latter to shaping change. These positions are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1 - Palmer and Dunford's (2008) Core Assumptions of Metaphors of Change**

Assumptions about change outcomes	Assumptions about managing	
	Controlling	Shaping
Intended	Directing	Coaching
Partially intended	Navigating	Interpreting
Unintended	Caring	Nurturing

Palmer and Dunford (2008)

The controlling assumption conformed to the classic top down ontology of change management, which emphasised planning, commanding, and coordinating; while the latter to the organic ontology of change management, which emphasised decentralised decision-making, self-organising systems and non-linear processes. Palmer and Dunford (2008) pointed out that while these images can be applied separately in their purest form, they can also be applied collectively to suit varying dynamics of the change process. They maintained in this context, "...skilled change managers are able to swap images depending upon the change or the change situation or manage multiple images simultaneously, where there are different but concurrent changes" (Palmer and Dunford 2008, p.30). The authors further mentioned that different change managers may have a greater affinity with some images over others. Given these options, I selected images, which best helped address my work based problem.

The next part of my review justified the selection of images, which helped me transition my classified advisors from a state of ad-taking to one of adaptive selling. I chose a mixed ontology, where I drew both from the controlling and shaping assumptions of managing organisational change. Of the two assumptions, the directing paradigm proved to be my dominant image, because it proved most applicable and expedient to effecting change in my practice. If I decided to compromise my vision as espoused by 'navigators', 'caretakers' and 'nurturers', I would have a diluted version of my change outcome, where at best my classified advisors will engage inconsistently with advertisers and at worst very little to no engagement. These partial outcomes would be ineffective to increasing revenue in my department, since my classified advisors will maintain their ad-taking practices. Consequently, there is a need for me to exert the necessary control over my classified advisors, so that their practices would align with my vision of not only in meeting the expectations of their advertisers, but also exceed them wherever and whenever possible.

My second paradigm centred on the coaching image, which like the directing image, sought to elicit an intended change outcome. With this orientation I can achieve my desired outcome by transferring new knowledge and skills among my classified advisors. I propose to transfer this knowledge through group, one-on-one and self-coaching, which will be delivered by me and knowledgeable and experienced staffers inside and outside my department. Judge et al (1999) observed that salespersons are less likely to resist change when they believe that they possessed the necessary abilities and skills to meet the demands.

My final paradigm drew on constructs from the interpreting image, which emphasised the need to change the narrative of an organisation. This narrative centred on optimising advertiser engagement and customising content to meet the needs of advertisers. This orientation has relevance for my work based

problem, since it rationalised the need for change among my staff, so that they can transform their culture in line with the expectations of advertisers, who expect to receive greater value for their advertising investment. Jones et al (2000) defined these forces as, “The exploding pace of technological innovation contributes to the competitive pressure with companies introducing an endless stream of new products, new manufacturing techniques and distribution systems” (Jones et al 2000, p.38). This image also helped me underscore the benefits to my classified advisors of adopting new practices. Giangreco and Peccei (2005) pointed out an individuals’ resistance to change is predicated on the degree to which they see it as a threat to their interest and involvement in the change process.

## **2.9 Riding out the storm - adaptive selling**

This section traverses divergent perspectives, which relate to adaptive selling practices. It sought to justify how these practices can provide organisations with new revenue, while delivering additional value for clients. Before delving into this discussion, it is necessary for me to provide an overview on why sales managers prefer adaptive selling over standardised forms of selling. The market environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has become increasingly competitive, where consumers are more informed and demand more value for money. Lyus (2011) posited, “Organisations are under pressure to adapt to changing external circumstances, so that they can survive and thrive in the long term” (Lyus, 2011, p.39). The author stated, “Macro-environmental forces, including new opportunities, threats from competitors and changing customer expectations are all beyond the control of managers, who as a result need to adapt their organisations quickly and smoothly to ensure continued prosperity” (Lyus, 2011, p.40). Given the economic conditions impacting my practice, there is a need for my team to engage in adaptive selling, so that they can weather the unstable market conditions.

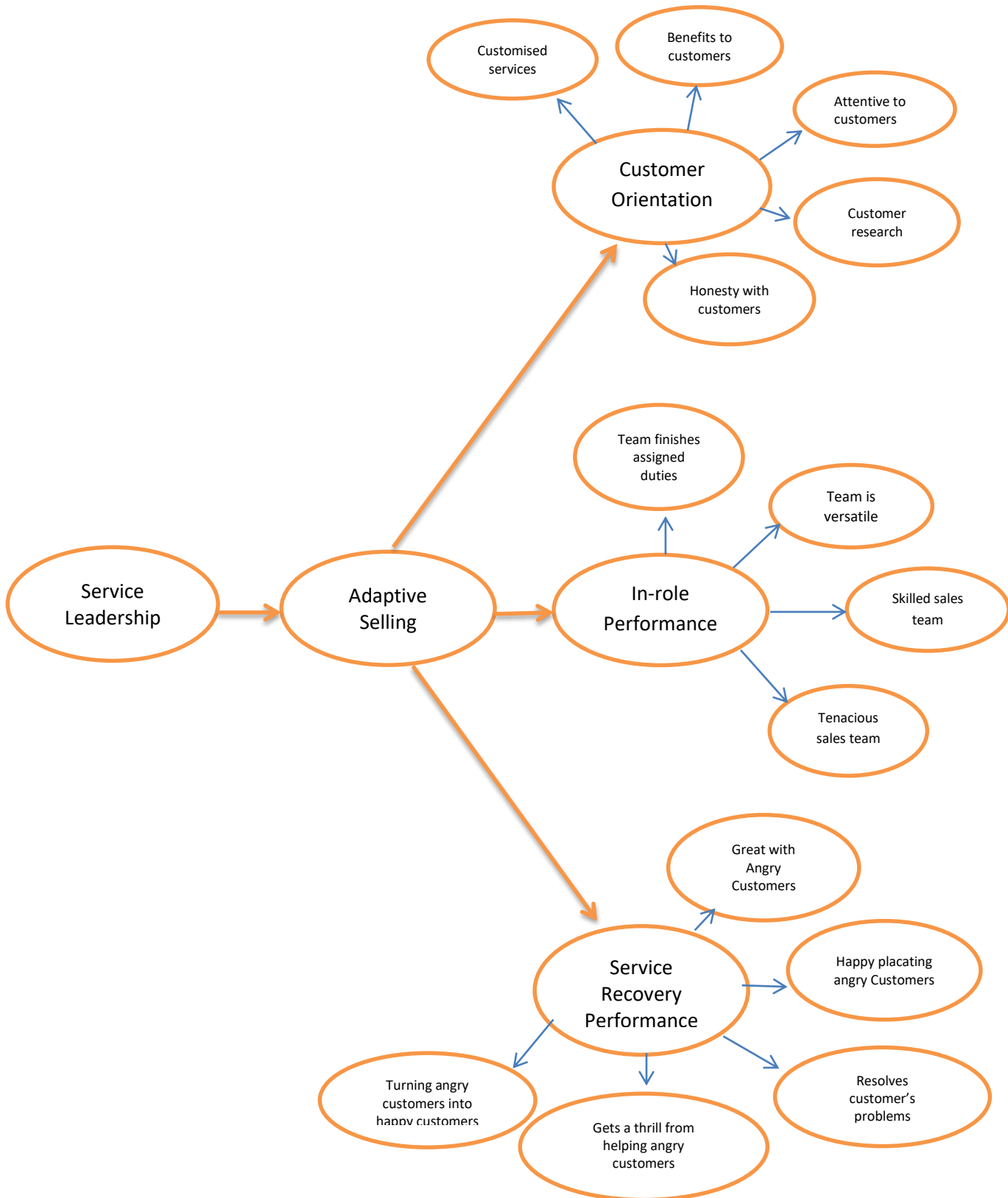
Adaptive selling is defined by Chai et al.(2012) when salespeople, “keep a close eye on the dynamics of sales situations, probe the specific needs of individual customers, monitor customers’ reactions, and correspondingly amend sales tactics, so that the product is presented in the most suitable and appealing way”(Chai et al, 2012, p.262). The authors maintained that these types of selling orientations involve salespeople who are “attentive to cues from customers and modify their approaches based on this information” (Chai et al, 2012, p.262). Franke (2006) pointed out, “salespeople who employ these techniques are both persistent in their attempts to serve customers and flexible in regard to their methods” (Franke and Park, 2006 p.700). This orientation differs from ad-taking or ‘canned’ forms of selling, which is “defined by using the same sales presentation in and during all sales encounters” (Spiro and Weitz, 1990 p.62).

Giacobbe et al (2006) described adaptive selling and standardised selling as irreconcilable, since they comprised conflicting perspectives, where one school of thought asserted that adaptive selling increases revenue, while the other contended that it offered very little value, when compared to standardised forms of selling. Of the 27 studies on adaptive selling, they discovered that there were 12 competing perspectives about this practice. Citing the work of Booram (1998), Goolsby et al (1992), Franke and Park (2006), Park and Holloway (2003), Sigauw (1993), and Sujana et al (1994), Giacobbe et al (2006) found that there was no evidence to show that adaptive selling practices increased sales among frontline staff. This assertion may hold validity for organisations such as fast food restaurants, supermarkets or call centre

operations, where the product or services is of low value, but required a high degree of efficiency to optimise revenue. However, if one considers the rudiments of sales and marketing, which is predicated on meeting the needs of consumers, then it would stand to reason that some limitations exist with these findings, since they failed to take into account the in-depth engagement required to sell high value products or services. My practice would fall into the latter category, because my classified advisors needed to engage their advertisers to publish compelling content, which met or exceeded their expectations. Although the views espoused by Siguaw (1993) and Sujan et al (1994) have merit for some organisations, Anglin et al (1990); and Blackshear (1994) contend that the adaptive selling practices were effective in generating increased revenue. However, like the previous perspectives, Anglin et al (1990) and Blackshear (1994) were nebulous in their views, since they too needed to expound on the type of sectors or organisations which were best suited to adaptive selling practices. These findings have relevance for my research, because they helped me to validate whether my advertisers preferred my team to engage in adaptive selling or standardised selling practices.

Alternatively adaptive selling can help customer service representatives build more cohesive relationships with their customers. Jacobucci (2010) found that customers appreciate when salespersons listen attentively to their problems. Similarly, Jaramillo et al., (2007) discovered that customers prefer when customer service representatives are willing to try fresh and innovative approaches to resolve their problems. According to Wong et al., (2015) high quality customer service is primarily driven by the ethos of leaders. This type of leadership is categorised according to two groups: servant leaders and service leaders, where the former placed an emphasis on serving and aiding followers, while the latter placed an emphasis on working with “followers to develop the approach, procedures, and culture that directly support high quality customer service” (Wong et al., 2015 p.124). Of the two orientations, Schneider et al., (2005) found that service leaders create conditions, which optimise adaptive selling practices. The authors contend that these type of leaders place a premium on listening to their customers and responding to their needs, so that they can maintain their patronage and loyalty. Conversely, Testa (2004) learnt, “It is clear that supportive management provides a pathway for positive employee behavioral outcomes” (Testa, 2004 p.409). Drawing on these characteristics, Wong et al. (2015) observed that service leaders have a positive impact on adaptive selling practices in three ways: customer orientation, in-role performance, and service recovery. These constructs are illustrated in Figure 12.

Figure 12 - Wong et al. (2015) triadic model



Source: Wong et al., (2015)

Wong et al (2015) provides an appropriate framework for me to restructure the selling practices among my classified advisors, so that they can recreate a culture, which exceed the expectations of their advertisers. The authors postulate that to apply adaptive selling effectively, service leaders must intervene in three core areas: customer orientation, in role performance and service recovery performance. While Wong et al's model has shown suitability for my practice, literature reveals that it has a few limitations, which could impact on the capacity of my team to deliver an adaptive service.

One critique of Wong et al's (2015) model is that they make the presupposition every service leader possesses the aptitude and resources to effectively transition their salespersons from a state of standardised selling to one of adaptive selling. Prior et al (2008) acknowledged, "Once organizational leaders realize the need for change, they also face challenges in terms of successfully implementing initiatives that will lead to change" (Pryor et al 2008, p.6). According to the authors these challenges are characterised when service leaders are unfamiliar with how change occurs and how to achieve their preferred outcome.

Wong et al's (2015) service recovery performance may be construed as mercurial in nature, since it emphasised the need to react to customer issues rather than proactively mitigating their occurrence. While it is unrealistic to prevent every error from arising, the authors should consider incorporating research into their intervention, so that service leaders can better understand how errors occur and put systems in place to mitigate them. By adopting this orientation, service leaders can better control customer related issues in a more proactive way.

Finally, Wong et al (2015) presume that all salespersons are predisposed with desirous traits, attitudes and values to engage in adaptive selling practices. However, in reality there are many disparities that exist between salespersons. Although many can elicit new skills, a degree of difficulty arises when service leaders seek to change the ethos of their staff, particularly those who are longstanding and may be steeped in undesirable selling practices. Loveland et al (2015) found that the "nature of sales requires dispositional attributes that cannot be trained if the goal is, overall, long-term satisfaction in sales" (Loveland 2015, p.234). Consequently, there may be a need for service leaders to transfer or terminate staff, whose orientation may be misaligned with their vision. However, the latter option should be considered a final resort.

## **2.10 Identifying the most suitable incentive schemes for classified advisors**

A wide divergence of perspectives exist on what motivates salespersons to perform at their optimum capacity. Motivation is construed by Campbell and Pritchard (1976) as the amount of effort expended in work related tasks. A problem exists with this description, since it is oversimplified in nature and utilises the terms of 'motivation' and 'effort' interchangeably. However, a more nuanced definition is given by Brown and Peterson (1994), who distinguishes between the two concepts: "Effort represents the force,



energy or activity by which work is accomplished, while motivation represents the psychological state of the individual, which involves direction, intensity and persistence of behaviour” (Brown and Peterson, 1994 p.70). Khusainova et al (2017) identified a total of 507 articles in peer reviewed journals on sales motivation. Despite this abundance of literature, the authors acknowledged that for every finding, an equal amount of ambiguity existed in terms of how managers can motivate their sales staff. This opacity was due primarily to two dichotomous paradigms: extrinsic motivation (EM) or intrinsic motivation (IM), where the former is characterised as tangible rewards such as salary, fringe benefits and job security; while the latter as the opportunity to use one’s ability, a sense of challenge and achievement (Pritchard and Ashwood, 2008, p.6). However, growing debate exist among sales scholars on whether financial or non-financial rewards, job design or management styles best incentivises salespersons. Bridging on psychology, Khusainana et al (2018) identified three salient paradigms on sales motivation: *Expectancy theory*, *Attribution theory*, and the *Self-development theory*.

Vroom’s (1964) Expectancy Theory underlined the basic tenets of sales that individuals were primarily incentivised by EM or financial rewards. This model is summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2 - Vroom's (1964) ‘Expectancy’ Theory on motivation**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Application</b>
Expectancy	Effective performance	Apply a given amount of effort and results in performance
Instrumentality	Performance reward	Performance at a certain standard will result in organisational rewards
Valiance	Rewards to achieve personal goals	The degree to which the organisation grants awards will satisfy their personal goals

Source: Vroom (1964)

Unsurprisingly, Expectancy Theory is ideal for a sales generating environment, which is primarily measured on its capacity of achieving revenue targets. This paradigm is a natural fit for my practice, since its primary objective is to grow advertising revenue according to monthly, quarterly and yearly targets. To motivate my sales team, the commissions of my classified advisors generally comprised 70 per cent to 80 per cent of their base salary, which was instituted to optimise their performance, with the view of them achieving their personal goals; while enabling my practice to achieve its revenue targets. Nemeckova (2017) and Mentel et al. (2016) observed that each financial causality was predicated on the next, since they enabled individuals and management to achieve their personal and professional objectives. Despite these derived benefits, a critique of Vroom’s (1964) paradigm was that it restricted motivation only to financial rewards, while negating other IM determinants such as personal satisfaction, autonomy, and job competence, which according to Mallin and Pullins (2009) were more effective in driving organisational performance.

An alternative paradigm is offered by Weiner’s (1980) Attribution Theory, which views motivation as primarily intrinsic. Unlike Vroom (1964), who postulated that achievement is induced by financial rewards,

Weiner (1980) espoused that an individual’s motivation is predicated on his or her ability to effectively perform in their particular role. A summary of this model is outlined in Table 3.

**Table 3 - Weiner's (1980) ‘Attribution’ theory on motivation**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Application</b>
Stable theory (Ability)	(stable and unstable)	Stability influences individuals' expectancy about their future
Locus of control (Effort)	(internal and external)	Control is related to individuals' persistence on their mission
Controllability (Task difficulty)	(controllable or uncontrollable)	Causality influences emotional responses to the outcome of task

Source: Weiner (1980)

This paradigm can be applied to job functions, which involve a certain degree of knowledge, competence and effort to complete a task or project. Weiner’s (1980) theory has application to my practice, since it undergirds the need for me to provide my classified advisors with challenging yet achievable projects, so that they can feel a sense of accomplishment. The author illustrates that when salespersons attribute a high degree of success on a task or project, it motivates them to perform similarly in the future, particularly on tasks, which may have a higher degree of difficulty. While this orientation explains why salespersons are driven to perform at their peak, Covington and Omelich (1984) contended that Weiner (1980) restricted his model primarily to cognitive assumptions. They concluded that the model can be enhanced by including additional affective variables such as humiliation, guilt and shame, which can have an inverse motivational effect.

Finally, Gayne and Deci’s (2005) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) propagates that individuals essentially function as organisms who have an innate inclination to achieve growth, integration and self-development. This theory represents the antithesis of Vroom (1964), since it emphasized that a supportive social environment enabled staff to perform at their optimal capacity. A summary of this model is outlined in Table 4.

**Table 4 - Gagne and Deci (2005) 'Self-development' theory**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Application</b>
Need for autonomy	Derived satisfaction by having the freedom to work autonomously or following others on their own volition.	Feeling a sense of achievement from their own actions.
Need for competence	A sense of being part of a team to meet their goals.	Satisfaction leading to effective work performances and professional outcomes
Need for relatedness	A sense of attachment to others, which is often reciprocated.	A sense of belonging by leaders to increase motivation and company performance

Source: Gagne and Deci (2005)

Although these variables underpin that social dynamics can motivate or demotivate staff, managers still need to maintain a state of equilibrium, where their staff enjoy autonomy, but exists in the confines of company policies, processes and practices. As a classified manager, the theory showed me that by fostering a supportive culture, my sales team would feel impelled to develop themselves, which in turn would impel them to perform at their peak.

Given the prevailing issues in my practice, which is characterised by limited advertiser engagement, underselling, and the complexity of selling print advertising in a digitalised market, each of the reviewed theories on motivation can be applied to address different context of my research problem. Stathakopoulos (1996) argued that each theory should be perceived as complimentary to the next, rather than competing. These theories have challenged me to reflect on my own assumptions as a sales manager and how I can incentivise my team to achieve their fullest potential.

## **2.11 Identifying best practices for providing advertisers with added value**

An established perspective exists that advertising should be construed as an asset, since it enables advertisers to increase their sales, differentiate their products, and reach new consumers. However, this assumption is subject to debate among scholars, since advertising can be deemed an expense or an investment. If it is viewed as the former, then an advertiser's budget may be construed as a debit; whereas if it is the latter, it may be a credit. Gu and Li (2010) contended that advertising should be considered as an intangible asset, since it created conditions for managers to grow their revenue. However, a critique of this view is that it presupposes that every advertiser derived dividends from his or her advertising investment, since some advertisements may yield higher dividends than others due to the quality of content, the reach of the particular medium and market conditions. Another complication arises when clients advertise certain content, which may hold little commercial value. This type of content comprise obituaries, in-memoriams and legal notices, which provide little to no financial returns to advertisers.

These findings have relevance for my research, since they showed how advertiser perceptions could potentially impact on my sales. For example, if clients considered advertising an expense, then they would spend less on their advertisements, since they would deem their investment as providing minimal or no returns. This paradigm explains why some clients may spend less on advertising, since they perceive it as paying them minimal or zero dividends. When clients start from this premise, they would be inclined to reduce or reallocate their advertising budgets to other areas, particularly during a recession, where advertiser spending is contracted. These dynamics can determine the extent to which advertisers respond to the propositions of my classified advisors.

## **2.12 Identifying best practices for providing clients with creative advertisements**

A related dimension of adaptive selling centres on the ability to which my classified advisors can produce creative content. This process is defined in the context of newspaper advertising, comprised two variables: divergence and relevance, where the former referred to the extent to which an advertisement, “contains elements that are novel, different, or unusual; [while the latter refers] to the elements in the advertisement that are meaningful, appropriate, or valuable to the audience” (Yang and Smith, 2009, p.336). According to the authors creative advertisements trigger increased open mindedness, curiosity, and positive effects which provide advertisers with a competitive advantage. Unlike the previous literature which related to motivation and the debate on whether advertising should be deemed an investment or an expense, the studies on creativity agreed that originality provided advertisers with added value, when compared to standardised or derivative content. However, authors such as Baack et al (2015) warned that creative content must be relevant to the product, so that recipients of each message can easily interpret its content. While creativity provided mutual benefits for the advertiser and the advertising provider, it calls for the provider to acquire the right talent, which can produce compelling and innovative messaging, which resonated with advertisers. When compared to derivative advertising, producing creative content can often prove time consuming, where copywriters and graphic artists have to engage in lateral thinking to differentiate their messaging. Conversely, I also sought to determine whether creative content contributed to improving advertising results among my staff and their advertisers. These sources have significance for my research, since they showed that advertisers received greater value when they place novel content in the media.

## **2.13 Identifying most suitable management styles for adaptive selling practices**

My final phenomenon explored whether sales performances were impacted by different management styles. Anderson (2009) posited, “The culture and effectiveness of any sales force are products of its management system: the rules that govern the way a company trains, monitors, supervisors, motivates and evaluates salespeople” (Anderson, 2009, p.7). Within this context, I identified the most suitable management styles that created the optimal sales environment. Anderson (2009) found two types of sales cultures: ‘Outcome Control’ and ‘Behaviour Control’, where the former placed a value on directing salespeople to achieve revenue targets regardless of how they were met; while the latter focused on how

people made sales rather than the amount achieved. Under 'Outcome Control', where the *customer is king*, the systems "measure and reward results that are determined by the sales reps interactions with customers"; whereas with 'Behaviour Control', where the *manager is king*, salespersons are expected to engender "attitudes, behaviours, and competencies that management prizes" (Anderson, 2009, p.7). He maintained that under "Behaviour Control" managers heavily supervised their sales staff; whereas under "Outcome Control" managers employed light supervision. However, a third dimension existed under Anderson's (2009) model, which related to a mixed system of 'Outcome Control' and 'Behaviour Control'. The author conceded that because the two systems were dichotomous in nature, the optimal approach was to employ the mixed paradigm, "where the power of the manager and the power of the customer are in some sort of balance," (Anderson, 2009, p.7). Although the author believed that a mixed blend represented the ideal framework, he found that the "Behaviour Control" system was more suited to junior salespeople, while the "Outcome Control" was more suited to experienced staff. Within this context, I sought to confirm which management styles elicited the greatest responses among my team. These three paradigms served a dual purpose for me, since they enabled me to corroborate or dispel the preferred management styles in my practice, while helping me determine whether I should change my 'Outcome Control' style to a 'Behaviour Control' style or 'mixed' style.

## 2.14 Critical summary and reflection

As an action learner and researcher, I have become familiarised with a range of competing frameworks and perspectives, which relate to the impact of technology facing newspaper publishers, diverse models on managing organisational change, and transitioning my classified advisors from a state of standardised selling to one of adaptive selling. Although much of these findings were based on empirical evidence, some of them proved more applicable to newspaper publishers and issues facing my practice. Unlike the first world markets of North America and Europe, newspaper publishers in micro developing economies like Barbados are more vulnerable to the shocks and vicissitudes from the global economy. Some of these pressures include additional expenses such as importing raw materials like ink and newspaper stock from the United States. Unlike newspapers in the metropolis, imported materials entering Barbados attracts 17.5 per cent of duties and shipping costs. These costs already make my practice four times more expensive, when compared to its counterparts in North America and Europe. In April 1, 2016, my practice increased its advertising rates by 5 percent across the board, so that it can stymie the loss of its revenue. Although this increase may appear marginal, it has inflated the rates for worded classified advertisements from US\$175.00 to US\$200.00 when including add on features such as colour, headlines and images. This increase has impacted on the micro and small scale advertiser, who is already price sensitive.

These issues were further compounded by the austerity programme, which has been introduced by the Government of Barbados. This programme has sought to restrict consumer spending through the imposition of increased direct and indirect taxes, so that it can protect and preserve the Island's depleting foreign reserves, which stood at 10 weeks in December 2016 (KPMG 2017, p.4). These taxes have reduced the competitiveness of my practice and restricted its advertiser spending.

With overwhelming pressures bearing upon my practice, it was necessary for me to view them through the lens of Srinivasan et al., (2011) and Graham and Frankenberger (2011), who described newspaper

publishers as resilient, since they survived five incarnations of technological advances, which threatened their viability. These threats were in the form of commercialised radio stations during the 1920s, television stations during 1950s, news websites during the 1990s, and the social media sites in 2006+. The final incarnation represented the *raison d'etre* of my research, since it undergirded my question that my practice can increase its revenue in a highly competitive environment.

However, I have also bridged my research on the views of Wunsch (2010), who posited that the threats facing newspaper publishers may be disguised as opportunities. Under this paradigm, I was encouraged to view my practice as a multimedia entity, which delivered content via print, online, social media and video platforms. By adopting this paradigm, I was able to diversify my product range, while appealing to new sections of my target market. Actually, this orientation is in keeping with the new direction of my practice, which has positioning itself as a multimedia provider of news, information and entertainment content. This paradigm formed another layer in the base of research.

The bedrock of my research is characterised by a plethora of theories, which relate to effecting organisational change. These theories were centred on the definition of Jones and George's (2008), who described organisational change when an entity shifts from its present state toward a desired state. This definition represented the nucleus of my action research, since it is incumbent on me to change the selling practices of my classified advisors, so that they can fully utilise existing and new opportunities in their market. Harrison and Shirom's (1999) theory on 'change outcome' undergirded the framework for my desired change, since I needed to improve the service delivery of my staff. The next stage involved utilising Palmer and Dunford's (2008) three metaphors for change, which comprised 'interpreting the desired change'; 'directing the desired change'; and 'coaching for the 'intended change outcome', which laid the groundwork of my research.

Finally, the literature showed me that adaptive selling practices can help my key stakeholders yield higher dividends, when compared to 'canned' or 'standardised' forms of selling, which provide them minimal value. Lyus (2011 and) and Chai et al., (2012) found that adaptive selling practices can help a commercial entity become more resilient, particularly during a period of an economic recession or uncertainty. For my practice, this resiliency was exhibited in trying to meet or exceed the expectations of advertisers, being proactive in resolving customer related issues and ultimately increasing customer loyalty. The literature helped me contextualise the nature of my work based problem. It has laid the groundwork for me to narrow the data for my research as well as to define and structure of my questionnaire, which I disseminated to my classified advisors and their active advertisers.

## **CHAPTER 3.0 – METHODOLOGY**

## *Research Chapter*

***An organization's ability to learn and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage – Jack Welch 1998***

### **3.1 Introduction**

Drawing on the credo of Jack Welch (1998), I endeavored to show how a multi-method research was effective in attaining new insights into my work based problem, which centres on how I can increase revenue at my practice during an economic downturn. Firstly, I achieved these insights by reflecting critically on my personal and professional philosophical assumptions, where I showed how they influenced my chosen research method. Secondly, I sought to justify my rationale for choosing a multi-method research method, which allowed me to draw a fuller and clearer picture of my work based problem. Finally, I discussed how I utilised the positivist and post-positivist paradigms to create new knowledge, where the former paradigm enabled me to draw generalisations into the customer service preferences of my advertisers; while the latter helped me attain richer insights into the selling practices of my classified advisors.

### **3.2 Research philosophy**

As an action researcher a plethora of research methods remained at my disposal. These methods comprised the quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. According to Borrego et al (2009) there is no research method that is more privileged than the next. They maintained, "Rather, the choice of method must be driven by the research questions" (Borrego et al., 2009 p.53). Given the nature of my research, where I interviewed five of my six classified advisors and surveyed a minimum of 135 active advertisers, I decided that the multi-method research paradigm would be the most suitable to address my work based problem.

According to Venkatesh et al (2013) a multi-method or mixed methods research is deemed "the third methodological movement (paradigm), with quantitative and qualitative methods being the first and second paradigms respectively" (Venkatesh et al, 2013 p.2). Although some social scientists refer to mixed methods research and multi-method research interchangeably, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) pointed out a few conceptual nuances, which exist between the two designs. They found, "In mixed method design various quantitative or qualitative strategies are drawn into a single project that may have a quantitative or qualitative theoretical drive"; whereas for the multi-method design, it entailed "two or more methods each conducted rigorously and complete in itself in one project", (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003, p.190). For my research design, the multi-method paradigm enabled me to engage in triangulation, where I drew from multiple modes of enquiry to validate my data. According to Terrell (2012) the multi-method and mixed method were borne out of the paradigm wars between quantitative and qualitative research, where they both reconciled to create an overarching mode of enquiry. A more detailed comparison of the positivist and post-positivist paradigm is summarised in Table 5.



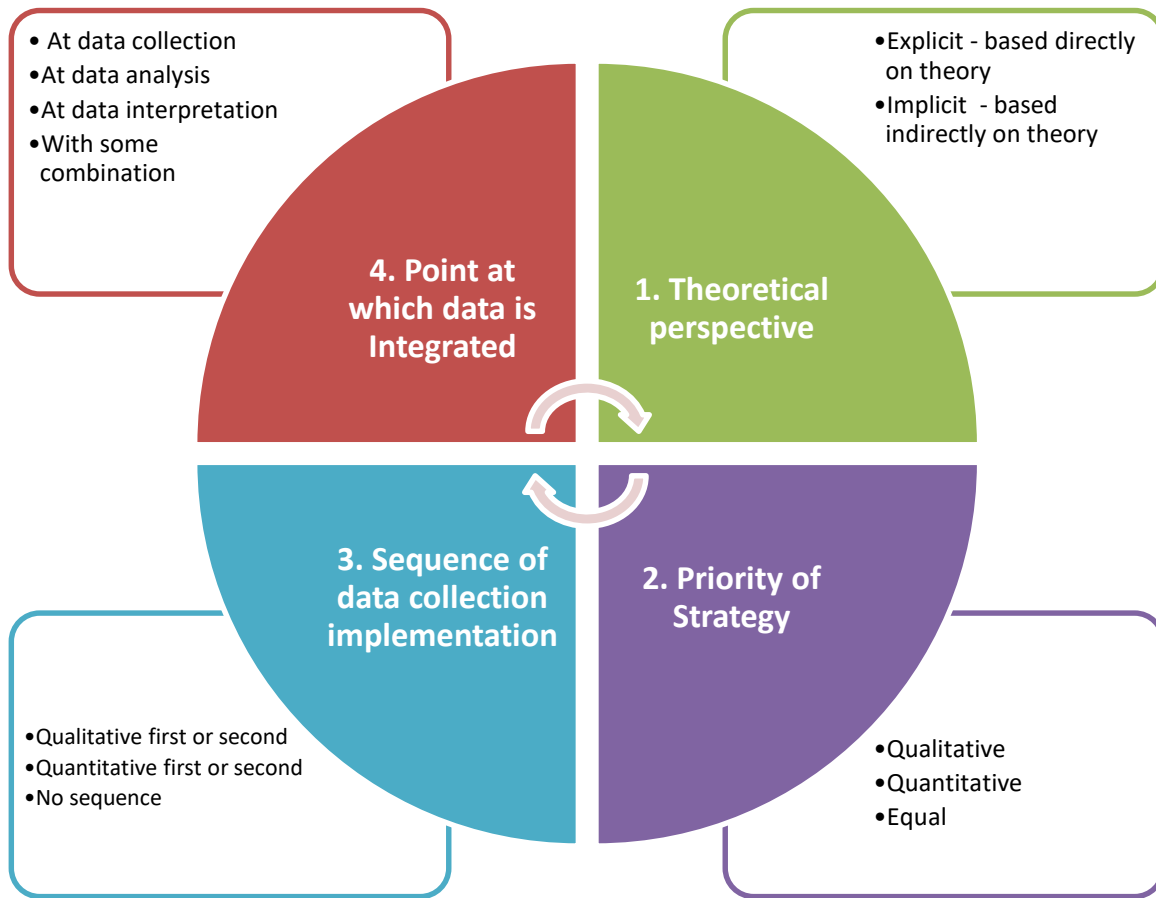
**Table 5 - Comparing the positivist and post-positivist orientation of a multi-method research**

<b>Positivists:</b>	<b>Orientations:</b>	<b>Post-Positivist:</b>
Very high	Independence of researcher	Very low
Very high	Objective	Very low
Very high	Testable	Very low
Very high	Causality	Very low
Very high	Results are generalisable	Very low
Very low	Subjective	Very high
Very low	Rich data	Very high
Very low	Unique insights	Very high
Very low	Intuitive approach	Very high

Adapted from Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008)

Synthesising these paradigms may appear problematic or even paradoxical initially, since they are both polarised in nature and scope. However, when integrated they create a third paradigm, where each competing orientation can actually complement or complete each polarity. Easterby-Smith et al., (2012), pointed out that even purists of one paradigm do not hold consistently to one position or the next. He found, “many researchers, both in management and social science research, deliberately combined methods from both traditions” (Easterby-Smith et al, 2012, p.7). Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008) posited that the multi-method is highly compatible with the paradigm of relativism, which dictated that researchers can employ “whatever philosophical and or methodological approach (that) works for their particular research problem under study” (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2008, p.9). In Figure 13, Terrell (2012) identified the following constructs, which researchers can use under this paradigm.

**Figure 13 - Terrell's (2012) four factors that determine a mixed approach**



Source: Terrell (2012)

Drawing on Terrell's (2012) quadratic model, he showed me that the mixed research paradigm is dynamic and multifaceted, where researchers enjoy the depth and breadth of corroboration and understanding, while offsetting their inherent limitations. The first construct revealed that each paradigm can compensate for the next, where they create rich and rigorous theoretical perspectives for researchers. The second construct showed that each paradigm can function dominantly, supportively, or concurrently. The third construct revealed that each paradigm can be arranged in a sequential or non-sequential order (findings from one another inform the other) or concurrently (independent of each other). The final construct showed that data can be integrated at any point during the course of research.

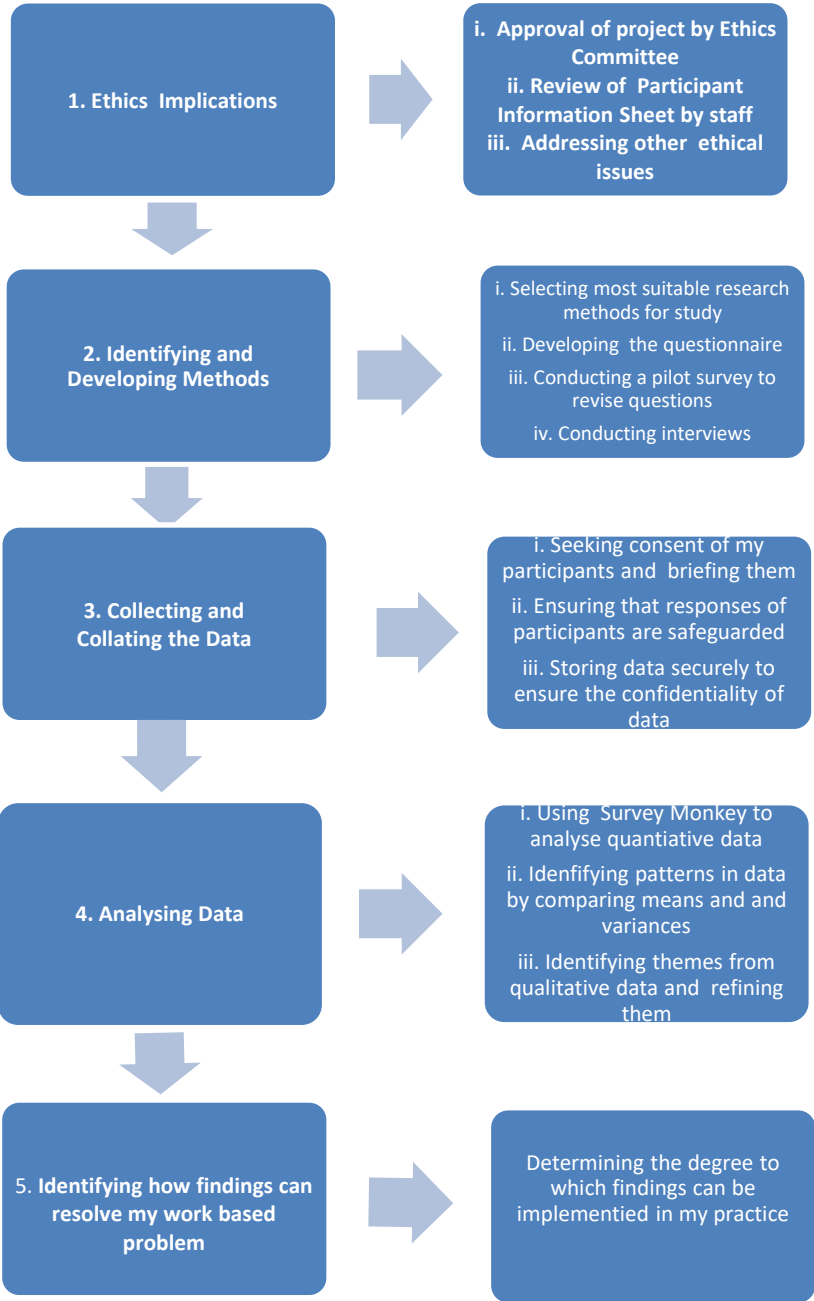
### 3.3 Research implications

Despite these benefits, pursuing a multi-method research does have a few drawbacks. Some of these drawbacks relate to the complexity of converging two divergent research designs, since each one required a different set of rules to gather, process and analyse data. Out of this complexity, researchers tend to expend more time, effort and resources employing a multi-method design, when compared to a single paradigm. As an action researcher, I addressed these challenges by accepting that a multi-method design would call for more time and effort than a single design. Another downside that I faced was that the guidelines for conducting a multi-methods design remained ambiguous, since it is still a relatively recent paradigm (Kaplan and Duchon 1988; Mingers 2001, 2003). However, I confronted these ambiguities by incorporating Terrell's (2012) guidelines for a multi-method research into my investigation and then synthesising them to create a sensitising strategy, where multiple strategies were employed into one overarching project.

The next section recounts the steps, which I took to generate, gather and analyse data from my classified advisors. I justified each step by drawing on literature, which related to customer service, advertising, and employee motivation. I concluded the section by reviewing some of the ethical implications and challenges that I encountered as an insider researcher with my staff.

A benefit of being an insider researcher is that I attained a high degree of familiarity with my research participants, since I have worked with them during the past five years. During this period, I have become au fait with their individual perspectives, strengths and weaknesses in relation to closing sales. However, I am cognisant that being an insider researcher may also become a disadvantage. For instance, my position of power may impede my staff from speaking openly and honestly on sensitive issues or divulging incidences, which may compromise their own professional standing. Consequently, their unwillingness to speak openly may deprive me from attaining valuable data for my research. To avoid these type of issues, McManners (2016) advised insider researchers to go beyond adopting a neutral posture, but instead I should assume an arbitrary role, where "he or she develops deep understanding of the problem and competing viewpoints to be able to formulate and propose a solution" (McManners 2016, p.204). Scaffolding on this paradigm, I informed my classified advisors that they will be the beneficiaries of my research. I shared with them that my research sought to improve their selling skills, so that they can increase their commissions and improve the quality of service to their advertisers; while leading to the financial stability of our own practice. Once I approached my staff from this angle, I was able to encourage them to participate in my study. These processes are identified in Figure 14.

**Figure 14 - Steps to identify, gather, analyse data to address my work based problem**



Source: Author’s own model (2017)

### 3.4 Ethical considerations

I commenced my research by addressing a range of ethical issues, which could impact on the wellbeing of my staff and professional practice. Against this background, I was cognisant to conduct my research ethically and transparently. Creswell (2007) postulated that researchers must proactively anticipate and plan for ethical issues in their study. He found that these issues arose prior, during and after the research process. I started the process by completing four application forms from the University of Liverpool, which ensured that my investigations conformed to its ethical codes of conduct. These forms comprised the *Personal Information Sheet*, and the *Participant Consent Form*, *Full Ethics Form*, and *Ethics Response Form* (Please refer to Appendix A and Appendix B for details). These documents helped me safeguard the interests of my participants and practice. "Ethical scrutiny must necessarily occur before a study goes ahead because participants may have already been victimized if studies were reviewed after they have taken place." (Kent et al, 2002, p.626). The Ethics Committee of the university also ensured that each stage of my research was conducted in accordance with their policy and practices. Hedgecoe (2008) pointed out that researchers are "not the best people to decide on the risk and benefits of their work, having, as they do, a tendency to underestimate the former and overestimate the latter" (Hedgecoe, 2008 p.880). To address this issue, I developed a Participant Information Sheet (PIS), which detailed to my advertisers the nature of my research and its benefits. A more detailed account of how I utilised the PIS, is discussed in section 3.6 of this chapter. Despite addressing these salient issues, there were still others that needed to be tackled.

An ethical dilemma of my interviews infringed on the capacity of my classified advisors to earn their commissions. While this issue in itself was only temporary, participating in my qualitative interview reduced the selling time of my classified advisors by one hour. To confront this issue, I scheduled the interviews on Monday afternoons, which represented both the lightest selling and production days of my practice. Consequently, these interviews only impacted my participants marginally. To further mitigate this issue, I also ensured that my department received adequate staff coverage to facilitate walk-in and phone-in advertisers.

Another issue related to the anxieties which my classified advisors experienced when they participated in my research. This sense of discomfort emanated from my mystery shopper programme, which I orchestrated prior to my enrollment on the University of Liverpool's DBA programme. The programme, which was facilitated through the National Initiative of Service Excellence (NISE), a quasi-governmental agency, promoting sustainable customer excellence in organisations, created some distress among my classified advisors, since they were unaware about the exercise. Consequently, some of my classified advisors were understandably apprehensive about participating in my research. To assuage their concerns, I reassured them that their participation was entirely voluntary and they can withdraw from the process at any time without explanation.

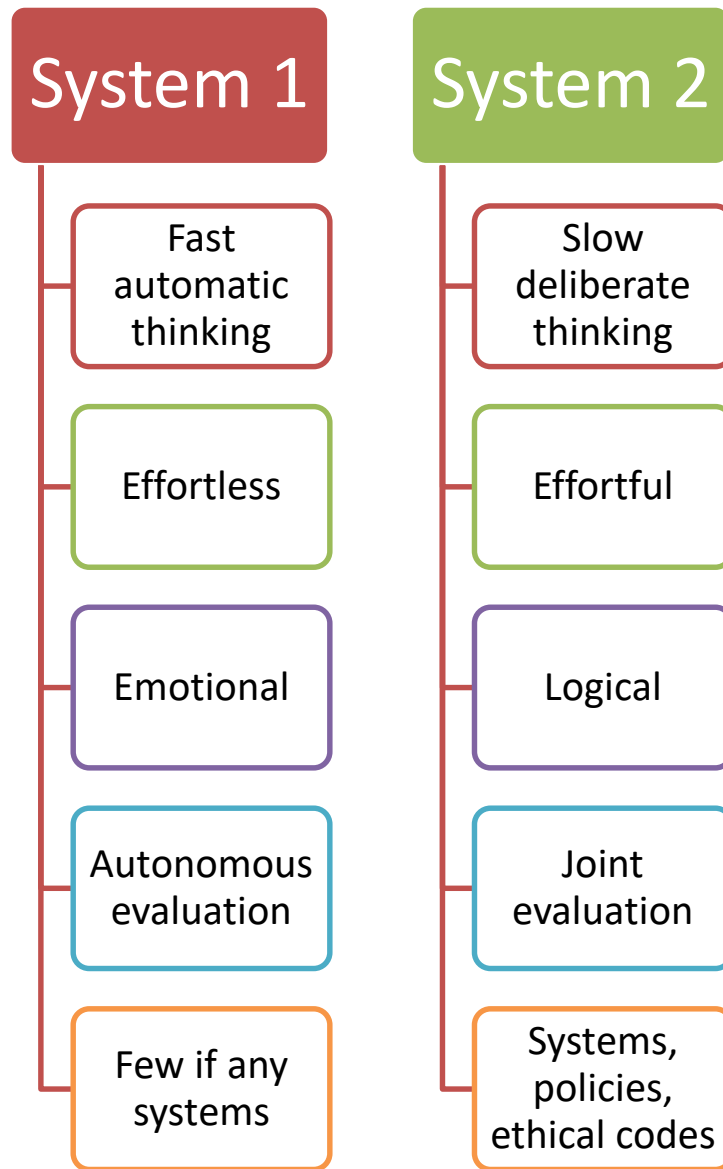
I also informed my participants that their responses would be anonymous and treated confidentially. I informed them that their responses would be encrypted, so that I could protect their identities. The quantitative data of my participants were stored in *Survey Monkey*, which was password protected, while the qualitative interviews which were placed on paper, was safely filed in my cabinet at home. These encryptions have value for my research, since they afforded my classified advisors the security of

answering questions openly and honestly, which yielded reliable data for my research. My view was espoused by Stang (2015) who stated, “Ethical research requires that the wellbeing and privacy of participants be protected at all times” (Stang, 2015, p.2012). He maintained, “Data integrity necessitates that researchers collect and store data in ways that protect the identity of a subject such as on password-protected computers, in locked cabinets or offices” (Stang, 2015, p.2012). This ethos underscored the argument that ethics in research is a two way process, since researchers have a responsibility to protect their participants, while participants have a responsibility to provide truthful answers for researchers. By proactively responding to their concerns, I was able to put my classified advisors at ease.

To further alleviate any apprehension among my classified advisors, I communicated with them positively during each stage of the interviewing process, so that they felt relaxed and comfortable expounding on issues, which may be deemed sensitive or difficult. Coghlan (2001) advised insider researchers to couch their interviews with positive language, so that participants can feel at ease in providing truthful and critical responses. He found when an issue is framed as an ‘opportunity’, it often promoted divergent thinking among participants, where they become much more involved with the project and provided creative solutions (Coghlan, 2001, p.53). Marquardt (2007) pointed out that researchers should be, “...genuinely curious and not make the employee feel as though he is being judged, interrogated, or manipulated” (Marquardt, 2007, p.2).

The final issue related to my unconscious biases as an action researcher, which may have skewed my ability to interpret and analyse data. Banaji et al (2003) found that researchers may be oblivious to their own biases, because they are subject to three types of ‘blind spots’: (1) implicit biases, (2) temporal distance from an ethical dilemma and (3) decision bias that lead people to disregard and miscalculate other ethical lapses. As an insider researcher, my potential blind spot may emanate from my implicit biases, which would have been motivated by my ontological position as a sales manager, which is primarily focused on stabilising and growing the revenue of my practice. While I am sure that there were unintentional instances, where I relegated the concerns of my respondents to focus on achieving my revenue targets, I sought to address these biases by employing Sezer et al’s (2015) framework of how researchers can minimise the incidences of their prejudices. This framework is summarised in Figure 15.

Figure 15 - Interval measurement of responses



Source: Sezer et al (2015)

During the questionnaire design, interview and analysis stages, I adhered to the attributes, which were outlined under System 2. These attributes guided me to constantly question and reflect on my possible biases when interpreting and analysing data. I fortified the first four attributes, by seeking guidance from the Ethical Committee of the University of Liverpool, who advised me to ensure that my proposal conformed to their code of ethics, so that my research can be conducted with minimal issues.

### 3.5 Document analysis

After addressing these ethical issues, I immersed myself in my research by firstly analysing a range of sales reports, which spanned 2005 to 2018. These documents helped me contextualise the intrinsic nature of my work based problem. Bowen (2009) described this process as, “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both print and electronic material” (Bowen, 2009, p.27). A review of these reports confirmed that my cash worded revenue declined more precipitously than my charge worded revenue, which decreased only marginally. However, the reports also revealed that my display advertising revenue performed relatively consistently during the period under review. These sectors comprised funerary, employment and legal notices. Bowen (2009) pointed out that document analysis should be employed “in combination with other research methods as a means of triangulation - the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon” (Bowen, 2009, p.27). Eisner (1991) found that by triangulating data with documents, the researcher attempts to provide “a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility” (Eisner, 1991, p.110). As a researcher, I employed triangulation to determine whether parallels existed with my quantitative and qualitative data, which provided me with fuller and richer data for my research.

### 3.6 Invitation of participants

The second phase of the process entailed inviting my six classified advisors to participate in my research. I commenced the process by meeting with them on January 18, 2017, where they were made aware of the scope of my research. My discussions revolved around the 16 items on my Participant Information Sheet (PIS), which set guidelines and expectations for my research. Although I reviewed every guideline, I focused specifically on the items, which I considered alleviated potential anxieties among my classified advisors. I gave each advisor an overview of how the research would be conducted and the questions they can expect to answer. I also informed them that their responses will be anonymous, so that they can share their views freely and without fear of victimisation. Finally, I impressed upon them that their involvement is entirely voluntary and that they can withdraw from the process at any time and without explanation. Following my meeting, I distributed to each of my classified advisors a printed version of the PIS and a Consent Form, so that they can review and decide whether they would participate. I asked them to contact me or the University of Liverpool should they require further information or clarification on my research. My classified advisors were given a week to decide on their participation.

My second sample was drawn from a database of 650 active advertisers, which were stored in Advertiser Management Professional (AMP), a software programme, which booked, placed and flowed advertisements in the classified pages of my newspaper. I utilised the AMP system, because it helped me expedite the process of identifying my target sample. My eventual sample comprised 135 advertisers, which were drawn primarily from funerary, real estate, automotive and human resources sectors. Ahrens and Zascerinska (2014) posited, “Sampling focuses on obtaining a group of subjects who will be a representative of the larger population or will provide specific information needed” (Ahrens and Zascerinska, 2014, p.39). As an internal researcher, I selected the non-probability sample findings, since it “can be generalised to the target sample to the institution, where the sample is studied” (Ahrens and Zascerinska, 2014, p.39). The link to my questionnaire was emailed to advertisers and returned to Survey Monkey during a three week period in February, 2017.



### 3.7 Pilot testing of surveys

Five of my six classified advisors consented to participate in my study. Upon their acceptance, I issued the senior advisor a pilot copy of my questionnaire, so that she can review it and recommend any changes for clarity purposes. Radhakrishna (2007) pointed out, pre-testing a questionnaire helped researchers determine whether their instruments were appropriate for their participants and comprehensive enough to address the predefined goals. When I completed these revisions, I distributed hard copies of my questionnaires to each classified advisor, who sought to quantify issues related to their job satisfaction, least or preferred duties, motivation to perform, and the preferred types of training.

Unlike with my classified advisors, I felt that conducting a pilot test among my advertisers may be considered an imposition by them, since many were sole proprietors and may have insufficient time to provide feedback on my questionnaire. To address this issue, I invited my senior classified advisor to critique the test questionnaire from an advertiser's perspective. While it may be considered inauthentic to some degree, my senior classified advisor's 25 year experience in professional role, coupled with her close relationships with advertisers, qualified her to offer this type of feedback. When she reviewed my questionnaire, she advised me to simplify two of my 14 questions. Batterton and Hale (2017) recommended that researchers should avoid "excessively complex or vague questions, built-in assumptions or questions with perceived intent" (Batterton and Hale, 2017, p.36). This feedback made my survey more reader friendly, which helped to increase the response rate among my advertisers.

### 3.8 Rationale for quantitative research

Action researchers derive a range of epistemic benefits from the positivist paradigm. Patton (2015) observed that under this modality, data can be collected more quickly and easily, unlike with the constructivist paradigm, which involved a more time consuming process. Unsurprisingly, my classified advisors expressed strong preference for the positivist design, since it impacted less on their production and selling time, which enabled them to still process a high volume advertisements, while maintaining their level of commissions.

As lead researcher in this study, the positivist paradigm proved of equal importance to me, since it only required me to orientate my staff and their advertisers and invite them to complete my survey. I was further assisted with the analytic tool in *Survey Monkey*, which computed for me the average weightings of each response in my surveys. Comparatively, a very in-depth constructivist design would have been too time consuming for me, since it necessitated that I transcribe, code, interpret and analyse a high volume of data. Bryman (2001) pointed out, "The use of statistical data for the research descriptions and analysis reduces the time and effort which the researcher would have invested in describing his result" (Bryman, 2001, p.20). By economising my time, I was able to devote more time and attention to my substantive duties of sourcing new revenue.

Another justification for choosing the positivist paradigm is that it helped me address the issue of power relations, which existed between my classified advisors and myself. As an internal researcher, who is in a position of authority over my classified advisors, I might inadvertently create for them a degree of stress if I posed sensitive or provocative questions, which related to their job performance. Consequently, the

anonymity of completing a questionnaire, provided a sense of relief and ease among my staff, since they could answer questions openly and honestly, which increased the reliability of their data. Kelly (2009) found that anonymisation encouraged apprehensive individuals to participate in research, since it put them in a state of ease.

Conversely, unlike the constructivist design, which tends to generate more socially desirable data, due to respondents acquiescing to interviewers, de Leeuw (2005) discovered that self-administered questionnaires normally yielded more authentic data, since respondents felt totally uninhibited in expressing their true opinions and emotions. As a researcher, it was imperative for me to rely on the most accurate data if I am to seriously tackle my work based problem. If my data is skewed, then invariably my strategy will be skewed, since one is predicated on the other.

The positivist paradigm enabled me to draw generalisations among 135 of my active advertisers. While the size of this sample proved more arduous than working with five of my classified advisors, this mode of enquiry provided me with generalised insights into the perceptions, attitudes and opinions of my advertisers. I commenced the process by referring to my reviewed literature, which explored *adaptive selling practices, advertising creativity, upselling and cross selling practices*. With these themes, I was able to quantify the preferred types of services among my advertisers. My survey comprised 14 questions, which were modelled on the outlined themes. I deliberately kept the questionnaire succinct, since my advertisers were very busy and had limited time to complete an extensive survey. I provided participants with a brief overview of my questionnaire (For a review of the questionnaire, please refer to Appendix E). These questions were also compiled and designed in *Survey Monkey*. Coghlan and Brannick (2013) noted, “The aim of positivist science is the creation of generalisable knowledge or covering laws” (Coghlan and Brannick, 2013, p.42). They maintained, “In positivist science, these findings are validated by logic, measurement and the reliability achieved by the consistency of prediction and control” (Coghlan and Brannick, 2013, p.42). By drawing on these variables, I was able to attain the requisite intelligence, which informed my strategy of having my classified advisors create more customised content that met or even exceeded the expectations of their advertisers.

### **3.9 Analysis of quantitative data**

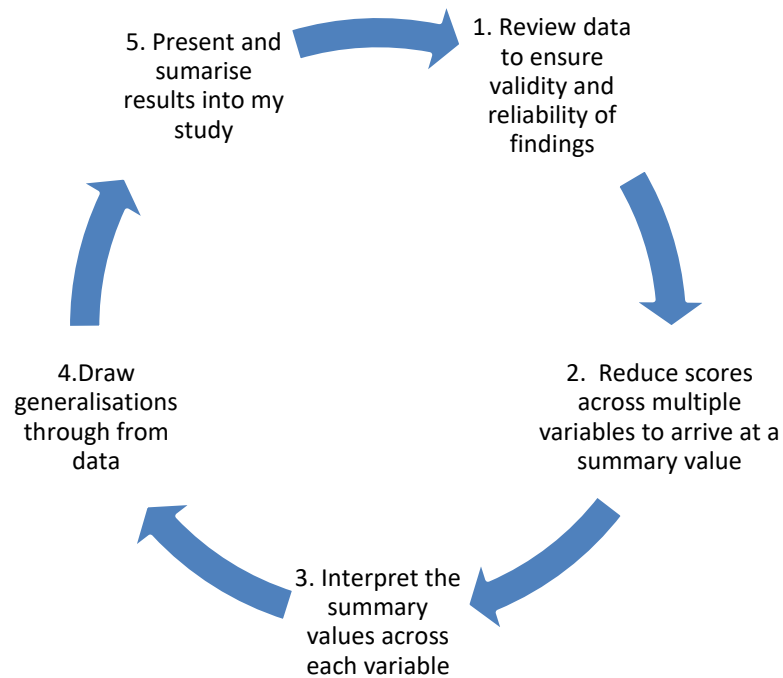
Of the 224 questionnaires emailed, only 41 were completed and returned in *Survey Monkey*. To address this insufficiency, I printed and distributed an additional 150 questionnaires to advertisers, who conducted their business face-to-face with my classified advisors. After a month, I received 109 completed questionnaires. I manually entered the data of each questionnaire in *Survey Monkey* over a two day period. The data was arranged, coded and analysed in *Survey Monkey*, which was based on the interval scale. These inferences and weightings are tabularised in Table 6.

I commenced the analysis by forensically checking the raw data for inconsistencies, which could skew my analysis. Fallon (2016) recognised, “Data points have questionable validity due to: suspected response bias; response omissions; participant disinterest, fatigue, or other incapacitation; or technological.” (Fallon, 2016 p.86). To mitigate this occurrence, I discarded seven questionnaires which were partially

completed by advertisers. After sanitising these responses, I entered the raw findings in *Survey Monkey*, so that I can compute the variables. This disqualification left me with 135 entries to analyse.

My analysis was predicated on Glass' (1976) scientific meta-analysis formula, which involved quantifying the average weighting of each response. This weighting was achieved by multiplying the values of each response by the values across the Likert scale. The values of each scale was totaled and then divided by the number of respondents. The final weighting of each response was determined by dividing the total values by the total number of respondents. For example, if the total number of respondents was 131 and the scale comprised five values: 1=strongly agree, 2= agree, 3 = uncertain, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree, along with the data range: 53 respondents strongly agreed ( $53 \times 1 = 53$ ), 63 respondents agreed ( $63 \times 2 = 126$ ), 13 respondents uncertain ( $13 \times 3 = 39$ ), 4 respondents disagreed ( $2 \times 4 = 8$ ), and 0 respondents strongly disagreed ( $0 \times 5 = 0$ ). The total score was calculated by using the following formula  $53 + 126 + 39 + 8 + 0 = 226 / 131 = 1.7$ . I analysed these weightings through deductive reasoning, which enabled me to draw generalisations from my data. The stages of my analysis are depicted in Figure 16.

**Figure 16 - Analysis of quantitative data**



Source: Fallon (2016)

The average of each weighting was calibrated against each response from the Likert five point scale. These values are compiled in Table 6.

**Table 6 - Interval measurement of responses**

<b>Likert five point scale:</b>	<b>Mean or weighted averages:</b>
Agreed strongly	1.00-1.99
Agreed	2.00-2.99
Uncertainty	3.00-3.99
Disagreed	4.00-4.99
Disagreed strongly	5.00-5.99

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience (2017)

The Likert scales provided a system for me to gauge the opinions, perceptions and attitudes of my classified advisors and their advertisers, while still coding and scoring each response. According to Timstra et al (2018) “these scores provided researchers with an indicative attribute of interest which can be analysed using a statistical model” (Timstra et al, 2018 p.2327). Conversely, Batterton and Hale (2017) observed that when these scores were interpreted and analysed correctly, they can provide powerful insights for decision makers. I keyed each response in *Survey Monkey*, a cloud-based software, which arranged, coded and analysed data for me.

I opted to tabularise key parts of my data, so that I could eliminate the need for excessive prose, which may overwhelm my readers and overcomplicate my analysis.

### **3.11 Rationale for qualitative research**

Due to the limitations of the positivist paradigm in explicating data, I decided to integrate it with the constructivist paradigm, which enabled me to shed light on inconsistent or anomalous findings that emerged from my surveys (For a comparative review of the research paradigms, please refer to Table 5). Walle (2015) acknowledged that a downside of the positivist design is that data gathered may be forced into pre-determined categories that are artificial and subject to distortion. Under these circumstances, capturing novel and unanticipated responses can be challenging. In contrast, the constructivist paradigm compensated for these disparities, because it provided atypical and rich answers that elucidated some of the complexities in my practice. Venkatesh et al (2013) affirmed, “Explanatory i.e., use of qualitative data can help to explain or elaborate on quantitative results” (Venkatesh et al, 2013, p.4). I was able to peel away the layers of my work based problem by interviewing three of my senior classified advisors, who helped me explain contradictory or perplexing data. These interviews were conducted on Monday and Wednesday afternoon, which represented the lightest production and selling days in my department. By choosing these days, I was to minimise disruption to my workflow, while mitigating the loss of earnings for my interviewees and my practice.

### 3.12 Analysis of qualitative data

I drew on the phenomenological approach, which explores structures of consciousness from the first-person perspective (Smith 2008), to explicate confounding or conflicting data. “A good qualitative study will not be limited to finding and confirming what was expected to be the result, but will produce new insights and ways of seeing the things and persons that have been studied” (Flick, 2011, p.5). Rahman (2016) pointed out that the phenomenological paradigm produces detailed descriptions, which “attempts to uncover, interpret, and understand the participant’s experience” (Rahman, 2017, p.104). These descriptions, which complemented my quantitative data, provided me with a clearer, richer and fuller picture of my work based problem.

I began the process by reflecting on my own philosophical assumptions as a manager and action researcher and how each orientation may shape how I gather, interpret and analyse my qualitative data. Doerr and Tripp (1999) described this form of introspection as a cognitive strategy, which help researchers to focus attention, organise new material and integrate new information. My self-exploration commenced by asking myself what I desire to achieve from my interviews? Should I adopt a managerialist or researcher orientation to my mode of enquiry? Am I conducting these interviews to effect meaningful change in my practice or am I looking for a quick fix to achieve my sales targets? Do I have any unconscious biases which may distort my interpretation and analysis of my data? If I do, how do I overcome this obstacle? Would my position of authority cause my respondent of acquiesce towards me? If it would, how would I overcome it? Malthouse et al (2015) observed that engaging in self-reflection can help new researchers “ask the right questions to themselves, learn how to think like an expert and, eventually, organise their knowledge like an expert” (Malthouse et al 2015 p.74). By becoming more attuned to my thought processes, I was mentally equipped to better engage in meaningful dialogue with my respondents, interpret their data and analyse it.

The next stage of the process involved me conducting two 30-minute interviews with three of my senior classified advisors. Mason (2002) stated the interview methodology begins from the assumption that it is possible to investigate elements of the social by asking people to talk, and to gather or construct knowledge by listening to and interpreting what they say and to how they say it. I found that the group dynamics worked well for me, since it enabled one respondent to scaffold on the views of another, which elicited more information and deeper and meaningful engagement. I sought to achieve these dynamics by pursuing a line of reflective questioning, which is designed to evoke critical thinking and analysis among interviewees. Brockbank and McGill (1998) discovered that this line of enquiry has the capacity to “stimulate emergent ideas related to existing senses of knowledge, self and the world, as new understanding emerges” (Brockbank and McGill 1998, p.56). This mode of enquiry helped me to demystify contradictory data, which emerged from my survey. My enquiry was based on Sofo et al’s (2006) taxonomy of 10 types of reflective questioning, which yield multiple rich and unique insights into different dimensions of an organisational problem. These questions are detailed in Table 7.

**Table 7. Sofu et al's (2006) 10 types of reflective questions for interviewers to ask respondents**

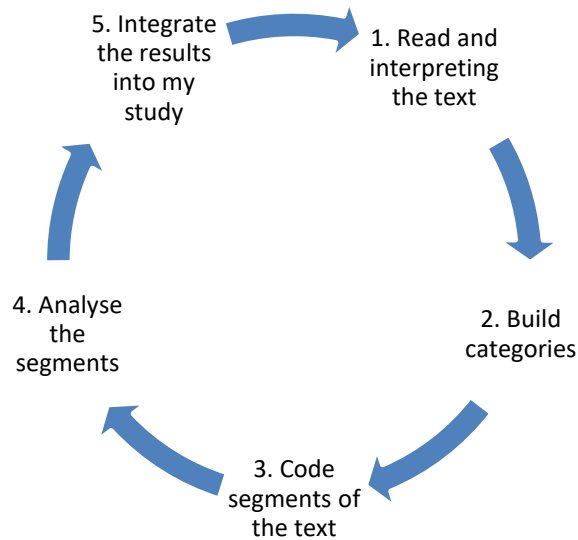
Code	Types of reflective questions or question areas	Objective of questions
A	<i>Action or Anticipatory questions</i>	To identify the best intervention to address the situation
C	<i>Challenging and critical questions</i>	To test the interviewees assumptions
E	<i>Evaluative questions</i>	To make judgments about worth, value and wholeness of a situation
F	<i>Seeking further details type questions</i>	Expanding on information already provided
H	<i>Hypothetical situations</i>	Viewing a situation from different perspective
P	<i>Probing questions</i>	To fill in the gaps of missing of missing data
Q	<i>Qualifying questions</i>	To help establish what is in and what is out
R	<i>Reflexive and introspective questions</i>	To understand about personal emotions and processes
S	<i>High order or supposition questions</i>	To predict or speculate about what might happen
T	<i>Task oriented questions</i>	To encourage the interviewees to complete a specific task

Source: Sofu et al's (2006)

An advantage of this schema is that it mitigates the need for interviewers to compile a list of exhaustive questions, which may fatigue their interviewees and complicate and lengthen the research process. Drawing on Table 7, I used questions E and P to uncover missing quantitative data, while questions A, C, F, H, and Q involved some degree of reflexivity to explicate complexities and contradictions from the quantitative data. To review a sample of my interview questions, please refer to Appendix D.

After transcribing the raw data, I reviewed the content, so that I could lay the groundwork for my analysis. Dey (1993) advised, "We cannot analyse our data unless we read it. How well we read it may determine how well we analyse it" (Dey 1993, p.83). Upon immersing myself in the data, I sought to simplify the findings, so that it would be more manageable and easier for me to interpret and analyse. Frueh (2004) found, "The pragmatic aim of every content analysis is ultimately to reduce complexity, while adhering to certain research based perspectives" (Frueh 2004, p.42). I simplified the data by coding and classifying each transcription, so that I could map out relevant themes, which supported my analysis. On mapping out these themes and narratives, I engaged in inductive reasoning, which helped me to interpret and apply the data to elucidating anomalies and omissions from my two surveys. A summary of how I conducted these interviews, is illustrated in Figure 17.

**Figure 17 - Analysis of the qualitative data**



Source: Kuckartz (2014)

I validated the data by having my classified advisors review, clarify and then approve my interpretations of their responses. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) viewed this process as a collaborative construct, where “Knowledge gained in this way is a co-production, since it is dependent upon the combined efforts of interviewer and interviewee in conjuring up the relevant contexts from which they think, talk, act and interpret” (Cited in May ed, 2002 p.202). With this collaboration, I was able to generate explanatory data, which enabled me to take requisite action to address the issues in my practice.

### **3.13 Participant observation**

Once my classified advisors consented to participate in my research, I then pursued the third step of the process by engaging in ethnographic research, which entailed observing how my classified advisors interacted with their advertisers. Woermann (2018) pointed out that this role involved acquiring knowledge of a culture over “the course of extended expositions of purposeful data collection and systematic production of records” (Woerman, 2018, p.477). I observed the cultural nuances of my classified advisors at their workstations over a period of 15 hours, which spanned two months from March 6 to April, 27, 2017. I made these observations covertly, so that I could attain a more authentic picture of the strengths and limitations of each of my classified advisors. Woerman (2018) found that an ethnographer metaphorically epitomised the instrument of data collection, since they became “a container to store said data and the major tool for analysing it” (Woerman, 2018, p.466). I personified this metaphor by diarising my mental notes into themed written notes, which I compared and contrasted with my body of literature.

### 3.14 Action research

A review of literature shows that there are varying shades of what constitutes action research. Reason and Bradbury (2008) defined this practice as “a participatory democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purpose, grounded in a participatory worldview” (Reason and Bradbury 2008, p.1). This interpretation is very broad based and nebulous in nature, since it failed to differentiate this practice from other forms of research. Despite these limitations, this definition has underscored the need for me to focus my research on enhancing the adaptive selling practices of my staff, so that I can determine the degree to which they can help me increase sales in a contracted marketplace. Unlike traditional academic research, which centred on gathering new knowledge, action research focuses on resolving specific organisational issues. Under this orientation, I attempted to gather, analyse, and subsequently apply the findings to help me grow revenue in my practice.

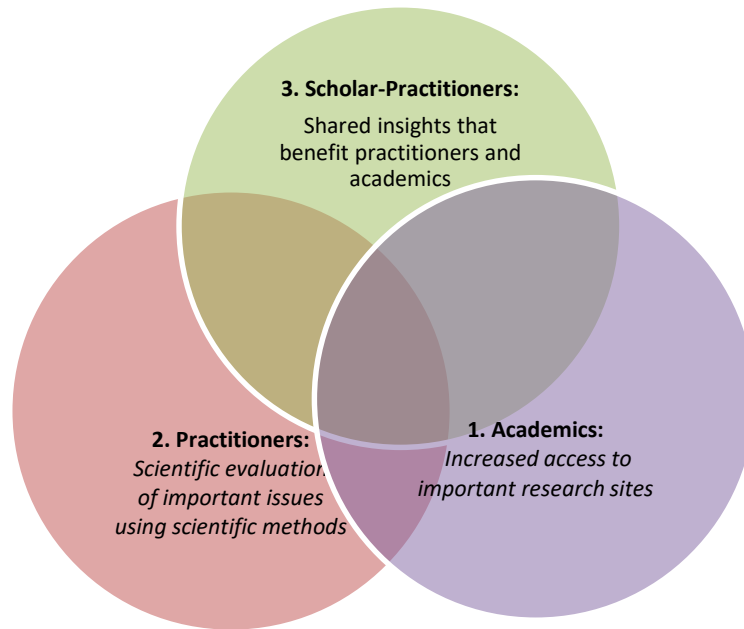
A more detailed description is offered by Greenwood and Levin (2007), who defined action research as “social research carried out by a team that encompasses a professional action researcher and the members of an organisation, community, or network (“stakeholders”), who are seeking to improve the participants situation” (Greenwood and Levin, 2007, p.3). The authors maintained, “Action research promotes broad participation in the research process and supports action leading to a more just, sustainable or satisfying situation for the stakeholders” (Greenwood and Levin, 2007, p.3). This definition may be construed as idealistic, since it presupposed that most or all participants derived benefits from the process. It discarded the notion that some participants may be adversely impacted by the research. For example, during a restructuring programme, the results of a research may call for the termination of some, most or all of the participants. Given this possible scenario, a more accurate description, is that action research ultimately served to benefit the organisation rather than its respondents.

My preferred definition of what constituted action research was provided by Shani and Pasmore (1985), who referred to it as an emergent inquiry, “...which applied behavioral science knowledge integrated with existing organisational knowledge and applied to solve real organizational problems” (Shani and Pasmore 1985, p.439). The authors maintained, “It is simultaneously concerned with bringing about change in organisations, in developing self-help competence in organizational members and adding to scientific knowledge” (Shani and Pasmore 1985, p.439). They concluded that it is an “evolving process that is undertaken in a spirit of collaboration and co-inquiry.” This definition is more applicable to my work-based phenomenon, since it emphasised rigorous research, which is orchestrated by a collaborative relationship with managers and their staff. Unlike action research, which focused on resolving work based problems, academic research may prove restrictive, since it placed an emphasis on creating new models and frameworks without necessarily putting them into practice. While these theories may prove relevant to my work based problem, they may still prove irrelevant, since they may be misaligned to the unique cultural nuances and dynamics of my practice. In contrast, action research would prove much more applicable to my practice, since it focused specifically on resolving issues, which are germane to my work based problem. Although each orientation may have its own inherent strengths and weaknesses, when these polarities are coalesced, they can help to bridge the gap between academia and practice. According to Zhang et al., (2015) this hybridity provided practitioners with the best of both worlds, since they create



rigorous knowledge, which enabled them to directly address their work related problem. These benefits are summarised in Figure 18.

**Figure 18 - Benefits of action research**



Adapted from Zhang et al (2015, p.156).

Zhang et al's., (2015) depiction of action research draws on three principle constructs: *academia*, *practice* and *academia-practice*. Under the first construct, action research can be applied by *academia* to investigate a range of real life issues, which otherwise would have remained prohibited to my practice. However, a risk existed here, since academic researchers might focus too much on resolving work related issues at the detriment of achieving their primary function of contributing to new knowledge. To overcome this issue, scholars may need to focus on developing actionable theories, which can resolve organisational problems, while contributing rigorous new knowledge to both academia and practice. As a scholar practitioner, this knowledge can improve the selling practices of my classified advisors, while laying the groundwork for further academic research. With the second construct, action research may enable practitioners to validate their assumptions and actions, which otherwise could be potentially skewed by their subconscious biases or prejudices. Miyazaki and Taylor (2007) discovered that when biases "are systematic in their occurrence, study results may be compromised" (Miyazaki and Taylor, 2007 p.779). A critique of this construct is that action researchers, particularly if they are a third party, may be viewed by staff as supporting the interests of senior managers. These perceptions may lead to staff

boycotting or even sabotaging the research. To overcome this issue, action researchers should explain how their research will directly benefit their organisation. Similarly, these researchers can seek to protect the responses of vulnerable staff, so that they can win their confidence and cooperation. Finally, the third construct, *academia-practice*, represented the ideal design, where practice contributed to *academia*, and *academia to practice*. Although this concept may appear ideal on paper, it may not be so in practice, since these two constructs may sometimes have divergent and even conflicting agendas: academia serves to create new knowledge, while practice seeks to resolve organisational issues. To bridge this gap, academics and practitioners must commit themselves to working together, so that they can address issues of mutual interest. As a scholar practitioner, who is versed in research methodologies, my academic and professional skillset qualified me to assume the role of an action researcher. My seven year tenure at my practice provided me with extensive knowledge not only about newspaper classifieds, but also about the nuances in my practice. These experiences proved invaluable as an action researcher, because I used my professional intelligence, coupled with the use of epistemological methods, to prove or disprove my question about whether adaptive selling practices can increase revenue at my practice in an austere environment.

Another advantage of being an action researcher is that my managerial position afforded me the privilege of accessing sensitive reports and financial information, which are normally prohibitive to external researchers, who may have to wait for a longer period or even be denied permission to use company documents. Despite these privileges, I still adhered to strict ethical procedures from the University of Liverpool about utilising sensitive information in my practice. As stipulated in the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) of the university, I provided my senior management with an overview of my action research, where I detailed to them how the requested information will be used in my research. Coghlan (2001) found, "Insider action research has its own dynamics, which distinguish it from an external researcher approach" (Coghlan, 2001, p.51). He maintained that action researchers "are already immersed in the organisation and have built up knowledge of the organisation from being an actor in the processes being studied" (Coghlan, 2001, p.51). Although these privileges provided me with unique insights into my work-based issue, I am cognisant that they could still create ethical dilemmas in my practice. In my case, a dilemma may exist in the form of creating a certain degree of unease among my senior management team, who may have reservations about me incorporating sensitive information, which may be utilised by competing publishers. To mitigate against this issue, I adopted an open posture, where I sought permission from my direct supervisor to use company information. With this transparency I was able to engender their trust, confidence and support, which further legitimised my position as an action researcher. Coghlan and Brannick (2013) implored insider researchers to function with a high degree of transparency, so that powerful political dynamics would not be a "major obstacle to doing action research in your own organization" (Coghlan and Brannick, 2013, p.133). However, these privileges can sometimes encumber the work action researchers, since they may be excluded from accessing informal or grapevine networks, which may be opened to junior staff, but closed to management such as me. While I may be denied access to these networks, my ability to forge and maintain close relationships with entry level staff and their supervisors, enabled me to have authentic insights into issues affecting them, which otherwise would have been hidden from management.

### 3.15 Reflective journal

Another method that I utilised in my research involved keeping a personal diary of my journey as an action researcher, which enabled me to explore my own reflections in relation to rethinking, reanalysing and redefining my assumptions and goals. Nobel (2015) urged action researchers to keep a journal, so that they can chronicle their reflections and subconscious views. According to Aghion and Ahern (2002) when researchers kept self-reflective journals they were better able to clarify their individual belief systems and subjectivities (Aghion and Ahern p.408). When I engaged in this type of written self-reflection, I was able to become more attuned to my personal biases and prejudices, which otherwise could have gone unnoticed and skewed the results of my research. Russell and Kelly (2002) observed that subjective views were “deepened through interaction with multiple nested systems of the environment and they serve to consistently evaluate and mediate one’s unique expectations and understandings of the world” (Russell and Kelly, 2002, p.2). The authors maintained that subjective lenses may, “mediate each element of the research project, influencing not only the process and intended goals, but also the interaction and attributions found within the event itself” (Russell and Kelly, 2002, p.2). Some of my predispositions may comprise subconsciously relegating the views of my staff and advertisers, which deviated from my managerial ontology.

### 3.16 Reflections

A review of this chapter challenged the dominant ethos that research is primarily concerned with the creation and advancement of knowledge for academic purposes. In the new millennium, research may be construed as a fluid state, where it evolved from a rigorous function to one of centring on practice. However, when these orientations converged, they optimised the problem solving processes for practitioners and scholars alike, since they viewed issues from a deep encompassing perspective. These convergences may be likened to the metaphor of a Tango dance, where practice and rigor embraced each and moved in synchronised steps with each one complementing the other. My chapter also explored the paradoxes, which existed between the positivist and post-positivist paradigms, where each lens was antithetical to the other. However, when these polarities were reconciled, they transitioned from a state of divergence, to one of convergence. This harmonisation is manifested with the positivist paradigm allowing researchers to view their phenomenon through a bigger picture, while the post positivist paradigm added finer details to the picture. Without this multi-method ideology, researchers may very well view their research problem through a one dimensional picture, which may only yield limited or incomplete data into his or her given phenomenon.

## **CHAPTER 4.0 – DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

## Charting a New Destiny

*Einstein's 3 rules of work: Out of clutter, find simplicity. From discord, find harmony.  
In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity – John Archibald Wheeler (1979)*

## 4.0 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

### 4.1 Introduction

Wheeler's (1979) credo encapsulates the need for me to unsettle the ad-taker selling practices of my classified advisors, since they tended to focus exclusively on facilitating the requests of their advertisers, which inhibited the performance of my practice. In analysing my data, I sought to determine whether adaptive selling can help my classified advisors optimise their sales, while maximising value for their advertisers. Without this quantum shift, advertising would continue to decline in my practice, which will manifest itself with further job losses for my staff, colleagues and me as well as financial losses for shareholders. The first part of my chapter reviews the data, which related to the perceptions, attitudes and selling practices of my classified advisors. This data was gathered by engaging in multi-method research, which comprised a dominant quantitative paradigm with a supportive qualitative paradigm. The former helped me quantify the professional experiences of my classified advisors and their advertisers, while the latter helped me identify anomalies in my data. The second part of my chapter determines the extent to which my advertisers rated the quality of the services delivered by my classified advisors. This data was analysed in the context of my classified advisors improving their engagement with advertisers and their ability to address sales issues more laterally. The data of each variable was cross referenced with my reviewed literature, which enabled me to further explicate my findings.

### 4.2 Research questions

Before delving into my discussion, I determined the extent to which my data answered my research question: can classified advisors of the publisher under review, apply adaptive selling to increase revenue in a declining economy? I addressed this question by designing, distributing and analysing two questionnaires, which elicited responses from my classified advisors and 135 of their advertisers. The data has implications for me as an action researcher, because if it confirmed that advertisers were unreceptive to adaptive selling practices, then it necessitated that I pursue an alternative strategy to increase revenue in my practice. However, to explore this phenomenon, I endeavored to achieve the following objectives:

- i. Transposing the selling practices of my six classified advisors from ad-taking to adaptive selling;*
- ii. Utilising adaptive selling practices to innovate new advertising products, which provided additional value to advertisers; and*
- iii. Utilising adaptive selling practices to increase revenue in line with my monthly and yearly sales budgets*

For a review of my two questionnaires, please refer to Appendix C and Appendix E. The questionnaires were based primarily on research from my literature review. The responses from each questionnaire were summarised in sections 4.3.13 and 4.4.4 of this chapter.

### 4.3.0 Part 1: findings and inferences drawn from classified advisors

The next part of my chapter identifies and discusses the data from my classified advisors, who comprised the first set of my sample. My justification for selecting this sample centred on their ability to determine the success or failure of my research. I went about the selection process by explaining the nature of my research to my classified advisors, where I informed them that their participation was entirely voluntary. I further advised them that they will benefit directly from their participation by way of improving their competitiveness as salespersons, which would help them increase their monthly commissions and biannual bonuses. These findings were analysed in the context of my reviewed literature, which related to job satisfaction, customer service recovery, employee motivation, preferred management styles, adaptive selling.

#### 4.3.1 Job satisfaction

This section identifies the most satisfying duties among my classified advisors. These practices bore significance for my department, since it helped me determine why certain tasks proved more enjoyable than others (See Tables 8 and 9).

**Table 8 - What I enjoy most about working as a classified advisor?**

Statements under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Total respondents	Weighted value on Likert scale
Ensuring that clients are satisfied with my service delivery	80% 4	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.20
Providing emotional support to grieving clients	40% 2	60% 3	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.60
Resolving the problems of clients	80% 4	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.20
Helping clients grow their businesses	100% 5	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.00

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience (2017)

**Table 9 – Basic statistics - What I enjoy most about working as a classified advisor?**

<b>Statements under consideration</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Ensuring that clients are satisfied with my service delivery	2.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	0.63
Providing emotional support to grieving clients	2.00	5.00	4.00	3.80	0.98
Resolving the problems of clients	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.60	0.80
Helping clients grow their businesses	2.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	1.00

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience (2017)

100 per cent of respondents unanimously agreed that their most satisfying duty was helping clients grow their business. This data, which equated to a value on the Likert scale of 1.00, may be unsurprising, since salespersons by their very nature recognised that their success was contingent on their client’s success. Consequently, my classified advisors and their commercial advertisers depended on each other to derive mutual benefits from their relationship, where the former received increased commissions on the volume of advertising sold; while the latter received increased profits from the responses to their advertisements. It is possible to infer that this may be a reason why my classified advisors were predisposed to working with commercial clients rather than those from government departments or law firms, since commissions are not paid on government tender notices or legal notices, because they only appear out of legal obligation.

80 per cent of respondents derived a strong sense of satisfaction when advertisers were contented with their quality of service. This finding, which generated a value of 1.20, connotes that my classified advisors were predisposed to engaging in adaptive selling. The data converged with Wong’s (2015) framework on adaptive selling practices, which dictated that customer satisfaction is the bedrock of sales. Although this data underlined the readiness of my staff to meet the expectations of their advertisers, it also has a direct correlation with their compulsion to maximise earnings, since the notion of customer satisfaction is inextricably linked to customer retention, which can determine the earning potential of my classified advisors.

‘Subject A’ shed light on this finding: *“While I recognise that every client is different and has different advertising needs, I try to be warm and friendly towards them, so that I can win their trust and maintain their loyalty. It is this confidence that gives me more business”* (September 11, 2017).

Conversely, ‘Subject B’ expounded, *“...when you strike up a strong rapport with your client, they are more likely to return to you to conduct their business”* (September 11, 2017).

80 per cent of respondents enjoyed serving grieving advertisers respectively. These responses, which achieved a value of 1.60, signifies that while my classified advisors were receptive to working with the bereaved, it should be noted that these type of interactions can evoke some degree of stress and unease

among salespersons, particularly if a customer becomes highly emotional or distressed. Conversely, these interfaces can engender a feeling of satisfaction or fulfillment among salespersons when they provide solace to the bereaved. Given this dichotomy, my classified advisors were able to transcend these disparities by reverting to their own experiences with bereavement.

*‘Subject A’ recounted, “Like me, four of my colleagues lost their mothers; consequently, we are better able to identify with our grieving advertisers, [which] makes our ability to understand them all the more easier.” (September 11, 2017).*

A causality existed here, because adaptive selling is contingent on salespersons being able to empathise with their clientele. Wood et al (2008) found that when a salesperson exhibited cues of high emotional intelligence and expertise, they were able to build trust among their customers.

For this section, the data revealed that my classified advisors were client centred. Wong (2015) pointed out that salespersons were predisposed to engaging in adaptive selling practices when they displayed a high degree of attentiveness to their customers. For my respondents, this attentiveness was depicted when they combined their hard and soft selling skills, which created conditions for optimising revenue. Although the data denoted that my classified advisors possessed some hardened and softened sales skills, there is still need for me to understand why they underperform in certain aspects of their sales.

### 4.3.2 Duties least enjoyed

This section identifies the least satisfying duties among my classified advisors. These findings bore meaning for my practice, since it helped me determine why certain tasks proved less enjoyable than others (See Tables 10 and 11).

**Table 10 - What I least enjoy about working as a classified advisor is?**

Statement under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Total respondents	Weighted Values
Working with difficult clients	0% 0	20% 1	60% 3	20% 1	0% 0	5	3.00
Sourcing new business	0% 0	20% 1	0% 0	60% 3	20% 1	5	3.80
Crossing selling to other publications	0% 0	20% 1	0% 0	80% 4	0% 0	5	3.60
Conducting callbacks to clients	0% 0	20% 2	0% 0	40% 2	40% 2	5	4.40

Source: Data generated using SurveyMonkey Audience 2017



**Table 11 – Basic statistics – What I least enjoy about working as a classified advisor is?**

<b>Statement under consideration</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Working with difficult clients	2.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	0.63
Sourcing new business	2.00	5.00	4.00	3.80	0.98
Crossing selling to other publications	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.60	0.80
Conducting callbacks to clients	2.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	1.00

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

60 per cent of respondents least enjoyed selling for special classified sections, which equated to a value of 3.80. This data, which received a value on the Likert scale of 1.20, validates by my sales reports, which recorded only negligible sales for special classified sections, which fell by 35 per cent Monthly Classified Report for December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016). Schmitz et al (2014) acknowledged, “[although] cross-selling offers significant benefits for both vendors and customers, three-quarters of all cross-selling initiatives fail, typically for sales force related reasons” (Schmitz et al., 2014, p.1). The authors attributed this failure to the tendency of salespersons to focus primarily on their core portfolio, which they know best.

*‘Subject A’ commented, “The degree of difficulty in cross selling lies with the unwillingness of clients to extend their budgets to different publications, which may only reach a restricted market. They tend to stay with newspapers that they know” (September 11, 2017).*

Consequently, traditional newspaper products entailed much less time and effort to sell, since they were already tried, tested and trusted by advertisers, when compared to newer forms of media with which they may be unfamiliar. By expending less time and effort in cross selling, my classified advisors were still able to sustain their income over the short-term. However, over the long term if my classified advisors continued to sell only for traditional media, they would expedite the decline of my revenue. Wong et al (2015) pointed out that salespersons, who engaged in adaptive selling, should be able to customise their services, so that they can cross sell other products. These findings underpinned the need for me to train and coach more of my staff on how they can engage their advertisers to consider alternative advertising options.

60 per cent of respondents least enjoyed soliciting new business. This divergence, which equated to a value of 3.60, was attributed to the varying experiences and skillsets among my classified advisors. As their supervisor, I was also able to observe that three of my six classified advisors felt uncomfortable engaging in cold calling. Subject ‘A’ and ‘B’ deemed as cold-calling ‘intrusive’ and ‘impersonal’ to prospects, since it ‘impinged’ on their personal or professional time. Consequently, there is a need for a paradigm shift among my staff where they viewed cold calling as an opportunity to attract new advertisers, which can sustain the longevity of their business. A review of my sales reports of December 2016 confirmed that my classified advisors who felt uncomfortable cold calling, tended to underperform on special projects, which necessitated frequent cold calling. This disparity exerted overwhelming

pressures on my experienced staff to compensate for the underperformance of their less experienced colleagues. Unless this imbalance is swiftly corrected, my practice will deprive itself of new streams of revenue, which can determine its very survival. Sanfilippo (1999) recognised, “Cold calling comes naturally to almost no one” (Sanfilippo, 1999, p.68). He implored salespersons, which were new in the practice of cold calling, to engage in self-training or coaching, where “someone else listens to your presentation and provides feedback. Find a colleague or friend who can listen objectively and make suggestions without being overly critical” (Sanfilippo, 1999, p.68).

60 per cent of respondents expressed uncertainty about working with difficult clients. This data, which generated a value of 3.00, has meaning for my study, since it denotes that working with difficult clients evoked a sense of stress, anxiety and even anger among salespersons. Walker et al., (2010) found, “customer incivility can detract from employee health and well-being” (Walker et al., 2010, p.1497). Given the volume of transactions facilitated by my department, it is not uncommon for my staff to encounter difficult advertisers. The term ‘difficult’, however, may be deemed nebulous, since it may be defined differently by different salespersons.

*‘Subject B’ conceded “I interpret ‘difficult’ clients as aggressors, who are inclined to become verbally abusive towards me and my colleagues”; while ‘Subject C’ extorted difficult advertisers may be construed as ‘indecisive and overly demanding’” (September 11, 2017).*

Blackford (2010) identified seven types of ‘difficult customers’, which ranged from ‘the hostile’ to ‘the indecisive’ (For a review of the seven categories of difficult clients, please refer to Appendix F). As an insider researcher, I observed that my classified advisors ‘handled’ ‘angry’, ‘overly critical’ or ‘very demanding’ advertisers, by referring them to me. While this approach might appear disengaging, it provided my staff with a sense of relief, since they could avoid further conflict with their advertiser. Wong et al (2015) noted that salespersons who engaged in adaptive selling practices should feel comfortable and at ease resolving conflict, so that they can recover from their service performance. In a vibrant customer service environment like my practice, where disagreements and tensions arise, it will be unrealistic for my classified advisors to avoid conflict with their advertisers. Consequently, the data confirmed that training is necessary for my staff, so that they can confidently manage moderate conflict situations, particularly in the absence of their manager.

### **4.3.3 Identifying the motivational factors for classified advisors**

This section identifies the preferred motivating factors among my classified advisors. These findings have meaning for my practice, since they showed me what made my respondents perform at an optimal level (See Tables 12 and 13).

**Table 12 - I become motivated as a classified advisor because of**

<b>Statement under consideration</b>	<b>Strongly agree (1)</b>	<b>Agree (2)</b>	<b>Uncertain (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly (5)</b>	<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>Weighted Values</b>
The commission that I receive on headlines	20% 1	60% 3	0% 0	20% 1	0% 0	5	2.20
The recognition from management	0% 0	40% 2	0% 0	40% 2	20% 1	5	3.40
The satisfaction that I receive when I help clients:	80% 4	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.20
The freedom I receive to create new products	20% 1	60% 3	0% 0	20% 1	0% 0	5	2.20

Source: Data generated using SurveyMonkey Audience 2017

**Table 13 – Basic Statistics – I become motivated as a classified advisor because of**

<b>Statement under consideration</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
The commission that I receive on headlines	1.00	4.00	2.00	2.20	0.98
The recognition from management	2.00	5.00	4.00	3.40	1.20
The satisfaction that I receive when I help clients:	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.20	0.40
The freedom I receive to create new products	1.00	4.00	2.00	2.20	0.98

Source: Data generated using SurveyMonkey Audience 2017

80 per cent of respondents were strongly motivated by the satisfaction they received from helping their advertisers achieve results. This data, which equated to a value on the Likert scale of 2.20, maybe construed as an oddity, since it was incommensurate with the views of most salespersons, who were

incentivised by maximising their commissions, bonuses, and other forms of compensations. This data is consistent with the findings of Abeysekera and Jayakody (2011), who observed that the more intellectually stimulated salespersons became, the more they were motivated to help customers achieve results. The data also supports Weiner's (1980) Attribution Theory, which underlines that staff derive contentment when they complete a task or project satisfactorily. However, these responses should not be taken at face value, since the financial incentives of salespersons are inextricably linked to the satisfaction they gave to their clientele. Consequently, it is possible to infer from the data that my classified advisors may not be purely driven by altruistic motives.

'Subject A' explained, *"We continue to lose a lot of business as a department; as a result, I try to ensure that my clients are very happy with my services, so that they can continue placing ads with me"* (September 11, 2017).

These findings corroborated the first response in section 1, which found that my classified advisors were highly oriented to growing the business of their advertisers.

60 per cent of respondents were motivated by the commissions they received from their headlines and other add-on features. This data, which bore a value of 2.20, is unsurprising, since commissions and other financial incentives determined the quality of life for salespersons. Underscoring this finding is Pritchard and Ashwood (2008), who posited that "the most basic incentive for the most basic human needs is money, so that they can motivate or improve the quality of their livelihood" (Pritchard and Ashwood, 2008 p.150). These findings conform to Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory, which underpins that staff are primarily motivated by commissions, bonuses and other financial incentives. Although these findings were expected, I still found it perplexing that my classified advisors did not rank financial incentives as their most preferred motivation. Shedding light on this anomaly is 'Subject A', who conceded that a reason why some of her younger colleagues were not overly motivated by money, was because many were at varying stages in their lives, where some completed their mortgage payments, while others were comfortable residing at the home of their parents. She recounted the fact that some of her colleagues were comfortable in their personal life, revealed that they had less financial commitments, when compared to their more mature indebted counterparts, who had to pay for their mortgages and provide for their children.

Subject A implored, *"I always advise younger salespersons with no responsibilities, if you want to do well on the job – get yourself into debt!"* (September 11, 2017).

This observation is validated by the performances of my classified advisors, where those with major financial commitments ranked in the top three performers, while those with fewer commitments remained at the bottom.

60 per cent of respondents were equally motivated by the freedom they received to create new or improved products. This data, which equated to a value of 2.20, bares meaning for my study, since it suggests that my classified advisors derived a sense of satisfaction when they were able to independently complete special project. This observation draws on Deci and Ryan's (2005) Self-Determination Theory, which undergirds that staff are motivated when they feel a sense of support and empowerment by their

management. Having the latitude to innovate, enabled my respondents to determine the types of products, which resonated with their advertisers; while at the same time, it accorded them the opportunity to increase their commissions.

Subject C shared, *“I enjoy the fact that management is usually receptive to new ideas, which can help me enhance the look and feel of our newspaper product, and whilst helping me to bring in much needed revenue” (September 11, 2017).*

60 per cent of respondents affirmed that they were receptive towards innovating new products. This finding, which generated a value of 2.20, has purpose for my research, since it signifies that my classified advisors were predisposed to engaging in innovative practices. Wong et al (2015) posited that innovation is a distinguishing feature of adaptive selling, since it enabled salespersons to realign their products to the needs of their customers. However, it is critical that my staff collaborate with their managers, so that their innovation would complement existing products, rather than cannibalise them.

#### 4.3.4 Types of classified advertisements best suited for adaptive selling

This section identifies the type of classified advertisements, which were best suited for my classified advisors to engage in adaptive selling practices. This data has significance for my practice, since it showed me where opportunities exist for my respondents to upsell or cross products (See Tables 14 and 15).

**Table 14 - What types of advertisements/notices were best suited for adaptive selling practices?**

Statement under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly (5)	Total Respondents	Weighted Values
Upsell obituary notices	40% 2	20% 1	40% 2	0% 0	0% 0	5	2.00
Upsell in-memorial notices:	40% 2	40% 2	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.80
Upsell business related advertisements	40% 2	40% 2	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.80
Upsell all advertisements	0% 0	80% 4	0% 0	20% 1	0% 0	5	2.40

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

**Table 15 Basic Statistics – What types of advertisements/notices were best suited for adaptive selling practices?**

<b>Statement under consideration</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Upsell obituary notices	1.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	0.89
Upsell in-memoriam notices:	1.00	3.00	2.00	1.80	0.75
Upsell business related advertisements	1.00	3.00	2.00	1.80	0.75
Upsell all advertisements	2.00	4.00	2.00	2.40	0.80

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

40 percent of respondents strongly agreed that in-memoriams were the easiest notices to upsell. This finding, which equated to a value on the Likert scale of 1.80, infers that the bereaved were more receptive to upgrading their notices from black and white to full colour content. Substantiating this position is Rosengren (2013), who noted, “advertisers were more drawn to content that provided them with additional value” (Rosengren, 2013, p.320).

‘Subject B’ commented, “...despite their emotions, we are still able to upsell [obituaries and in-memoriams] to grieving families, since we here in Barbados have a culture, where families are willing to pay more to honour the memory of their loved ones” (September 11, 2017).

However, an ethical dilemma existed with emotional selling, since classified advisors like funeral directors may be construed as exploiting the bereaved at one of the most vulnerable times of their lives. Parsons (2003) pointed out, “it would be foolhardy for a funeral director to take advantage of this vulnerability by pressing for more expensive purchases, since this would certainly damage their reputation and may also run the risk of making sales that cannot in fact be paid for” (Parsons, 2003, p.2003). Consequently, there is a need for my classified advisors to sensitively and respectfully give the bereaved options rather than persuade them to upsize their notices solely for the purpose of maximising their commissions.

40 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that commercial advertisements were some of the easiest to upsell. This data, which equated to a value of 1.80, has relevance for my research, because it revealed that commercial advertisements can provide my practice with incremental revenue. Unlike private advertisers, their commercial counterparts were often able to afford sell-ons such as headlines, colour, images and photographs. These features were considered ‘investments’, since they enabled advertisers to receive higher returns on their advertising dollar. These findings correlated with the dominant paradigm, which dictated that commercial advertisers were willing to increase their spending once they felt confident that they can capitalise on their investment (Till and Baack, 2005). However, an ethical implication existed here, since my classified advisors can sometimes oversell, where they provide advertisers with add-ons that they do not necessarily need nor want. While this point may appear counterintuitive in my role and scope as sales manager, it may have repercussions later for my practice,

since while overselling might increase revenue in the short term, in the long-term, it may make my product uncompetitive, particularly in a dynamic technological environment, where free advertising on social media abounds.

#### 4.3.5 Best practices that facilitated adaptive selling

This section identifies the practices which best facilitated adaptive selling. These findings have meaning for my research, since they helped me to determine the most lucrative selling techniques for my practice (See Tables 16 and 17).

**Table 16 - What are the types of practices that facilitate adaptive selling?**

Statement under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly (5)	Total respondents	Weighted Values
Conduct research into the products or services of clients	60% 3	40% 2	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.40
Have a strong relationship with my clients	40% 2	40% 2	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.80
Am passionate about a product or service	60% 3	20% 1	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.60
Can produce mockup ads	60% 3	20% 1	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.60

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

**Table 17 – What are the types of practices that facilitate adaptive selling?**

Statement under consideration	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard deviation
Conduct research into the products or services of clients	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.40	0.49
Have a strong relationship with my clients	1.00	3.00	2.00	1.80	0.75
Am passionate about a product or service	1.00	3.00	1.00	1.60	0.80
Can produce mockup ads	2.00	3.00	1.00	1.60	0.80

Source: Data generated using SurveyMonkey Audience 2017

60 percent of respondents strongly agreed that it was easier for them to engage in adaptive selling when they conducted research into the products of their advertisers. This data, which generated a value of 1.60, confirms that when my classified advisors familiarised themselves with their advertiser’s products, they were better able to upsell content. Given the limitations of the data, it was necessary for me to ask my respondents to expound on how they engaged in this type of research.

Subject C: *“When I conduct research, particularly if I am servicing an unfamiliar account, I usually view what the client did previously in AMP or Élan [Booking software], so that I don’t under charge” (September 13, 2017).*

Subject B: *“When I do research it’s usually to see what the client has done before, so that I can recommend improvements to his or her artwork” (September 13, 2017).*

Subject A: *“I use research to find out more about the deceased such as their occupations or passions in life, so that I can liaise with the graphic artist, who would create a themed obituary for the family. This way I can upsell them from a worded to a full colour display [notice]” (September 13, 2017).*

The data showed me that while my classified advisors engaged in research, they tended to restrict it to their active advertiser base. While their initiative is commendable, it still deprived my practice of utilising this tactic to source new forms of revenue, which can determine whether my practice grows, remains unchanged or diminishes.

60 per cent of respondents expressed strong consensus that it was easier for them to engage in adaptive selling when they were passionate about their advertiser’s products or services. This data, which generated a value of 1.60, signifies that my classified advisors can increase their sales when they were naturally interested about a particular product, service or sector. These responses suggested that when my classified advisors were assigned to their preferred sectors or accounts, they tended to engage in a more meaningful and richer dialogue with their advertiser, when compared to a sector or product that they disliked. Mallin (2016) pointed out that clients preferred salespersons to be passionate and



knowledgeable about their particular industry. This data underscored the need for me to match classified advisors with sectors, which evoked their passions, so that they would feel impelled to perform at an optimum capacity.

60 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that it was easier for them to engage in adaptive selling when they presented clients with a mockup of their advertisement. This data, which generated a value of 1.60, affirms that mockups provided classified advisors with a physical aid, so that their advertisers or prospects can visualise how their advertisement might appear in a printed or digital form. This response revealed that proofs helped my respondents to expedite the closure of a sale. Although mockups can expedite the closure of a sale, they may sometimes have the reverse effect, particularly if the graphic artist producing the proof is completing other work. A mockup also does not guarantee closure of a sale, since the prospect may change his or her mind or be unable to afford the product. Consequently, this may mean that the time and effort spent creating the mockup would have been a work in futility.

#### 4.3.6 Preferred management styles to facilitate adaptive selling practices

This section identifies the preferred management styles, which best support adaptive selling among my classified advisors. These variables helped me to reflect on my own assumptions as a manager, where I sought to realign my management style with the preferences of my classified advisors (See Tables 18 and 19).

**Table 18 - What are the preferred management styles that facilitate adaptive selling practices?**

Statement under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly (5)	Total respondents	Weighted Values
Autocratic style:	0% 0	0% 0	60% 3	40% 2	0% 0	5	3.40
Democratic style:	60% 3	0% 0	40% 2	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.80
Laissez-faire	0% 0	0% 0	100% 5	0% 0	0% 0	5	3.00
Coaching style:	20% 1	40% 2	40% 2	0% 0	0% 0	5	2.20

Source: Data generated using SurveyMonkey Audience 2017

**Table 19 – Basic Statistics - What are the preferred management styles that facilitate adaptive selling practices?**

Statement under consideration	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard deviation
Autocratic style:	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.40	0.49
Democratic style:	1.00	3.00	1.00	1.80	0.98
Laissez-faire	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	0.00
Coaching style:	1.00	3.00	2.00	2.20	0.75

Source: Data generated using SurveyMonkey Audience 2017

A review of data affirmed 60 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that a democratic style of management optimised conditions for adaptive selling. This response, which carried a value of 1.80, shows that respondents preferred to contribute to their own decision making.

'Subject C' opined, *"Under a democratic manager, "I am better able to contribute to my own destiny, since my colleagues and I were able to play a role in the decision making process" (September 13, 2017).*

This finding correlated with preceding data from my classified advisors, who strongly agreed that they became more motivated when they were given the latitude to innovate new products. This finding supported Jones et al. (2016), who posited that a democratic leadership style inculcated values such as increased commitment, satisfaction, and self-motivation among employees.

40 per cent of respondents agreed that a coaching style fostered conditions, which supported adaptive selling practices. The data, which carried a value of 2.20, has meaning to my study, since it shows that new relevant knowledge and skills can be transferred to my classified advisors while they worked in on the role. Kirkman, Lowe and Gibson (2006) found that salespersons preferred their leaders to empower them through coaching and mentoring instead of giving orders (Kirkman, Lowe and Gibson, 2006). However, an incongruity existed with these findings, since group coaching can be autocratic as well as participative, where the former is defined as controlling and demanding, while the latter was compassionate and participative (Castillo et al 2014). A third option existed, where the coachee engaged themselves in self-coaching, which entailed minimal support by the coacher. The data deserved further explanation:

'Subject C' stated, *"I prefer participative coaching, since it allowed me to enhance my knowledge in a supportive environment, where I can ask my coach questions. Ultimately, it enables me to be better at what I do" (September 13, 2017).*

'Subject B' interjected, *"Like my colleague, I definitively prefer participative coaching, cause I can learn in a stress free setting without being self-conscious of being reprimanded if I get something wrong. (September 13, 2017).*

100 per cent of respondents were undecided on whether a laissez faire style of management optimised conditions for adaptive selling practices. The data, which generated a value of 3.00 reveals that my

respondents were neither averse nor receptive to this approach. This finding appears initially perplexing, since staff in creative departments tended to prefer a laissez faire style of leadership, because it afforded them the latitude of immersing themselves in their creative endeavor. According to Yang and Smith (2009) this style “can lead to positive effects on subordinates including autonomous motivation, to a feeling of empowerment and self-leadership” (Yang, 2009, p.1251). Although my staff functioned in a creative department, their substantive purpose and role was still sales based. Consequently, my respondents would require some degree of direction, so that they can still sell purposefully. Stogstad (2008) found that the laissez faire style “elevated levels of conflict as well as ambiguity” (Stogstad, 2008, p.86).

#### 4.3.7 Identifying advertisements that were easier to upsell

This section identifies the types of advertisements which were easier for my respondents to upsell. This data has purpose for my research, since it enabled me to understand the type of advertisements, which best resonated with advertisers. With this intelligence, it helped me to enhance or replicate similar products, which were easier for my team to upsell or cross sell (See Tables 20 and 19).

**Table 20 - Responses to statements – certain advertisements are easier to upsell than others**

Statement under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly (5)	Total respondents	Weighted Values
Sell obituary notices	40% 2	40% 2	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.80
Sell in-memoriam notices	40% 2	40% 2	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.80
Sell business related advertisements	0% 0	80% 4	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	5	2.20
All advertisements	0% 0	0% 0	60% 3	0% 0	40% 2	5	3.40

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience (2017)

**Table 21 – Statistics – Responses to statements – it is easier for me to engage in adaptive selling when I**

Statement under consideration	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard deviation
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Sell obituary notices	1.00	3.00	2.00	1.80	0.75
Sell in-memorial notices	1.00	3.00	2.00	1.80	0.75
Sell business related advertisements	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.20	0.40
All advertisements	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.40	0.49

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience (2017)

40 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that obituary notices were the easiest advertisements to upsell. This statement, which generated a value of 1.80, validates that this type of product provided the highest dividends for my practice, because clients were more receptive to upgrading their obituaries from worded content to display content, which provided a more fitting tribute to their deceased relatives. Obituary notices inclusive of in-memoriams generate approximately 30 per cent of revenue to my practice. ‘Subject B’ stated that these notices created ideal conditions for upselling, since grieving families want to place the most impactful notice for their loved ones. These ‘send offs’ were likened to purchasing a casket over a coffin, hiring a limousine over a taxi, or hosting the funeral service in a cathedral over a chapel. In advertising, these status symbols were manifested in the form of the bereaved purchasing a display obituary over a worded, a full colour over a black and white obituary or a half page display (7” x 8 columns) over a quarter page (7” x 4 columns). These findings corroborated that classified advisors were partial to empathising with grieving families, which helped them to optimise conditions for upselling.

40 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that in-memoriams were the second easiest notices to upsell. This finding, which had a value of 1.80, reveals that close similarities existed with how in-memorial and obituary notices were sold, since both involved a high degree of emotional selling. However, ‘Subject B’ recounted that in-memorial notices required a lesser degree of emotional selling than obituary notices, since clients booking in-memoriams had a year to accept the loss of their loved one. Consequently, conditions may be slightly less favourable for upselling in-memorial notices, since the degree of emotionality would have been lowered.

Finally, 80 respondents agreed that commercial advertisements were the third easiest products to upsell. This response, which resulted in a value of 2.20, undergirds the notion that many businesspersons perceived advertising as an investment rather than an expense, since they were able to capitalise on their advertising dollar (Chen and Waters, 2016). ‘Subject B’ observed that sell-ons such as images, photographs, spot colour or full colour can be considered ‘commodities’, or representing ‘added value’, since they helped commercial advertisers maximise their investment. Concurring with this position are McAlister et al., (2016), who argued that advertising provided companies with a competitive market advantage. However, they further espoused that advertising is more “strongly related to firm value for differentiators than for cost leaders [because it is the differentiation that allows advertising to create brand equity and intangible firm value]” (McAlister et al., 2016, p.220).

#### **4.3.8 Difficulties facilitating adaptive selling practices**

This section identifies the degree to which classified advisors encountered difficulties when they engaged in adaptive selling. This variable bore significance for my research, because it identified issues, which

potentially impact on the ability of my classified advisors to engage in adaptive selling practices (See Tables 22 and 23).

**Table 22 - Responses to statements – it is less easier for me to engage in adaptive selling when I am**

<b>Statement under consideration</b>	<b>Strongly agree (1)</b>	<b>Agree (2)</b>	<b>Uncertain (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly disagree (5)</b>	<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>Weighted Values</b>
Unfamiliar with services or products of the client:	20% 1	60% 3	0% 0	20% 1	0% 0	5	2.20
Selling to private clients:	0% 0	20% 1	20% 1	60% 3	0% 0	5	3.40
Selling to commercial clients:	0% 0	20% 1	40% 2	40% 2	0% 0	5	3.20
Selling to families of the deceased	0% 0	20% 1	40% 2	40% 2	0% 0	5	3.00

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

**Table 23 – Basic Statistics - Responses to statements – it is less easier for me to engage in adaptive selling when I am**

<b>Statement under consideration</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
Unfamiliar with services or products of the client:	1.00	4.00	2.00	2.20	0.98
Selling to private clients:	2.00	4.00	4.00	3.40	0.80
Selling to commercial clients:	2.00	4.00	3.00	3.20	0.75
Selling to families of the deceased	2.00	4.00	3.00	3.20	0.75

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

60 per cent of respondents agreed that engaging in adaptive selling was most challenging when they were unfamiliar with the products and services of their advertisers. These responses, which generated a value of 2.20, corroborates previous data in 5.3.5, which found that my classified advisors found it easier to close on sales when they conducted research about the products of their advertisers. Mallin (2016)

discovered that a positive relationship existed with proactive behaviour and the selling performances when salespeople acquainted themselves with their customers products.

However, 40 per cent of respondents were undecided whether they encountered difficulties selling advertisements to businesspersons. These responses, which carried a value of 1.20, undergirds a technicality here, since earlier data indicated that commercial clients were some of the easiest to upsell, given that businesspeople tended to perceive advertising as an investment rather than an expense. Chen and Waters (2016) observed, “Advertising expenditures are directly related to profits for industries with significant advertising expenditures” (Chen and Waters, 2016, p.7). However, this variance reflected the limitations of my data, since it does not identify advertisers according to sectors, which may have shed further light on whether certain sectors were less easy to sell.

40 per cent of respondents were reticence on whether they experienced challenges selling in-memoriam notices to the bereaved. This response, which accrued a value of 2.20, confirms that these types of notices carried the least degree of difficulty in selling or upselling. However, ‘Subject B’, attributed this skepticism to the challenges they encountered when they conducted their callbacks with families, who may find their calls slightly intrusive, particularly after the second or third year of their anniversary. This variable corroborated the data relating to callbacks, which also found that classified advisors expressed a certain degree of ambivalence in conducting their callbacks, because they considered them invasive. This data is in keeping with the findings of Kim (2008), who found that emotional selling has a double-edged effect: “Despite its benefit to a company’s bottom line, emotional labor can be detrimental to service providers both psychologically and physically” (Kim, 2008, p.152).

#### **4.3.9 Enhancing adaptive selling skills (training)**

This section identified how my classified advisors can improve their adaptive selling skills. These variables have meaning for my research, because it yielded intelligence on how my classified advisors can enhance their competitiveness in a contracted market, which could help my practice accrue incremental revenue (Table 24 and 25).

**Table 24 - Responses to statements - I can better enhance my adaptive selling skills through**

Statement under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Total respondents	Weighted Values
Formal training	20% 1	80% 4	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	5	2.00
Coaching	20% 1	80% 4	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	5	2.00
Role playing exercises	40% 2	40% 2	0% 0	20% 1	0% 0	5	2.00
Reading relevant management literature	0% 0	40% 2	60% 3	0% 0	0% 0	5	3.00

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

**Table 25 – Basic Statistics - Responses to statements - I can better enhance my adaptive selling skills through**

Statement under consideration	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard deviation
Formal training	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.80	0.40
Coaching	1.00	2.00	2.00	1.80	0.40
Role playing exercises	1.00	4.00	2.00	2.00	1.10
Reading relevant management literature	2.00	3.00	3.00	2.60	0.49

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

80 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that formal training helped them to improve how they engaged in adaptive selling. This response, which bore a value of 1.80, indicates that formal training can derive higher dividends for my practice, since it tended to be more rigorous in nature and scope, when compared to coaching or mentoring. However, a limitation existed with this premise, since formal external trainers, may be unfamiliar with the nuances and intricacies of their client’s operations. Consequently, these trainers may be unable to thoroughly address issues, which were unique to their client’s practice.

Also 80 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that coaching improved their adaptive selling techniques. This data, which generated a value of 1.80, confirmed that my classified advisors valued the convenience, practicality and transfer of relevant information that coaching has to offer.

'Subject B' comments, *"I have always found that my senior colleagues provided me with richer and relevant knowledge when they coach me, since they know my strengths and weaknesses and are definitely familiar with my [organisation]"* (September 13, 2017).

'Subject C' interjects, *I also love the personalised one-on-one experience of coaching, because you have enough time to ask questions. That said though, I equally love formal training, because you get to leave the office, can hear from someone who can provide a fresh and independent perspective"* (September 13, 2017).

Finally, 40 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that role playing helped them to improve their proficiency in adaptive selling. This finding, which resulted in a value of 2.00, is germane to my practice, because it showed me that my respondents were receptive to applying imagined, but relevant scenarios, to a real-life setting.

'Subject B' affirms, *"Role playing exercises are fun and allowed me to receive practical knowledge as classified advisors, while building camaraderie with my colleagues in a training setting"* (September 13, 2017).

DiModica (2017) found, "Role playing, when employed correctly, can increase your sales team success, identify sales skill gaps and allow you to develop an esprit de corps amongst your sales team as they experience sales education as a team" (DiModica, 2017, p.17). However, what is most critical about role playing, it is not so much the exercise itself, but the feedback given by the facilitator and the participants. While these simulations may not prepare staff for every eventuality, it does provide them with a practical benchmark on how they should respond in certain situations.

#### **4.3.10 Presentation of collaterals to facilitate adaptive selling**

This section determines the degree to which mockup advertisements can help classified advisors engage in the process of upselling. These variables have significance for my research, since they confirmed whether the submission of proofs could help my respondents upsell to advertisers, which could enable my practice to generate incremental revenue (Table 26 and 27).



**Table 26 - Responses to statements - I can better engage in adaptive selling when I**

Statement under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly (5)	Total respondents	Weighted values
No mockup	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	25% 1	75% 3	4	5.00
Past advertisements	75% 3	25% 1	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	4	1.25
A generic mockup	50% 2	50% 2	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	4	1.50
A customised mockup	75% 3	25% 1	0% 0	0% 0	0% 0	4	1.25

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

**Table 27 – Basic statistics – Responses to statements – I can better engage in adaptive selling when I**

Statement under consideration	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard deviation
No mockup	4.00	5.00	5.00	4.75	0.43
Past advertisements	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.25	0.43
A generic mockup	1.00	2.00	1.50	1.50	0.50
A customised mockup	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.25	0.43

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

75 per cent of respondents expressed very strong consensus that customised mockups helped them to upsell or close a sale. This statement, which carried a value of 1.25, affirms that prospective advertisers were highly receptive to customised proofs, since they gave a visualisation of how their advertisement would appear in print. These types of proofs comprised the prospect’s logo, branded colours, contact information, and images of their core products or services. ‘Subject A’ recounted that when prospective advertisers received a customised mockup, they were impressed that their classified advisor took the time and effort to create a customised proof. Despite these benefits, producing proofs consumed the professional time of graphic artists, while offering no guarantees of a sale.

75 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that past advertisements helped them to close a sale. This statement, which generated a value of 1.25, shows that past advertisements can be employed to allow prospective advertisers time to visualise how their messaging would appear in the newspaper. While these advertisements have less impact than customised proofs, they are much easier and quicker to prepare, since it only involved my classified advisors retrieving content from the archival base and emailing it to the prospect.

50 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that generic mockups helped them to close a sale or upsell a product. However, these responses, which resulted in a value of 1.50, confirms that generic mockups were

slightly less effective than customised mockups in closing a sale. Unlike the previous data, generic mockups were quicker and more convenient to source, since it only necessitated for a classified advisor to randomly download a past advertisement from the digital archives. While these types of collaterals were expedient to source, like past advertisements they resonated less with prospects. However, an ethical issue exists here, since these type of advertisements are often copyrighted, which can expose my practice to legal action if they are used without permission.

**4.3.11 Starting the process of upselling**

This section identifies the best time that classified advisors should approach clients to book in-memoriam notices. These variables hold significance for my research, because it revealed the most opportune time to approach prospects to book these type of notices. By identifying the most appropriate time, I can better anticipate the receptiveness of placing in-memoriams in Press (See Table 28 and 29).

**Table 28 - Responses to statements - I am better able to sell in-memoriams when I approach prospects**

Statement under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly (5)	Total respondents	Weighted values
One month earlier:	0% 0	0% 0	40% 2	40% 2	20% 1	5	3.80
Three weeks earlier:	20% 1	20% 1	40% 2	20% 1	0% 0	5	3.00
Two weeks earlier	40% 2	40% 2	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.80
One week earlier:	40% 2	20% 1	20% 1	20% 1	0% 0	5	2.20

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

**Table 29 - Basic statistics – Responses to statements – I am better able to sell in-memoriams when I approach prospects**

Statement under consideration	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard deviation
One month earlier:	3.00	5.00	4.00	3.80	0.75
Three weeks earlier:	1.00	4.00	3.00	2.60	1.02
Two weeks earlier	1.00	3.00	2.00	1.80	0.75
One week earlier:	1.00	4.00	2.00	2.20	1.17

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience 2017

40 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that two weeks prior to the date of publication were the optimum time to sell an in-memoriam notice. This response, which received a value of 1.80, reveals that this period allotted sufficient time for the bereaved to place in-memoriam notices, since it provided them with time to budget for their advertising.

40 per cent of respondents agreed that one week prior to the date of publication was the second preferred option to sell in-memoriam notices. This data, which carried a value of 2.20, shows that while a week did not represent an ideal date for booking an in-memoriam, the bereaved were still receptive to booking in-memoriam notices, since they fell within the anniversary period of their beloved’s passing. ‘Subject A’ attributed this phenomenon to advertisers having less time to budget for their in-memoriam. However, ‘Subject C’ refuted that one week prior to the placement of publication was the most opportune time, since the emotionality of clients was at its peak; consequently, it was easier for classified advisors to close a sale for these types of notices.

However, 40 per cent of respondents were undecided whether one month prior to the date of publication represented the least preferred option to sell in-memoriam notices. This date, which received a value of 3.80, has significance to my study, since it connotes that the emotionality of the advertiser was at its lowest, which lessened the chances of an immediate sale. Although prospects have sufficient time to budget for their in-memoriams, they were not overcome with the heightened emotion to book their notice.

#### **4.3.12 Client engagement**

The final section of my responses determines the degree to which my classified advisors engaged with their advertisers. These variables hold currency for my study, because they highlighted the preferred communicative practices among my respondents (See Table 30 and 31).

**Table 30 - Responses to statements - I am better able to sell advertisements when I engage prospects**

Statement under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly (5)	Total respondents	Weighted Values
On the telephone	0% 0	40% 2	40% 2	20% 1	0% 0	5	3.80
Face to face	40% 2	40% 2	20% 1	0% 0	0% 0	5	1.80
Via email	20% 1	40% 2	20% 1	20% 1	0% 0	5	2.4
Via third party	0% 0	40% 2	20% 1	20% 1	20% 1	5	2.20

Source: Data generated using SurveyMonkey Audience 2017

**Table 31 – Basic statistics – Responses to statements – I am better able to sell advertisements when I engage prospects**

Statement under consideration	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard deviation
On the telephone	2.00	4.00	3.00	2.80	0.75
Face to face	1.00	3.00	2.00	1.80	0.75
Via email	1.00	4.00	2.00	2.40	1.02
Via third party	2.00	5.00	3.00	3.20	1.17

Source: Data generated using SurveyMonkey Audience 2017

40 per cent of respondents preferred engaging with their advertisers face-to-face. These responses, which received a value of 1.80, confirms a highly personalised approach to selling enabled my respondents and their clientele to exchange and expound on ideas, which served each other’s mutual interest.

Subject B’ affirmed, *“With face-to-face interaction you can feed off the tone, facial expressions, and body language of your advertiser to further [enrich] the selling process. This enrichment created an enabled environment where my client and I created memorable advertising copy”* (September 13, 2017).

These type of exchanges enabled my classified advisors to probe their advertisers, so that they can understand their needs and identify compelling copy, which would deliver desired results.

40 per cent of respondents expressed equal preference to communicating with advertisers via email. This response, which bore a value of 180, shows that utilising email allowed respondents to communicate with their advertisers conveniently, quickly and accurately. The email also served as an archival document, which both classified advisors and their clients could refer to. However, a limitation of this medium is that

it may be viewed as detached or impersonal, when compared to face-to-face communication, since it was primarily restricted to the written medium. Depending on the workload of both the classified advisor and their advertiser, the email can be an inefficient medium to conduct business, since receipt of communication may often not be in real time.

40 per cent of respondents agreed that the telephone was the least preferred option of engagement with their advertisers. This response, which totaled a value of 380, signifies that the telephone enabled classified advisors to conduct transactions with their advertisers remotely rather than having their clients travel to their office, where they often endure slow moving queues to pay their bills. However, a drawback of this medium is that it may be deemed intrusive to the advertiser depending on when, where and to whom the call was being made. This medium also lacks the richness of face-to-face engagement, which can lessen to the degree of difficulty of closing a sale.

#### **4.3.13 A reflection on findings from classified advisors**

A review of the data validates that my classified advisors possessed the requisite attributes to engage in adaptive selling, since they were concerned primarily with ensuring the satisfaction of their advertisers. This position was further corroborated among my advertisers, who expressed satisfaction with the service they received from my classified advisors. These findings were consistent with Wong et al's (2015) triadic model of adaptive selling practices, which underpinned the need for salespersons to optimise benefits for their customers. Given this orientation, my data indicates that I should receive support among my classified advisors for my strategy of transitioning them from a state of standardised selling to one of adaptive selling. However, an issue that could impede this process involves instilling requisite technical skills among my respondents, so that they can create compelling content, which not only meets their advertisers' expectations, but also exceeded them – wherever and whenever possible.

My data affirmed that my classified advisors were receptive to both formal and informal training, which served to build their capacity. I can utilise these sessions to address deficiencies among my respondents by drawing on best sales practices to bolster their competitiveness. The formal sessions are normally facilitated by trainers who possessed rigorous knowledge in their field of specialisation. Conversely, I can also infer from the data that my respondents were receptive to coaching, which complemented the formal training by transferring to them richer and deeper knowledge. These sessions can also be facilitated by both senior and junior staff, who may hold expertise in a given field. For instance, a senior classified advisor may coach their junior counterparts on how to engage in cold calling, while their junior counterparts may engage them how to sell for social media or digital advertising platforms.

Given the feedback from my classified advisors, I can employ both types of training to help them resolve conflicts with their advertisers, particularly those who exhibited signs of moderate aggression. Possessing knowledge of how to placate angry advertisers would help my sample defuse potentially volatile situations, which otherwise could disrupt their workflow, while straining relationships with their advertisers. Although this type of training can help to mitigate conflicts, it is still restrictive, since it failed to address core issues, which were characterised when my classified advisors booked the incorrect ad or keyed in incorrect advertising content. While errors will always occur, they can still be minimised, which in turn would help reduce the incidences of volatile situations with advertisers.

The data reaffirmed that my classified advisors were motivated by helping advertisers achieve their goals rather than receive their commissions. Although I initially considered their responses noble, on deeper reflection I can infer that my classified advisors equated client satisfaction with increased remuneration, where one action was predicated on the other. This congruence may mirror the extensive professional experiences of my five respondents, who have a combined total of 91 years. This data further substantiated that my classified advisors were oriented to engaging in adaptive selling practices. Consequently, any training would need to be facilitated at an advanced level, which would be aligned to the skillsets and professional experiences of my classified advisors.

My classified advisors further reaffirmed that they needed to engage in more preliminary research, so that they can better align products with their advertisers. Given this response there is need for me to engage in group training or mentorship sessions with my classified advisors, so that they can learn how to gather the necessary intelligence to create customised content for advertisers. With this intelligence, my classified advisors would be able to present compelling mockups, which would not only enhance their selling proposition, but also improve the messaging of advertisers.

My research revealed that my classified advisors were more motivated when they became passionate about a product or sector. These Figures supported the need for me to review how I assign my classified advisors to certain sectors. A presupposition can be advanced that when a classified advisor is assigned to his or her preferred sector, then he or she would feel more impelled to perform at an optimum capacity. With this motivation, my classified advisors may engage in deeper and more meaningful dialogue with their advertisers.

The data also showed that I should consider incorporating role playing exercises during my formal and informal training programmes, which would enable my team and I to address real life issues in a simulated setting. According to McFarland et al. (2016) a key variable of adaptive selling training should focus on improving the emotional intelligence of salespersons. The authors pointed out that salespersons can engage more effectively with clients when they can better identify emotions in themselves and others. This recognition was in the form of identifying changes in facial expressions, body posture, and other non-verbal cues to create a richer customer service experience. By attaining this skillset, my classified advisors, particularly those who are junior, will be able to work more empathetically with the bereaved. McFarland et al., (2016) posited, "This ability has been found, for example, to positively moderate the effectiveness of adaptive selling and negotiations between buyers and sellers" (McFarland et al., 2016, p.109).

My research validated that my classified advisors found it easier to upsell and cross sell, when they presented their prospect with a customised mockup of an advertisement. This data suggested that there is need for me to encourage my classified advisors and graphic artists to work more collaboratively, so that they can produce more innovative content for their advertisers. However, these creatives will not only redound to the benefit of the advertiser, but also will help enhance the aesthetics of my newspaper and digital products, which in turn can resonate with other prospective advertisers.

In summary, the data denoted that my classified advisors are predisposed to engaging in adaptive selling practices, because they understood that delivering a quality service equated to them increasing and sustaining their commissions and bonuses. The derived knowledge came from their preliminary training

with the National Initiative of Service Excellent, coupled with feedback on their customer services delivery by me their manager. Although my classified advisors grasped the fundamentals of adaptive selling practices, they now need to venture further in creating content, which were aligned to the expectations of advertisers. Upon creating this content, it is only then that advertisers would seriously consider paying more for additional features, bundled packages or placements in special classified sections. When advertisers buy into these products, my practice would be able to accrue new revenue to pre-2013 levels.

### 4.4.0 Part 2 Findings and inferences from advertisers

The second part of my chapter quantifies and examines the preferences among my advertisers, which related to the quality of services delivered by my classified advisors. The section also explains the parallels and contradictions with the data.

#### 4.4.1 Service Delivery

This section gauges the quality of service delivery by my classified advisors. These responses have purpose for my research, because it validated the degree to which my staff needed to engage in adaptive selling practices (See Table 32).

**Table 32 - Responses to statements that best represent how you feel about the service of my practice:**

Statement under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Total respondents	Weighted Values
I am satisfied with the level of responses I receive from my advertisements at Nation Classified	39.69% 53	48.09% 63	10.69% 13	1.53% 2	0.00% 0	131	2.0
I am satisfied with the amount of thought that goes into producing my advertisement from classified advisor	34.85% 45	48.48% 65	15.15% 20	1.52% 2	0.00% 0	132	2.0
I prefer my classified advisor to be proactive in creating advertisements, which provide	40.63% 52	39.84% 50	16.41% 21	3.13% 5	0.00% 0	128	2.0

maximum results							
I am satisfied with the quality of service delivery from my classified advisor	41.35% 55	48.87% 65	9.77% 13	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	133	2.0
My classified advisor is friendly and approachable	57.25% 75	37.40% 49	5.34% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	131	1.4
I prefer when my classified advisor recommends other advertising options in their newspaper, magazines, or electronic media	30.53% 40	49.62% 64	18.32% 24	2.29% 3	0.00% 0	131	2.0

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience (2017)

40 per cent of advertisers expressed satisfaction with the quality of service they received from their classified advisors. This response, which generated a value of 2.0, substantiated the data from my classified advisors, who expressed strong agreement that they were highly motivated by helping commercial advertisers grow their revenue. While the data did not define what was meant by quality service, it still supported the findings that my classified advisors were predisposed to pleasing their clientele, which represented the underlining basis of an adaptive selling orientation.

40 per cent of advertisers preferred their classified advisors to recommend advertising options in other publications. Unsurprisingly, this data which carried a value of 2.0, bares significance to my study, since it showed that my advertisers were more receptive towards salespersons who sought to provide them with greater value. This result is in keeping with Wong's (2015) model of best sales practices, which dictated that salespersons should always remain attentive to the needs of their customers.

48 per cent of advertisers agreed that they were satisfied with the responses received from their advertisements. This data, which resulted in a value of 2.0, has meaning for my research, since it proved that my advertising provided my advertisers with expected results. This finding supported Chen and Water (2016), who asserted, "Advertising expenditures are directly related to profits for industries with significant advertising expenditures" (Chen and Waters, 2016, p.7). However, a limitation existed here, because there is need for greater clarity to determine whether the results were derived due to the type



of content in the advertisement or the circulation Figures of my newspaper, which reached 83 per cent of the local market in 2017. Given this orientation, it calcified my assumptions that conditions at my practice were ideal for my staff to engage adaptive selling practices.

#### 4.4.2 Responses to creativity in advertising

This section quantifies the preferences of my advertisers, which relate to selling creative advertising content. These findings were relevant to my research, because it helped me determine whether creativity can help my practice stimulate more revenue (See Table 33).

**Table 33 - Creativity: Please respond to the statement that best represents how you feel about the creativity of my practice**

Statement under consideration	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)	Total respondents	Weighted Values
I prefer my advertisements to stand out from other advertisements	45.38% 59	41.54% 54	11.54% 15	1.54% 2	0.00% 0	130	1.6
I prefer to place low impact advertisements	3.82% 5	6.87% 7	27.48% 36	39.69% 53	22.14% 30	131	3.7
I prefer to place high impact advertisements	38.76% 50	37.21% 48	20.16% 26	3.10% 4	0.78% 1	129	1.8
I always receive a better response when I add features to my advertisements such as colour, images, photographs and headlines	29.01% 38	29.01% 38	36.64% 48	3.82% 5	1.53% 2	131	2.1
I prefer when classified advisors are creative when designing my advertisements	39.23% 51	43.08% 56	14.62% 19	2.31% 3	0.77% 1	130	1.8

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience (2017)

45.3 per cent of advertisers strongly preferred their advertisements to stand out in the newspaper. This response, which generated a value of 1.6, showed that clients had a predilection of placing content that helped them to differentiate their messaging from their competitors. These findings indicated that most worded advertisers were receptive to paying more for add-on features such as headlines, colour, images or photos, so that they can differentiate their messaging. These responses converged with the findings of Rosengren (2013), who postulated that advertisers spend more on creative advertising, because “it increases the perceived value of the advertising media context” (Rosengren, 2013, p.320). However, a limitation of the data was that it homogenised my sample, which prevented me from segmenting them according to sectors. Despite this limitation, I found that commercial and bereaved advertisers were more amenable to purchasing add-ons, since the latter increased the commercial value of their advertising, while the latter increased the emotional value of their advertising.

39 per cent of advertisers strongly preferred their classified advisors to be creative when designing their advertisements. This statement, which carried a value of 1.8, reaffirms that creative content provided my advertisers with additional value, which enabled them to further differentiate their messaging. This data espoused the views of Yang and Smith (2009), who posited that imaginative advertisements better resonated with readers, since they were easily distinguishable from other content, particularly those that were more derivative in nature and scope. However, my observations found that an exception to this rule comprised lawyers and government technocrats, who advertised only out of legal obligation. Consequently, they would be disinclined to accept creative content, since it would add very little value to their advertising, because it would be deemed it an expense rather than an investment. The data in AMP and Élan, software booking systems, revealed that these notices did not carry any add ons.

38.7 per cent of advertisers strongly preferred to place high impact advertisements, which differentiated their messaging from derivative content. The data, which resulted in a value of 1.8, found that advertisers viewed high impact advertisements as an investment, because “Powerful copy can produce dramatic effects, sometimes 10 or 20 times more effective than mediocre copy” (Wood, 2009, p.190). Conversely, Rosengran et al., (2013) pointed out that advertisements, which are “both novel and relevant can make consumers think more, and think more favorably, about the ad and its subject” (Rosengran, 2013, p.321). Although creativity helped to differentiate the messaging of advertisers, it can sometimes have the reverse effect if content remained esoteric, where it becomes lost or misinterpreted by the receiver. Consequently, any advertisement must maintain the 3Cs: creative, clear and credible content.

#### **4.4.3 Value for money**

This section surveys the degree to which my practice provided advertisers with value for money. These variables have meaning for my research, since it confirmed whether advertisers agreed with the value proposition of my practice (See Table 34).

**Table 34 - Responses to the statement that best represents how you feel about value for money provided by my practice**

<b>Statement under consideration</b>	<b>Strongly agree (1)</b>	<b>Agree (2)</b>	<b>Uncertain (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly disagree (5)</b>	<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>Weighted values</b>
Nation Classified represents good value for money	26.12% 35	49.25% 66	14.18% 19	8.96% 12	1.49% 2	134	2.1
I am willing to pay a little more for added features such as adding colour, images, photographs and headlines	12.03% 16	36.84% 49	27.82% 37	21.80% 29	1.50% 2	133	2.7
I receive better results from my advertisements when I pay for added features such as colour, images, photographs, and headlines	13.64% 18	34.85% 48	37.88% 48	11.36% 15	2.27% 3	132	2.6
Advertisements that include added features (such as colour, images, photographs and headlines) provide me with better value for money, when compared to advertisements without added features	17.56% 23	42.75% 56	35.11% 46	3.05% 4	1.53% 2	131	2.3

Source: Data generated using *SurveyMonkey* Audience (2017)

49.2 per cent of advertisers agreed that my practice represented good value for money. These responses, which totaled a value of 2.1, reveals that clients were satisfied with their results when they advertised with my practice. Given this feedback, I can make the supposition that their satisfaction may stem more from the dominant readership share of my fleet of newspapers than the service they received from my classified advisors. Our market dominance allowed advertisers to reach 79 per cent of readers, when

compared to my two competing newspaper publishers, which have a readership of 9 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. Chen and Waters (2016) pointed out, “Advertising expenditures are directly linked to profits for industries with significant advertising expenditures” (Chen and Waters, 2016, p.242). The data suggested that while my advertisers were satisfied with their results, they expressed concern that our rates were too high. These findings are supported by the feedback that I received from advertisers, particularly among micro and small businesspersons, who possessed very limited budgets. My observations were further substantiated, because my practice increased its rates by five percent on April 1st, 2016.

42.7 per cent of advertisers also received better results when they paid for additional features such as colour, images, and photos. The data, which carried a value of 2.3, signified that these features provided my advertisers with an improved response rate, when compared to advertisements without features, which often yielded nominal results. This data conformed to the established paradigm in sales literature, which purported that additional sell-ons provided customers with ‘richer’ results, while providing my practice with incremental revenue (Vercellis, 2009). Similarly, Cui and Shin (2017) pointed out, “Cross selling or upselling helped to convert these new (product) arrivals into actual sales and thereby increase profits (Cui and Shin, 2017 p.382).

#### **4.4.4 A reflection on findings from advertisers**

Adaptive selling encouraged my advertisers to increase their spending with my practice during periods of moderate economic austerity. These findings are consistent with Lyus (2011) and Chai et al., (2012), who espoused that adaptive selling practices were instrumental in helping commercial advertisers increase their sales. While my findings affirmed that adaptive selling can increase my advertiser spend during periods of austerity, when these conditions deteriorated, they exercised greater caution with their spending, since they were already working with restrictive budgets. Picard (2008) found that classified advertisers were more vulnerable to the shocks and vicissitudes of an austere economy, when compared to corporate advertisers who have a significantly higher budget to absorb economic shocks.

My data proved that advertisers were receptive to adaptive selling, because it provided them with better results and value for their advertising dollar. My results also refuted the findings of Frank and Park (2006), who posited that adaptive selling was ineffective in increasing sales. While these findings may prove valid to organisations which needed to optimise efficiency, it failed to take into account that adaptive selling may be more suited to entities, which sell high value products.

A synopsis of the findings verified that my advertisers overwhelmingly agreed with Wong et al’s (2015) framework on adaptive selling. Of the 16 responses, eight supported Wong et al’s (2015) framework, five very strongly, and one expressed uncertainty. This literature corroborated the data of my classified advisors, who were strongly oriented to engaging in adaptive selling practices.

The literature that resonated most with me was Chen and Waters (2016), who observed that advertisers, particularly those who are commercially oriented, were willing to pay more for high impact advertisements, because they yielded higher dividends on their investment. Despite the premium placed on optimising upselling and cross selling practices, Kim (2008) implored salespersons to exercise a degree of restraint when selling emotional content, since overselling could create emotional distress among the

bereaved. To address this ethical dilemma the author implored sales managers to consider the advertiser's emotional state and provide them with options without necessarily placing them under duress to commit to buying a product.

Other literature that reverberated with me was Rosengren (2013), who found that advertisers preferred bundled packages which helped them to save money, while extending the reach of their messaging. This finding also encapsulated the nature of my research, since I needed to provide added value for my advertisers, since they have become more discerning and discriminating in a highly sophisticated market.

## **CHAPTER 5.0 –APPLICATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

*The best way to predict the future is to invent it - Alan Kay (1971)*

## 5.1 Overview

This chapter details the actions taken to address the salient issues, which were identified in my discussion chapter. The first part of my review justifies the selection of my preferred frameworks, which relate to effecting organisational change. These frameworks helped me recreate an environment, which applied and sustained adaptive selling practices among my classified advisors. The second part of my chapter traced how frameworks, which relate to coaching and motivation were applied to enhance the sales proposition of my classified advisors. The third part of my review identified a range of new internal processes, which helped me inculcate a culture of innovation in my practice. My chapter concludes by taking an introspective look at my ability to precipitate and sustain desired change in my practice.

## 5.2 Organisational outcomes

My vision of transitioning my sales team from a state of ad-taking to one of adaptive selling was achieved by applying Harrison and Shirom's (1999) framework of change. This model comprised three constructs: (1) 'intended change', where outcomes were achievable through the plans and actions of managers; (2) 'partial change', where some change situations were achieved through power processes, interests and skillsets of management; and (3) 'unintended change', where situational forces impeded the desired change. Given the propensity to increase revenue in my practice, I selected "intended change" as my preferred option, since my data indicated that my classified advisors were receptive towards engaging in adaptive selling. My plan was predicated on the 5Ps:

1. *Paradigms;*
2. *Practices;*
3. *Processes;*
4. *Products;*
5. *Performances*

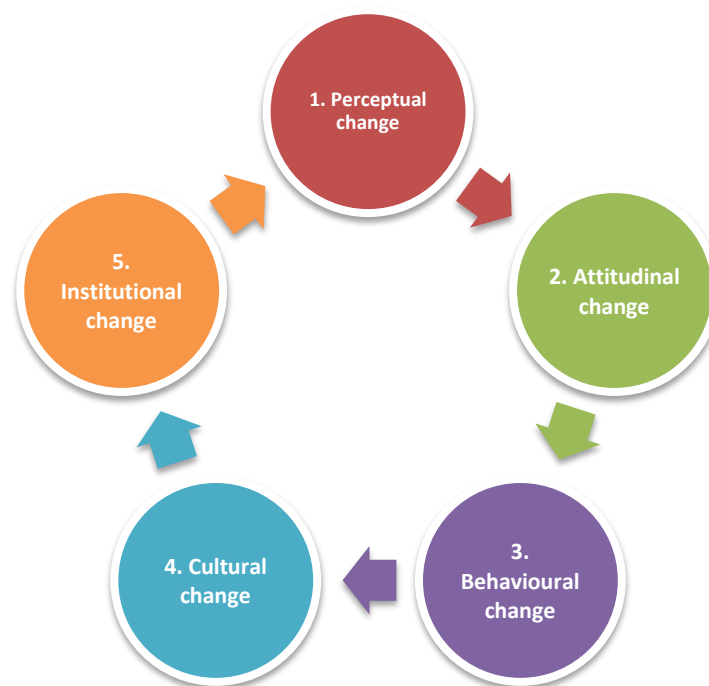
### 5.2.1 Paradigm change

My justification for effecting desired change is supported by Palmer and Dunford's (2008) 'Interpretation' metaphor, which required managers to rationalise the need for change by engaging staff through logical and plausible reasoning. With this metaphor, I explained to my classified advisors why current market conditions have made it imperative for them to offer advertisers more value for their investment, so that they can compete on a value proposition rather than on price only. Tsoukas and Chia (2002) observed, "Changes in the environment put pressure on management to improve their customer service, but it was also management's receptivity to, and appreciation of, those changes that ultimately determined the precise organizational response" (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, p.578). The data affirmed that there should be a high degree of acceptance among my classified advisors to fully embrace adaptive selling practices, since they were highly motivated to maximise their bonuses and commissions, while ensuring the satisfaction of their advertisers.

After justifying the need for change, I utilised the 'Directing' image to outline my intended change outcome. This metaphor helped me transition my classified advisors from a state of standardised selling

to one of adaptive selling, which comprised upselling of worded advertisements to include add on features such as logos, corporate colours, and creative content as well as display advertisements to include add-ons such as spot, mixed and full colour. These add-ons helped advertisers differentiate their messaging, while providing additional revenue opportunities for my practice. By employing the 'Directing' metaphor, I was able to cogently articulate my vision to my classified advisors, where I outlined to them that they must engage meaningfully with their advertisers if they are to exceed their expectations. These engagements entailed asking about the unique selling points of advertiser's products and the type of consumers they desired to reach. However, to realise my vision, I implored my team that exceeding the expectations of advertisers was not a choice, but a necessity if benefits are to be derived to their advertisers, my practice and themselves. Palmer and Dunford (2008) asserted that with the 'Directing image' any form of "resistance can and must be overcome in order to move change forward" (Palmer and Dunford, 2008, p.528). Perceptions are critical to determining the extent to which change is achieved, because every stage of this process is contingent on the psychological shift precipitated by my classified advisors. This effect is illustrated in Figure 19.

**Figure 19 - Stages towards institutional change**



Source: Kilduff and Dougherty (2000)

Given that data confirmed my classified advisors were receptive to training and adaptive selling, they were embracing towards achieving this psychological shift.

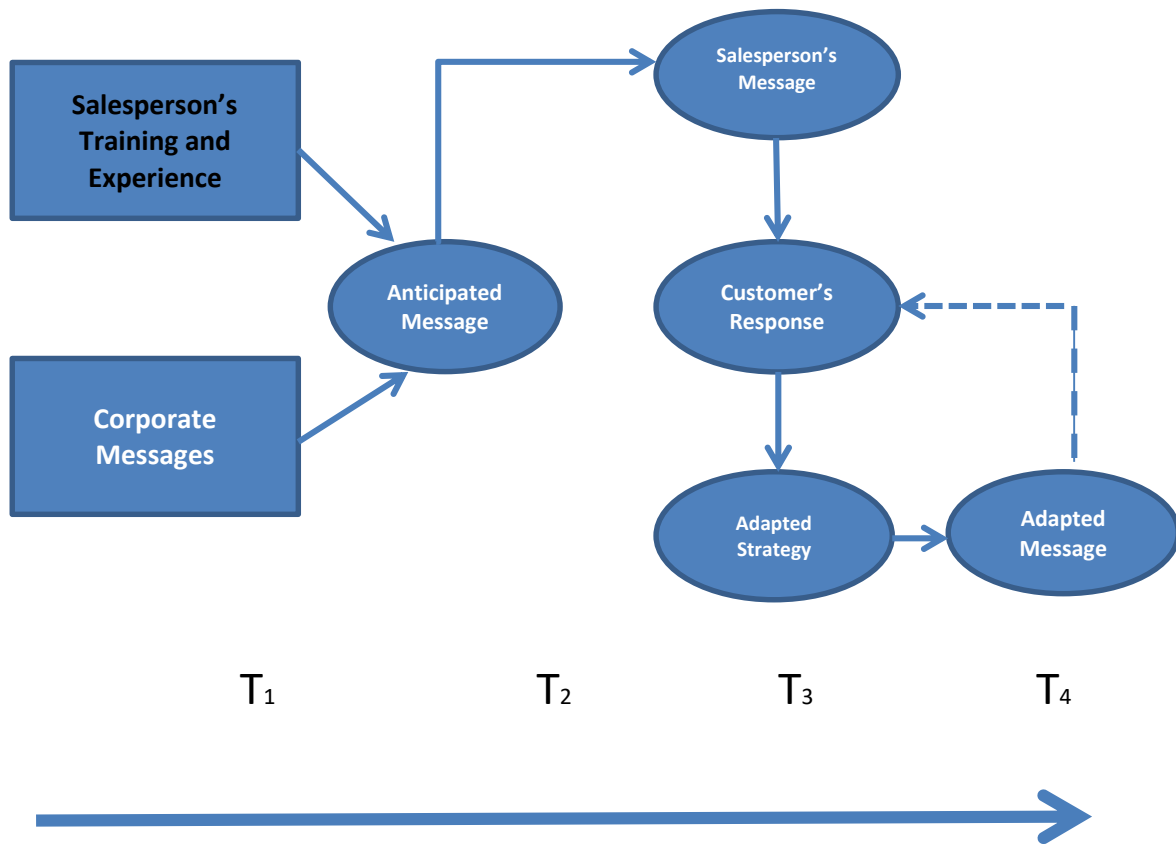
The next stage of the process involved applying the coaching metaphor, which entailed a systematic acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) to improve performance (Bradford et al, p.134). This knowledge was acquired through a customised formal workshop, which was facilitated by the National



Initiative of Service Excellence (NISE), a local quasi-governmental agency that evaluated the service delivery of my classified advisors (For a review of the results of the Mystery Shopper exercise, please refer to section 2.7 of my Literature Review). The programme entitled, *Delivering Service Excellence: Sales Powered by Service*, addressed the deficiencies, which were identified in the Mystery Shopper programme, conducted in April, 2014. Bradford et al (2017) observed that external and internal training may prove lucrative for business-to-business salespersons, since it allowed them to update their skillsets and evolve with their changing marketplace. For my classified advisors, continuous training may be construed as once every six months. A limitation of this proposition is that frequent external training may prove costly for an underperforming organisation. However, if training serves to enhance the selling skills of staff, then an organisation can ill afford not to invest in these types of programmes. The process of these programmes are depicted in the Figure 20.

Figure 20 - Adaptive selling process





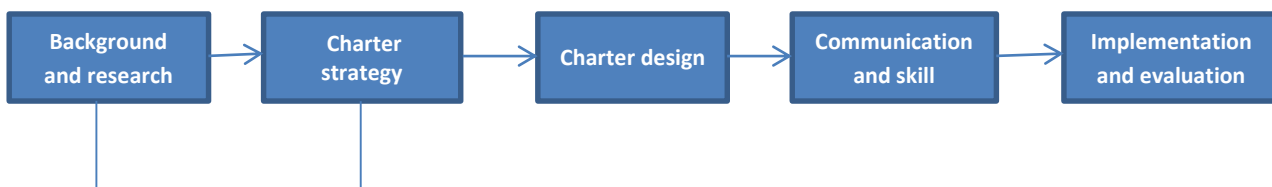
Source: Rocco and Whale (2014)

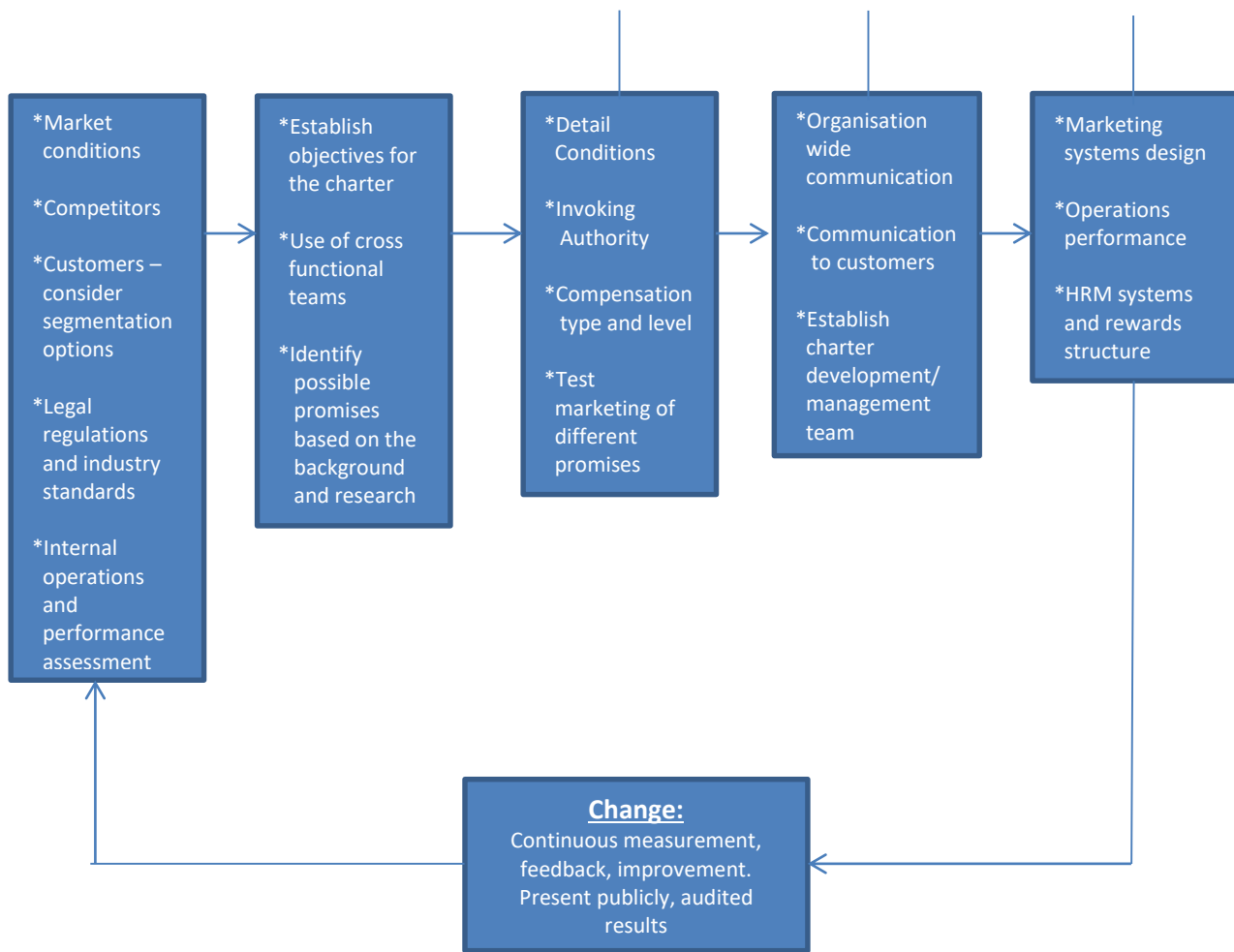
The diagram depicts that during the 'T1 stage' my classified advisors should attain the capacity to synthesise their professional and technical knowledge in line with the corporate vision and mission statements of my practice, so that they can formulate anticipated messages for their pre-sales call (refer to T2). According to the data from my advertisers, these pre-messages should differentiate content, so that it can fully resonate with their target consumers. With this engagement (refer to T3 and T4), my classified advisors can tailor the right message, to the right advertiser, and to deliver the right results. However, Rocco and Whale (2014) pointed out that sometimes a customer's response is outside the bounds of the messages planned during the presales call planning (T1 and T2). To deal with these eventualities, NISE and I conducted role-playing exercises with my classified advisors, so that they can experience in a simulated setting how to think, communicate, and act consistently in line with their corporate messaging.

## 5.2.2 Perception change

I reverted to Palmer and Dunford's (2008) 'interpretation metaphor' to create a customer service charter for my classified advisors, so that I could standardise their services. This charter served to address the deficiencies among my classified advisors, which were identified in the Mystery Shopper exercise. According to Weick and Quinn (1999) there is a need for managers to adopt a common benchmark due to a plurality of divergent standards, values and opinions held by managers, staff, and advertisers. This model has relevance for my practice, since it helped me to improve, maintain and standardise the service delivery at my practice. McColl (2013) defined a customer service charter "as a quality assurance and marketing tool, which goes beyond the typical service guarantee by delivering a continuous improvement process" (McColl, 2013, p.11). Drawing on this definition, the author devised a model, which comprised six stages for developing a customer service charter: (1) 'background research', (2) 'charter strategy', (3) 'charter design', (4) 'communication and skill building' and (5) 'implementation and evaluation'. These stages are illustrated in Figure 21.

**Figure 21 - Customer service support framework**





Source: McColl (2013)

The first stage of the process involved conducting formative action research, which enabled me to attain a panoramic view of my work based problem. McColl (2013) described this phase as the most critical part of the process, since it formed the basis of my charter. Without this foundation, the charter may be predicated on my own intuition, which may be misaligned from the realities of my practice.

With reference to the second construct, I designed a strategy, which involved collaborating with my key stakeholders to create a draft charter. This plan sought to achieve the following:

- a. *Receiving buy-in from my classified advisors and key stakeholders in my practice;*
- b. *Standardising the adaptive selling practices among each of my classified advisors;*
- c. *Creating an adaptive selling culture, which increased revenue over prior year;*
- d. *Increasing the satisfaction among my active advertisers; and*
- e. *Correcting the core customer service deficiencies emanating from the mystery shopper programme*

Upon presenting the draft to my classified advisors, I invited them to give feedback on the document, so that I can mitigate the perception of the finished version being deemed as a management document. By inviting my staff to give their feedback on the document, I can eliminate an 'us' vs 'them' scenario and ultimately receive their buy-in for the charter.

During third stage of the process, I incorporated the comments from my classified advisors to enhance the document. The final charter was designed in the form of a laminated calendar, which was placed at the desk of each classified advisor, where they could refer to each precept on a daily basis. We kept the content conversational, so that it was easy to grasp. Out of this design, we agreed on the theme, *Ten Commandments of Making Ordinary Moments Extraordinary*, which undergirded the mission of my practice to delivering *creative, 'high-quality, market-leading products and services that add value'* to advertisers (To review this charter, please refer to Appendix G).

The fourth step involved ensuring that the practices of my classified advisors were aligned to each precept of the charter. McColl (2013) recommended that customer service representatives and their supervisors should undergo an orientation to ensure that their service delivery was synchronised with each tenet in the charter. This realignment would have been achieved in the form of my reorientation programme, which comprised training and coaching. These parts of the programme are discussed in section 5.2.3 of this chapter.

The penultimate stage required me to monitor the new selling practices of my classified advisors, so that they can be synchronised with the charter. During this stage, we made each classified advisor accountable not only to management, but also to each of their peers, so that they would conform to each tenet of the charter. Rosenberg (2013) observed that positive peer pressure can create "a group social norm that encourages positive change; inspire individuals to behave valiantly to win the esteem of peers and serve as an organizing tool to create activism for an altruistic cause" (Rosenberg 2013 p.494). To achieve these dynamics, I won over the prime influencer among my classified advisors, so that she in turn can win over her peers and by extension my entire team.

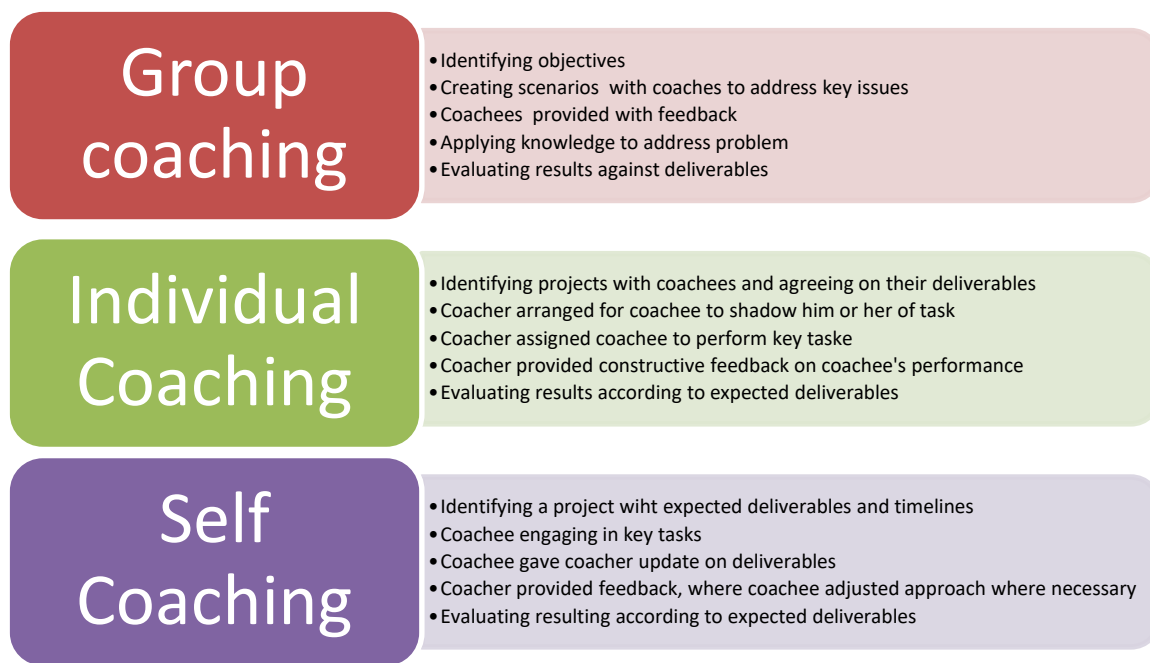
The final step involved evaluating the performances of each classified advisor against predetermined goals. Although customer service charters have potential to transform my practice, McCollaugh (2010) acknowledged that they should be integrated with other supporting systems such as coaching, training and mentorship.

### **5.2.3 Practice change**

McNamara's (2005) model revealed that change is sometimes 'incremental', which involved a series of small steps to achieve the intended vision. Utilising this paradigm, I employed Palmer and Dunford's (2008) coaching metaphor, which sought to inculcate varying types of coaching, to address deficiencies that were drawn from the data among my classified advisors. By employing this construct I was better

able to standardise and sustain adaptive selling practices among my three junior classified advisors. The data confirmed that my classified advisors were highly receptive to undergoing formal training. Tsoukas and Chia (2002) conceded that while formal collective training can trigger ongoing change, what exactly occurred after it was initiated, remained uncertain. Instead they advised, “Change programmes should be locally adapted, improvised, and elaborated by human agents” (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, p.578). Wong et al., (2015) posited ‘service leadership’, should centre on coaching sales staff, so that they can help permeate a culture, which supported adaptive selling practices. Coaching draws on Weiner’s (1980) and Deci and Ryan’s (2005) Attribution and Self-Determination Theories, where the former underpins the need for coachees to attain greater competence, while the latter greater autonomy and relatedness (See section 2:10 for an overview). Losch et al (2016) defined coaching as a collaborative helping relationship, where the coacher and coachee “engaged in a systematic process of setting goals and developing solutions with the aim of facilitating goal attainment, self-directed learning, and personal growth of the coachee” (Grant 2013, p.16). To facilitate this growth, Losch et al., (2016) advised that coaching should assume three dimensions: (1) group coaching (2) individual-coaching, and (3) self-coaching. These dimensions are illustrated in Figure 22 in the context of addressing my work based problem.

**Figure 22 - Three types of coaching employed in the department under review**



Source: Author’s own model

### 5.2.3.1 Group coaching

Under this intervention, coaches typically transferred theoretical or rudimentary knowledge to their coachees (Losch et al, 2016). Unlike individual coaching, group coaching tended to be more efficient in transferring knowledge, since coaches can concurrently engage multiple recipients in one session (Greif, 2008). When coaches facilitate these type of interactions, they are better able

to standardise practices among a wide cross section of staff, since they would have identified a common benchmark. This intervention also facilitated the exchange of multiple perspectives when coachees pose questions, which took the form of coaches engaging with coachees and coachees with each other. This cross fertilisation of information helped to augment and enrich the learning process. Finally, group coaches were able to transfer practical knowledge to their coachees in the form of case studies and role playing exercises. Inks and Avila (2008) explained, “Experiential learning encourages social learning, which then promotes greater involvement and interest in the course content” (Inks and Avila, 2008, p.47). While experiential learning cannot compensate for real life experiences, Losch et al (2016) found that this intervention provided recipients with a foundation with which to pursue both individual and self-coaching.

#### **5.2.3.1.1 Application of group coaching**

To address the issues from my data with my classified advisors and their advertisers, I employed group coaching by inviting my most skilled and experienced classified advisors to facilitate coaching sessions with their colleagues during my weekly meetings. Some of the issues that were tackled related to how classified advisors could sensitively and empathetically engage the bereaved to place in-memoriams. This coaching helped instill a greater sense of confidence among my junior staffers. These interactions also improved the capacity of my junior classified advisors on the best practices of assuaging aggressive advertisers, who impacted on the emotional state of my staff. Although I assigned senior staff to engage in group coaching, there were occasions when I chose juniors to coach their senior counterparts. Some of these sessions comprised my junior staff coaching in the areas of how to upsell newspaper advertisements with web and social media platforms. My approach is supported by Rauen and Eversman (2014), who pointed out that unlike the leader – follower relationship, where leaders are in a higher hierarchical position than their followers, in coaching, the relationship is one of equals.

#### **5.2.3.1 Individual coaching**

Individual coaching assumed the next stage of the process, since it bridged on group coaching, which enabled less experienced coachees, to derive rudimentary knowledge in their particular endeavor. Onyemah (2009) confirmed that coaching was intended for younger “salespeople with lower confidence in their company’s product superiority over competitors brands; salespeople with fewer years of formal education and salespeople whose values fit the least with organisational values” (Onyemah, 2009, p.953). Unlike group coaching, this intervention involved a much closer collaboration between the coacher and the coachee, where both focused primarily on goal attainment. Jowett et al (2012) described this orientation as a dyadic relationship, which provided individualised support and attention from the coacher to meet the very specific developmental needs of the coachee. Compared to group and self-coaching, a drawback with individual coaching is that it can become very time intensive for both coacher and coachee. Despite this downside, Losch et al (2016) found that individual coaching is the most effective at goal attainment.

### **5.2.3.2 Application of individual coaching**

With my data indicating that some of my junior classified advisors encountered difficulties conducting cold calls to commercial advertisers, I bridged on the group coaching sessions to select three of my classified advisors, who recorded the lowest sales, to participate in a one-on-one coaching session with their more experienced peers. This intervention took the form of juniors shadowing their coaches and me when they were engaging in cold calling activities. The coachees closely observed every stage of the process, which involved their peers compiling a list of prospective sponsors, engaging with prospects via email and telephone and booking confirmed advertisements in system. Other processes comprised liaising with advertisers and graphic artists to design creatives and liaise with the feature writers and page planners to confirm content. Out of this intervention, two of my three classified advisors became adept at conducting cold calls.

### **5.2.3.4 Self-coaching**

This intervention represented the antithesis of individual coaching, since self-coaching refuted the notion that coaching is only reserved for younger or less experienced salespersons. Although novices were normally recipients of coaching, their experienced and skilled counterparts may also derive significant benefits from this type of intervention. With self-coaching, the coachee functioned more autonomously, where he or she was given a brief from the coacher and expected to complete the task or payment with minimal supervision. Losch et al (2016) stipulated with this intervention, "It was up to the participants themselves to set goals, reflect on the exercises, and identify the relevance of the insights for their personal goal" (Losch et al 2016, p.6).

### **5.2.3.4 Application of self-coaching**

For self-coaching, classified advisors were able to engage in self-discovery, where they learnt from their experiences, which helped them to develop themselves both professionally and personally. Despite these advantages, self-coaching entailed a certain degree of intrepidation among my classified advisors, since they were worried about falling short of their targets. To address this issue, I sought to create a nurturing environment, which instilled a sense of confidence among my classified advisors. Although this orientation represented the polarity of individual coaching, both still complemented each other, since the former may be considered a continuum of the latter, because my classified advisors who underwent personal coaching, then progress to self-coaching. I have employed self-coaching successfully among two of my senior classified advisors, who have the proficiency to work independently on sourcing sponsorship within agreed production timelines. Given the coachee's self-sufficiency, I could allocate more time to managing other projects or coaching other staff.

Unlike formal training, which is often facilitated by third parties, coaching calls for very little investment in terms of time, finances and resources. Dahling et al (2016), "Organizations increasingly encourage managers to provide this kind of continual, tailored feedback and direction to their subordinates as a consequence of flatter organizational structures, smaller training budgets, and increased performance expectations in the workplace" (Dahling et al, 2016 p.864). This intervention also caused minimal disruption to my workflow, since coaches and coachees were already familiar with the cultural nuances,



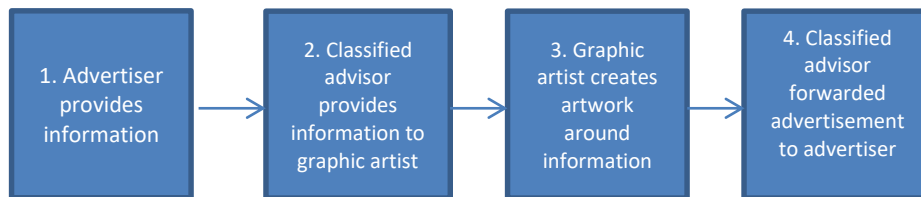
systems and policies of my practice. The three interventions of coaching should not be viewed as episodic, since my classified advisors and I were in a continuous state of refining our craft.

### 5.3.1 Processual change

The next phase of my recommendations centred on forging collaborative relationships with key personnel in my practice, so that the framework of adaptive selling could be extended to other production departments. I applied this framework by employing Palmer and Dunford's (2008) 'navigating' metaphor, which involved me negotiating with managers of other departments, so that we can develop new processes to better customise advertising content. The authors pointed out that this image helped change agents like myself to overcome possible resistance to my proposed change. I effected this change by showing that my proposed framework would help my classified advisors generate new streams of revenue, which would help to stabilise my practice.

An assessment of the data confirmed that my clients preferred booking high impact advertisements, because they provided greater visibility to their messaging. Given this feedback, it was incumbent on me to collaborate with the advertising manager of administration and his senior graphic artist to engineer a new system, which facilitated closer collaboration between my classified advisors and their graphic designers. It was this collaboration, which transitioned my graphic artists from designing derivative content to creating compelling content. McNamara (2005) found that when working collaboratively in a subsystem, "change agents can alter the mindset, attitudes, and practices of managers and staff, restricted to a particular subsystem" (McNamara, 2005, p.174). The final stage involved forwarding the finished product to the client for approval. These sequences are summarised in Figure 23.

**Figure 23 - One dimensional processing of classified advertisement in the department under review**



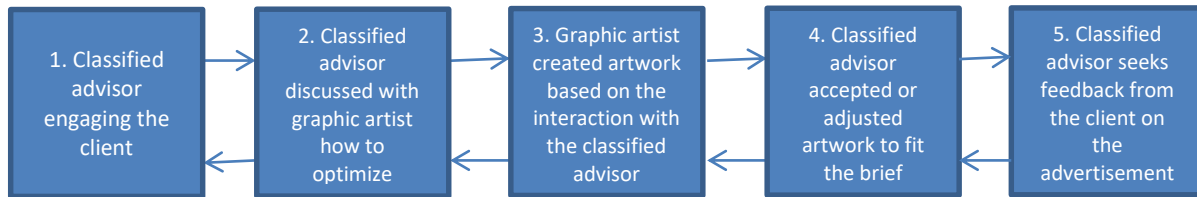
Source: Author's own model (2017)

A review of the one dimensional model revealed that it derived some benefits for production staff and classified advisors, since it expedited the processing, design and delivery of advertisements, while utilising limited technical resources. Despite these benefits, the model only yielded minimal revenue opportunities for both my practice and its advertisers.

In contrast, the two-dimensional model, which assumed a more composite process, is designed to facilitate the creation of high impact advertisements. Unlike the previous framework, which expedited the ad-taking process, the two dimensional model was predicated on collaborative relationships between

advertisers, classified advisors, and graphic artists, where each of them engaged in meaningful dialogue to create higher impact content. These sequences are depicted in Figure 24.

**Figure 24 - Two dimensional model for the department under review**



Source: Author's own model (2017)

The first stage involved my classified advisors engaging with their advertisers, so that they could understand their specific request. The second phase entailed classified advisors discussing the concept with their graphic artists, so that they could lay the groundwork for the creation of high impact content. The third step required graphic artists forwarding the proof to the classified advisor for review, where further changes or modifications may be necessary depending on feedback by the advertiser. The final stage involved the classified advisor engaging their advertiser to determine whether they were satisfied with the quality of the creative.

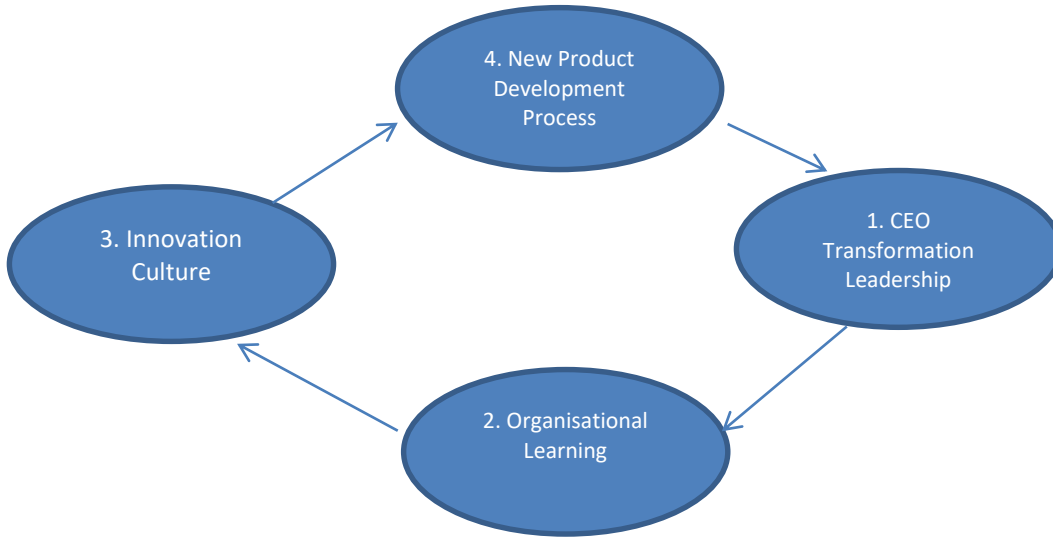
However, a limitation of this process is that it may be deemed time consuming, since it necessitated deeper collaboration with classified advisors, graphic artists, and advertisers to ensure satisfaction of the finished artwork. Unlike the one dimensional model, this system also placed more pressure on graphic artists to produce customised and creative content. However, the benefits of the two-dimensional system far outweighed its limitations, since it enabled advertisers to differentiate their messaging from parochial content. The data from my research confirmed that my advertisers would support the two-dimensional system, since it provided them with the opportunity to yield the highest dividends on their advertising investment. Kaynak et al (2016) found, "adaptive selling should be considered "effective" in the long run if its results outweighed the costs" (Kaynak et al, 2016, p.78). They maintained, "adaptive selling should be particularly cost effective when (1) salespeople have a variety of customers with different needs; (2) the sales situation is of high value and importance; (3) the company provides required resources and support; and (4) the salespeople are highly skilled and able to adapt" (Kaynak et al, 2016, p.78). My practice conforms to each of these constructs.

### **5.3.2 Performance transformation**

The final stage of my plan inculcated Palmer and Dunford's (2008) 'interpretation metaphor', which emphasised creating an enabling environment, so that new possibilities could evolve. Drawing on this image, I collaborated with my staff and managers of other departments to create a suite of new digital and social media packages, which complemented traditional printed advertisements. According to

Sattayaraksa and Boon-itt (2016) an “innovation culture encourages employees to seek for new ideas and try different alternatives, which can be useful for the new product development process” (Sattayaraksa and Boon-itt’s, 2016, p.731). The authors expostulated that this transition can be achieved when leaders applied four constructs of transformational leadership, which are illustrated in Figure 25.

**Figure 25 - Sattayaraksa and Boon-itt’s quadratic model on transformational leadership**



Source: Sattayaraksa and Boon-itt (2017)

The model underscored the need for me to espouse values and beliefs, which promoted innovation among my staff. Given data confirmed that my classified advisors were oriented to creating new products, I facilitated a forum, where each advisor chaired a session at my weekly departmental meetings, which sought to innovate new products. To optimise this model, I evaluated my staff on their ability to innovate new products. This evaluation formed part of their biannual appraisals, which were tied to their bonuses. Manso (2017) advised, “An organization that wants to encourage innovation must design compensation plans that free managers to take risks, experiment, and discover what practices and technologies are most effective” (Manso, 2017, p.19). According to Sattayaraksa and Boon-itt (2017) when leaders adopt these constructs they are able to transition their staff from a state of holding individualised values to holding a collective mindset. The authors maintained that when staff adopt a shared mindset, it permeated itself into a cohesive culture, which can lead to transformation.

### 5.3.3 Post review

A post review of my objectives under section 6.2.1 revealed that I achieved some degree of success with my strategy, which was predicated on the question whether my practice can increase revenue in a downward economy. Since embarking on my strategy, I achieved most of my objectives by engaging with

my classified advisors and their advertisers in an anemic economy. This collaboration was garnered through formal and informal training, creation of a customer charter and eliciting the support of technical departments, which served to enhance the service delivery of my staff, so that they could exceed the expectations of advertisers. However, my research has shown me that when an economic situation worsened, adaptive selling practices were proven ineffective in increasing revenue in a downturned economy. A synopsis of my results is detailed in Table 35.

**Table 35 - Results of my action research strategy**

	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Results</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1.	<i>To achieve an average of 85 per cent in the annual customer performance survey at my practice.</i>	Achieved an average score of 81 per cent of annual customer performance survey 87 per cent in 2015 82 per cent in 2016 *76 per cent in 2017	*The survey indicated that there is a need for me to reinforce and conduct continuous training in customer service with my team rather than just once per year.
2.	<i>To increase sales per annum by US\$100,000 effective 2015-2017 through upselling, cold selling and cross selling.</i>	Increased sales by US\$52,000 in 2015 Increased sales by US\$55,000 in 2016 *Recorded a deficit of (US\$375,000) in 2017	*The high deficit was due to the imposition of the National Social Responsibility Levy, which increased by 400 per cent, coupled with the deteriorating economic situation in Barbados
3.	<i>To coach four junior classified advisors to independently manage special revenue generating projects.</i>	Only three of the four classified advisors were proficient at generating sales for special projects.	The lone advisor, who remained unproficient, put very little effort into her work. This was also compounded that she worked in a remote office.
4.	<i>To create five new sustainable printed advertising products in 2015-2017.</i>	Created the following new products: 3 new products 2015 2 new products 2016 5 new products 2017	Please refer to Table 23 to receive an update on the products launched
5.	<i>To cross sell advertising to five special printed classified sections.</i>	Cross sold special classified advertising in three of the five targeted publications	Please refer to the Appendix H to receive an update on the products launched

### 5.3.4 Reflections

A review of my chapter revealed the alliterative themes of the '5Ps' underlined salient stages of my strategy, which sought to transition my classified advisors from a state ad-taking to one of adaptive selling, where the former provided advertisers with minimal value and the latter with maximum value. Each stage of my plan effected varying degrees of controlled changes among my classified advisors, their graphic artists, and their production processes. Every stage evolved around customising content for current and prospective advertisers, so that they leveraged maximum results on their investment. When advertisers perceived that they were receiving greater value for their dollar, they felt more inclined to continue their advertising at my practice. To cultivate business in my practice, it is imperative that my classified advisors continue adopting an adaptive seller mindset, so that they can elicit required traits and behaviours, which if practiced on a frequent and consistent basis, can create a new culture, which will facilitate services and products, which not only meets the expectations of advertisers, but also exceeds them whenever possible. However, to further sustain these practices, it is critical that I continue identifying training and coaching opportunities for my classified advisors, so that they collectively and consistently address emerging issues, which may compromise the quality of my service delivery and products. These capacity building sessions were undergirded by the customer service charter, which served to reinforce desired traits and values among my team. By continuously perfecting the performances of my team, I can then perfected the performance of my practice, which ultimately redounded to the benefit of each of my advertisers and by extension my parent company and their shareholders.

## **CHAPTER 6.0 – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

***Don't just play the game; be a game changer***  
Stephanie Lahart (Date unknown)

## **6.0 Introduction**

This section traversed my journey as a scholar practitioner and action researcher on the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programme with the University of Liverpool from May 2012 to June 2019. The section chronicled how my exposure to action research and action learning helped me to refine both my hard and soft managerial skills. My reflection also traced how the programme impelled me to develop new competencies, which I previously felt a sense of discomfort with. Finally, my account explored how my research helped me become a more collaborative and evidence-based manager.

### **6.1 Hard and soft skills**

Upon matriculation to the DBA programme, each of its nine modules sharpened my administrative skills as classified advertising manager. Some of the most impactful modules for me comprised the following:

#### Leadership and community

My exposure to this module underscored for me the importance of becoming a more collaborative manager, where I sought the input of my senior classified advisor and her five staffers. Their feedback often provided me with a richer or alternative perspective, which I may have overlooked as their manager. Since becoming a more collaborative practitioner, I have found it easier to receive the consensus of my staff, particularly on special revenue projects.

This module proved cathartic for me, since it validated my personal management style, which centred on empowering staff. At my previous practice, where I was appointed director of corporate communications at a Barbados based quasi-governmental promotional tourism agency, a senior colleague brusquely critiqued my leadership style, because she thought that I was too embrasive toward my staff. She believed that I should assume a more dictatorial, dispassionate, and detached style of leadership, so that I could rule by intimidation rather than inspiration, where she perceived the former as strong leadership, while the latter a weak. However, on completion of my research, I felt a sense of vindication, since the textbook by Raelin (2010) emphasised that effective leadership centred on compassionate, collaborative, collective, and concurrent - values that I inculcated as a manager. My exposure as an action researcher further invigorated me to decentralise my style of leadership, which helped me become even more patient, collaborative, and empathetic toward my staff and senior colleagues.

Although I subscribed to a decentralised style of leadership, I learned that sometimes the autocratic and laissez faire styles can be just as effective as the democratic style of leadership. Raelin (2010) explained that these divergent modes can best be employed during certain situations. For example, I learned that situational leaders applied varying management styles to suit different situations. The author showed me that the autocratic style is best suited to managing inexperienced staff or in a crisis situation, which warranted clear and decisive directives. As an action researcher, I employed the autocratic approach



whenever staff deviated from established company policies or delivered a service, which fell below standard. Since my exposure to the module, I have been able to adapt my leadership skills to address different exigencies.

#### Change and crisis management

Prior to the commencement of my research, I perceived organisational change as linear, where it had a beginning and ending stage. However, my exposure to Tsoukas and Chia (2002) challenged me to view change as a state of flux, where it was a direct response to exogenous and endogenous pressures overtime, which are "...complex, multilayered, and evolving, rather than simple, fixed and episodic" (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, p.572). Since invoking this paradigm, I now view innovation as a continuous practice, where I now implore my team to strive for continuous improvement, so that we can realign ourselves with the new realities of a rapidly evolving environment. For instance, I have applied this ethos by integrating web and social media technology with newspaper classified advertising content. Although I have integrated these media platforms successfully, I have redeveloped these packages to launch a special video classified product, which further enhanced the competitiveness of my practice.

#### Action research and the action research thesis

Since pursuing my research, I have become more confident in my role as an advertising manager. For example, I have become more self-assured in overcoming my insecurities with utilising technology. Prior to working on my thesis, I was quick to call on my IT Department if I needed to integrate digital with printed content. For example, my exposure to action research helped me to master how to embed QR codes in printed advertisements and upload content to my classified website. Actually, I am so adept at these practices, that I now coach my team and other colleagues how to generate and incorporate these type of codes into printed advertisements. If I was unexposed to these modules, I would have continued in my state of diffidence and dependence on my IT Department.

Equally, I have applied my new confidence to compile, calculate and analyse accounting figures, which I thought were previously beyond my scope. I gathered these figures from Élan and Advertisement Management Pro (AMP), online advertising booking software programmes, to forensically investigate why certain sectors were underperforming or over performing. These findings were incorporated into my monthly, quarterly and annual sales reports. With my new confidence, I am no longer dependent on the Administrative Advertising Manager or the Senior Accountant to generate these figures for me. Instead I can now compile and calculate these figures by myself and incorporate them in my report for senior management. My new self-confidence has represented a quantum step for me, since I was previously averse to calculating figures.

## **6.2 Evidence based manager**

The DBA programme has shaped me into a more evidence based practitioner, where I tend to rely on scientific evidence and organisational research to inform my decision making. Prior to enrolling on my

doctorate, I made some decisions without necessarily understanding or appreciating their implications. However, since my exposure to my research, I made it a course to gather and assemble as many missing pieces of my puzzle, so that I can view it from a fuller and richer perspective. With this intelligence, I was able to determine my next course of action. For instance, if my sales declined in excess of 10 per cent, I generated sales reports in Élan or AMP to identify the underperforming sectors, where I compared them with the sales of prior year. With this data, I determined whether there were any emerging patterns among certain sectors, which enabled me to explain any anomalies. However, when I discovered anomalous data, I learned from my doctoral journey to engage relevant individuals, who could clarify for me any unfolding issues in the market. Since becoming an evidence based practitioner, I have found it easier to justify and defend my decisions against the most scrupulous critics in my practice.

### 6.3 Double loop learning

As an action researcher and scholar practitioner, I have learned to reflect more critically on the policies and practices of my department, which tend to impede progress. Prior to embarking on my thesis and DBA journey, I used to engage in single loop learning, which according to Matthies and Coners (2018) involved identifying and resolving problems without necessarily carrying out an in-depth analysis of their underlining causes. In hindsight, I accepted these practices, because I wanted to be perceived by my employer as a team player rather than someone deemed 'difficult' or 'disruptive'. Bess and Dee (2008) observed that many managers preferred to engage in "single loop learning due to the resistance to change, fear of failure and overemphasis on control" (Bess and Dee, 2008, p.676). Consequently, by adopting a peripheral approach to 'addressing' problems, I tended to replicate them. However, since my exposure to action research, I make it a course to engage in double loop learning, which entailed learning lessons, not only to solve problems, but also to "modify standards, procedures, policies, and objectives underlining problems of the whole organisational context" (Matthies and Coners, 2018 p.331). In June 2019, I applied double loop learning to increase the number of advertisers in *Commercial Services*, a special section in my classified section, which declined from 28 advertisers in 2016 to only eight in January 2019. Prior to engaging in double loop learning, I kept applying the same sales techniques, with the same salesperson, which delivered the same results – a section that depleted from a full page to a quarter page of advertisements. In June 2019, I attempted to address this situation by analysing the sales reports on *Commercial Services*. Out of this analysis, I created *Hurricane Supplies*, a new section, which targeted small and medium sized retailers and service providers, who stocked products or provided services during the hurricane season. My research confirmed 20 advertisers who discontinued their advertising, 19 dropped out due to difficulties paying their monthly rate of US\$295.00. These advertisers comprised micro sole proprietors, who were highly susceptible to contractions in the marketplace. Further investigations revealed that the salesperson of *Commercial Services* focused more on closing business with corporate advertisers rather than micro advertisers, since the former provided her with significantly higher commissions. With this intelligence, I identified a new salesperson to sell *Hurricane Supplies*. I then bundled the print, web, and social media packages to make the selling proposition more attractive. I have

also removed the three month contract clause, which necessitated that clients commit to a minimum period of three months to place their advertisement. The removal of this clause would make my proposition to advertisers more attractive.

#### **6.4 Commitment to lifelong learning**

Finally, since embarking on my research, I implored my classified advisors to view their practice as an extended classroom, where they should view their work environment not only as a place to earn, but also as one to learn, so that they can acquire, apply and transfer to each other new knowledge, which would enabled them to improve their performance. This information sharing normally takes place during my departmental meetings, where I invited one of my classified advisors or skilled colleagues outside of my department to facilitate a group coaching session. For example, on Monday January 7, 2019, I invited one of my classified advisors to share with her colleagues how she was able to sell the most bundled print and digital advertising packages. The facilitator challenged her colleagues to perceive their products differently, where they were viewed as a multimedia platform rather than only being a newspaper, which restricted their proposition to their prospect. These sessions helped me to elicit rich responses from my staff, who by articulating their opinions, contributed to building the capacity of their colleagues. Since orchestrating these sessions, two of my older staff, who previously generated the lowest sales for bundled digital and social media packages, increased their sales by “15 per cent 33 per cent in February 2019” respectively (Davis February p.2).

#### **6.5 Reflections**

A review of this chapter reveals that I grew exponentially both professionally and personally, since embarking on my DBA journey. As classified advertising manager, I have become more confident addressing complex or contentious issues, which may involve my senior management, my staff or their advertisers. I attained this confidence by gathering quantifiable or rich data, which helped me deepen engagement with stakeholders, where I invited them to respond to the evidence at hand. When I shared this evidence with these stakeholders, it was often difficult for them to refute it. Conversely, evidence has laid the groundwork for me to innovate new products and resolve problems, which may impact on service delivery of my final product. My exposure to the DBA programme has not only benefited me professionally, but also personally, where I tend to reflect more deeply on my assumptions, which may influence my perception and judgement on personal issues. By adopting an introspective outlook, I have become more prudent in my decision-making, which has redounded in me taking more responsible actions. However, when I error in judgement, ironically it can be a gratifying, yet humbling experience, since I have become acutely attuned to my own frailties and flaws, which has brought me even closer to self-actualisation.

## CHAPTER 7.0 – CONCLUSION

*The future isn't something we enter; the future is something we create.*  
Leonard Sweet (2008)

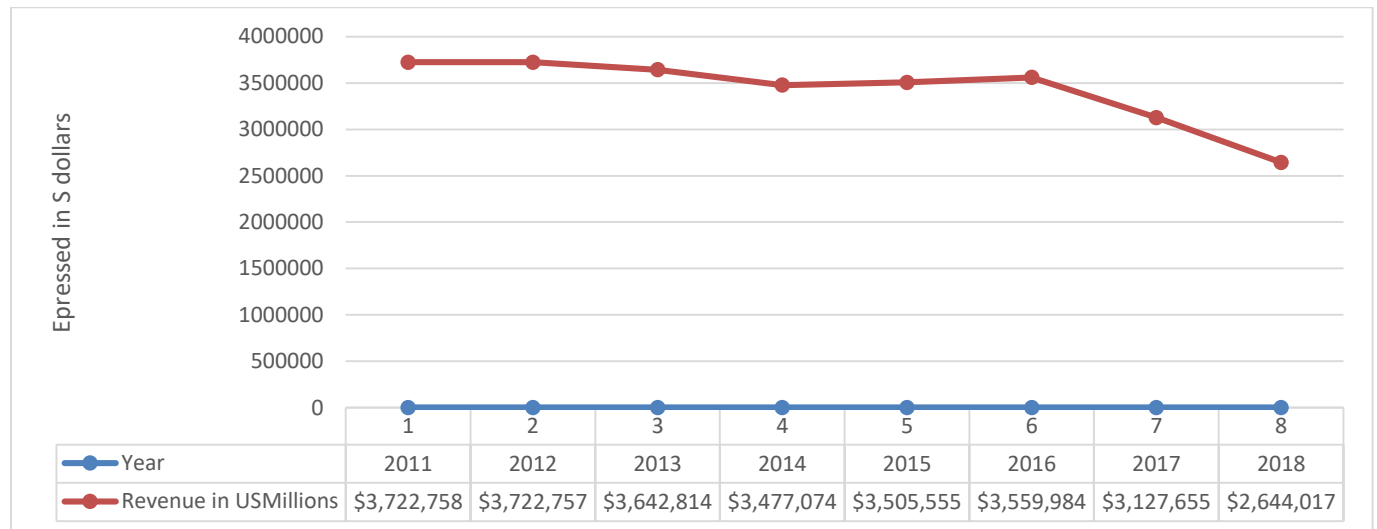
## 7.1 Introduction

The credo by Sweet (2008) encapsulates the essence of my research, since it underscores the need for my classified advisors and me to evolve with our changing environment. Drawing on this paradigm, the chapter discusses the degree to which I was able to achieve my research aim and objectives, which were identified in my Introduction Chapter. The chapter also offers personal reflections on my research problem, which were discussed in the context of my reviewed literature, my research data and how they helped me tackle my work based problem. The next part discusses the main learning outcomes of my research and how they have impacted on the performance of my classified advisors. Finally, my chapter identifies further research opportunities which can help me and my senior management improve the competitiveness of my practice.

## 7.2 Achievement of research aim and objectives

A review of my sales reports from 2015 to 2018 and data from my classified advisors and advertisers confirmed that I was able to a certain extent meet my core aim of utilising adaptive selling to increase advertising revenue at my practice during a downturned economy. However, I was only able to effect this increase during the years of 2015 and 2016, when Barbados' economy achieved real growth of 2.2 per cent and 2.5 per cent respectively (IMF 2019). This growth is summarised in Figure 26.

**Figure 26 - Classified advertising revenue from 2011 to 2018**



Source: Marshall (2019)

However, on May 30, 2017, when the economy contracted due to the imposition of an aggressive austerity programme introduced by the Government of Barbados to protect its precarious foreign reserves, which stood at US\$352.50 million or six weeks of import cover at end of April 2017 (below the standard 12 weeks

of import cover), these dynamics caused my revenue to decline concomitantly. To address this issue, the Government of Barbados increased the National Social Responsibility Levy (NSRL) by 400 per cent, so that it could finance the cost of its health care services and avoid defaulting on the repayment of its loan expected in January 2018 (Brome and Brathwaite, 2017, p.4). It also imposed a 2 per cent levy on all sales of foreign currency, which was extended to wire transfers, credit card transactions and over the counter sale of foreign currencies (Brome and Brathwaite, 2017, p.4).

These taxes inflated prices for consumers and significantly contracted advertising revenue at my practice, particularly for notices such as 'Employment' and 'Auto', which represented my first and fourth top performing sectors respectively. The import levy reduced the advertising for auto dealers, since their budgets had to be reallocated to pay for the new taxes, which ranged from US\$15,000 to US\$20,000 for each sedan vehicle. Conversely, the imposition of these duties also deterred employers from publishing vacancy advertisements (my highest performing revenue sector), since they were unable to afford new hires. Consequently, these austerity measures reduced advertising by 22 and 38 per cent for automotive and employment respectively in 2017, when compared to prior year (Advertising Sales Report for September, 2017). Graham and Frankenberger (2011) found that during a recession the first budgets to be cut are traditionally advertising and promotions, which were often reassigned to pay for more 'critical' expenditures such as utility bills, wages and salaries and rent.

Since the introduction of the (NSRL) in May 2017, which significantly restricted advertiser budgets, I have only achieved on average 76 per cent of my sales target, when compared to 102 per cent and 102 per cent in 2015 and 2016 respectively (Marshall, 2018 p.1). The precipitous decline in my sales confirmed that adaptive selling has limitations in a severe austere economic climate, because it shows that despite how engaged salespersons are, in dire economic conditions, there is a limit to how much they can increase revenue through adaptive selling practices. This situation is an issue for my practice, because I have found myself now back at square one, which has once again made my staff and me vulnerable to being separated from the company.

A further exploration of my data and sales reports revealed that I was able to achieve some of my research objectives, which were previously outlined in my Introduction Chapter.

#### Research objective 1

*Transposing the selling practices of my six classified advisors from ad-taking to adaptive selling;*

A review of data inferred that my classified advisors were able to transpose their ad-taking practices with adaptive selling practices. I drew this conclusion from the data of advertisers, who rated the responsiveness and proactivity of my classified advisors at 87.78 per cent and 80.47 per cent respectively. As classified manager, I can further substantiate these responses, since I can attest that my six classified advisors were definitely more attuned to the needs of their advertisers after they were exposed to training

and ongoing coaching. However, it is necessary to point out that some classified advisors were more oriented to adaptive selling than others. Consequently, there is a need for me and senior staff to engage in ongoing coaching efforts, so that my classified advisors can deliver a more consistent service.

#### Research objective 2

*Utilising adaptive selling practices to provide advertisers with greater value by producing creative content*

A further study of data revealed that adaptive selling practices provided my advertisers with greater value by producing more creative content. Eighty two per cent of advertisers confirmed that they received added value when their classified advisors provided them with creatives, which differentiated their messaging from other content. Similarly, 76 per cent of advertisers affirmed that they preferred to publish high impact content, when compared to low impact content. Since my research, my classified advisors have published much more high impact advertisements in my classified section. By publishing this type of content, my practice creates a platform, where it not only promoted the products or services of advertisers, but also infinite possibilities for prospective clients to advertise, since they can view the newspaper content in my newspaper (To review an example of a high impact advertisement, please refer to Appendix H).

With Barbados' market trending towards digital advertising, my practice has commissioned the construction of a new classified website, which facilitated newspaper advertising. We utilised our digital platform to expand the reach of advertisers, so that they can communicate their messaging to new segments of their market, who otherwise may not have read my newspaper content. Since launching my website, my team and I have been able to create bundled packages, which provided advertisers with additional value, which helped generate incremental revenue for my practice. The packages have also served to further differentiate my product from other competing newspapers.

#### Research objective 3

*Utilising adaptive selling practices to increase revenue in line with my monthly and yearly sales budgets*

A further parallel showed that since training and coaching my classified advisors, a review of my sales Figures effective 2015 and 2016, reveals an increase in the sales of special classified products. These performances are summarised in Table 36.

**Table 36 - Sales performances of classified advisors from 2014-2018**

Products	Sales in 2014	Sales 2015	Sales 2016	Sales 2017	Sales 2018
Health Magazine	US\$5,437.00	US\$7,227.00	US\$9,272.00	US \$7,006.00	US \$6,253.00
Property Magazine	US\$2,417.00	US\$4,516.00	US\$6,066.00	US \$3,712.00	US \$3,211.00
Website	US\$2,706.00	US\$3,776.00	*US \$0.00	*US \$0.00	US \$9,975.00
Upselling special features colour, photos, headlines sold among the six classified advisors	US\$96,088.00	US\$126,122	US \$150,577.00	US \$123,008	US \$102,071.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>US\$106,648.00</b>	<b>US\$141,691.00</b>	<b>US\$165,915.00</b>	<b>US\$133,726.00</b>	<b>US\$121,510.00</b>

Source: Davis, C (2019)

*\*Website closed due to upgrade.*

A review of the sales Figures confirmed my core question that adaptive selling can help increase classified advertising revenue during a moderately downturned economy. This increase was attributed to engaging advertisers and providing them with customised mockup full colour display or worded advertisements, which generated an addition 20 to 400 per cent revenue when compared to standardised advertisements (To review an example of a customised advertisement, please refer to Appendix I). However, there were anomalies with the data, since I lost revenue from my website, because it was under redevelopment during the periods 2016 to 2017. Consequently, the data for those periods could have been slightly higher, but not to the extent that I would have achieved budget.

### 7.3 Key reflections on the literature

My research problem centred on the need for me to transition my classified advisors from a state of standardised selling to one of adaptive selling. By providing added value for my advertisers, I was able to increase the revenue in my practice by US\$28,505 or 0.8 per cent and US\$54,000 or 1.5 per cent in 2015 to 2016 respectively (Marshall, 2018, p.1). My practice was the only department, which recorded



consecutive growth in a moderately austere economy. This growth influenced the decision of my senior management to retain existing staff of my practice, which otherwise would have been terminated from the company, due to its underperformance.

I attributed the 2 per cent growth to the intensive training conducted by the National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE) on Saturday January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015, coupled with ongoing group and one-on-one coaching with senior staff and myself, which sought to address deficiencies from the Mystery Shopper programme, conducted in April 2014. The programme revealed that most of my staff only functioned as ad-takers without necessarily engaging advertisers to determine their needs. Consequently, many of my staff missed out on opportunities to cross sell and upsell their products, which precipitated a decline in my sales (Please refer to Figure 8 in the Literature Review Chapter).

### **7.3.1 Change management**

A review of literature confirmed that adaptive selling made it easier for salespersons to upsell or cross sell. Lyus (2011) showed that when salespersons investigated the needs of their clientele, they were better able to customise a product, which was aligned to their needs. This type of selling is ideal for my practice, since it afforded my classified advisors an opportunity to customise content for their advertisers. However, the literature showed me that this practice may prove impracticable in some organisations, where standardised forms of selling may be deemed more suitable to their operations, since it involved less time and labour than adaptive selling.

### **7.3.2 Effects of technology**

Finally, the literature confirmed that advances in digital technology proved a 'double edged sword' for newspaper publishers: on one side they provided additional platforms for disseminating news and advertising opportunities; while on the other, it led to the proliferation of competing advertising social media sites, which targeted traditional classified sectors such as 'Auto', 'Realty', 'Items for Sale', and 'Employment'. Zanks (2019) reported that Facebook revenue for the twelve months ending June 30, 2019 was US\$62.604B, a 29.09% increase year-over-year. Duffett (2015) attributed these exponential increases to the shift from traditional media advertising to digital interactive media advertising by organisations" (Duffett, 2015, p.500).

## **7.4 Implications of my research**

A review of my study confirmed that my classified advisors were better able to upsell when they presented advertisers with a customised mockup. To facilitate this process, it was imperative for my classified advisors to collaborate with graphic designers, so that they can create customised proofs for prospective advertisers. While these proofs resonated with advertisers, they had the effect of placing a heavier workload on graphic designers, who are already charged with increased responsibilities following the retirement of two stenographers and one page planner. However, to assuage their stress, my classified advisors agreed to approach them to design mockups only on Mondays and Wednesdays, which represented their lightest production days.

Another implication of my findings relates to the time intensity of adaptive selling, particularly when my classified advisors have to liaise closely with their graphic artists to create customised mockups and proposals. To mitigate this challenge, I implored my classified advisors to investigate the spending patterns of repeat advertisers, so that my staff would know whether their proposed product would fall within their budgets. As with customised mockups, drafting proposals helped attract new revenue in my practice. However, the research expended tremendous time, energy and resources, which did not necessarily guarantee a sale. To mitigate this wastage, my classified advisors and I tended to engage clients more to determine whether they would be receptive to a mockup. A review in Ad Management Pro (AMP) and Élan, ad booking software for newspapers, revealed that corporate entities and businesspersons tended to be more receptive to customised proposals and mockups than micro or small advertisers.

As a manager oriented to enhancing the service and product delivery for my advertisers, my research necessitated that my senior management allocate funding for specialised training by a third party provider. Sourcing this funding has implications for my research, since senior management is streamlining its expenses due to reduced advertising revenue. Given these restrictions, senior management may deem this cost as an unnecessary expense. Consequently, it is contingent on me to impress upon them that customer service training should be considered an investment, since it would derive immediate and long term dividends for their company and their shareholders. Without this funding, it would be difficult for me to contract the services of a trainer who may hold specialised knowledge outside of my skillset.

The final implication of my research is that coaching can sometimes prove counterproductive for my classified advisors, since it impacted on their selling, callback and production times. However, I sought to minimise these effects by facilitating one-on-one and self-coaching only on Mondays or Wednesday from 9am to 11am, when the advertiser traffic and production work were at their lightest. These times enabled coaches to build the capacity of their colleagues, while still serving the needs of their advertisers.

## **7.5 Recommendations to my practice**

Upon applying the frameworks and data to my work based problem, I identified a range of recommendations, which could help my senior management improve the competitiveness of my practice, particularly in an austere climate. These recommendations are outlined below:

I propose that formal training should address salient deficiencies, which were identified in the data from my classified advisors and their advertisers. A key deficiency, which should be addressed related to how my classified advisors responded to difficult clients. This issue can be confronted by enlisting the services of the National Initiative of Service Excellence, a local quasi-government customer service training agency, which would build the capacity of my classified advisors to respond to different types of difficult advertisers. Other forms of training would focus on defusing potentially hostile situations with dissatisfied advertisers. These sessions would assuage the stress levels among my classified advisors, while showing them how they can proactively address confrontations.

My second recommendation incorporates video content with traditional printed advertising. I envisioned that this content would give my worded advertisers additional value. On November 13, 2017, my practice launched its website, which provided my advertisers with an opportunity to place content on a digitalised platform. While these platforms provided advertisers with extended reach, I recommend integrating them with 30 to 60-second video advertisements, which would complement my suite of printed products. This integrated content would be hosted on the corporate Facebook and the classified websites, which reaches 165,450 followers and 192,000 unique viewers respectively (Ward, 2017, p.4). According to Sabbar and Hyun (2016) video content often enhanced the messaging on social media sites.

Conversely, traditional print platforms can facilitate the placement of digital content by imbedding a Quick Response (QR) code, which can activate digital content via the coded reader. These devices can help my practice remain relevant, particularly among the 18-35 year olds, who prefer digital content over traditional media. I propose to coach my classified advisors how to integrate these codes into their newspaper advertisements, so that they can offer advertisers more options. They also need to master how to sell digital content to advertisers, particularly those over 50-years, who may be unfamiliar with digital technology.

I also propose that senior management should extend training in adaptive selling to two of the traffic clerks in my department, who facilitate bookings from local advertising agencies and brokers. Currently, these clerks adopt an ad-taker orientation to their core duties, where they only action requests without necessarily engaging their clients to consider additional advertising options. Some of the options which tend to be ignored relate to my bundled packages, which incorporate web and social media advertising. When these clerks focus primarily on facilitating the requests of advertisers, they deprive my practice of additional revenue by crossing selling to web and social media platforms, while depriving agencies and brokers of an opportunity to reach additional consumers, who may prefer to read only digital content. Conversely, by focusing exclusively on newspaper advertising, the traffic clerks deprive my practice of digital advertising content, particularly for employment notices and real estate advertisements. By facilitating only newspaper advertisements, traffic clerks not only deprive my practice of additional revenue, but also of additional content for my website, which depends on new advertisements to maintain the interest of viewers and ultimately grow traffic. This traffic can determine whether my website will be utilised by advertisers.

Finally, I recommend that my senior management review commissions paid on worded advertisements for my classified advisors. My strategy of encouraging my classified advisors to upsell worded advertisements has been so successful that it has now become a problem, since they upsell too aggressively on headlines, which has priced our worded products out of the market. This incongruity is prevalent among five out of my six advisors, who place as much as 20 headlines on each advertisement, which has inflated the average cost of a standard 16-worded 7-day advertisement from US\$37.50 without headlines to US\$135.00 or more. This form of overselling has now made my worded advertisements uncompetitive, particularly in a market, where social media sites offer comparatively very low or even free advertising. Due in part to this overselling, my worded product has declined precipitously on average

by 17 per cent annually from 2013 to 2017 (Marshall, 2017 p.2). To mitigate this trend, there is need for management to place commissions on the base cost rather than on the headline cost, so that it would temper overly aggressive selling among my classified advisors.

## **7.6 Final reflections on my action research**

My thesis concludes by reverting to the analogy of the 'perfect storm', which opened my Introductory Chapter. This metaphor mirrors the turbulent environment of my practice, which has led to its traditional revenue declining by 22 per cent in 2017, when compared to prior year. However, my research did confirm that adaptive selling can help my practice weather the tempestuous environment, which led to two years of sustained financial growth from 2015 to 2016.

As an action researcher, I found that only a paucity of literature examined how newspaper advertising managers can improve the performance of their sales staff. A review of literature at the library of the University of Liverpool confirmed that only seven journals focused on increasing sales in newspaper entities. However, only Lorimor (1977) and Betancourt (2014) explored this subject in the context of classified departments. Furthermore, there was a total absence of research, which traversed this phenomenon in micro developing markets such as Barbados. My research has value not only because it filled a void in the literature, but also that it provided a practical guide on how classified advertising managers can engage their sales team to stabilise and grow their advertising revenue in a contracted market. My findings show that the most effective approach of effecting desired change is for advertising managers to engage their sales staff through ongoing training and coaching, so that they in turn can become more engaging with their advertisers. To facilitate this transition, internal trainers must possess a fine blend of soft and technical skills as well as draw on their professional experiences and empirical studies, so that they can impart relevant, rigorous, and rich knowledge to their coachees.

An iterative subject worthy of future research is how advertising managers can apply adaptive selling to upsell or cross sell funerary notices. This investigation could explore how sales staff can sensitively engage funeral directors and their bereaved clients to publish customised obituary notices. For this content to be created, salespersons must collaborate with their graphic artists to create customised artwork, which celebrated the legacy of the deceased. This research also has significance for classified managers, because it will help them to explore ethical topics, which involved identifying best practices of selling obituary or in-memoriam notices to the bereaved without adding to their grieving.

Given the market trends towards digital advertising, opportunities exist for action researchers to investigate how newspaper advertising managers can transition their sales staff from selling purely printed advertising content to selling bundled packages, which incorporates print, website, and social media content. The study can explore whether there were any best practices in selling digital media content, when compared to only print content. This research has relevance for newspaper publishers, particularly classified managers, since it can help them to further differentiate their selling proposition, where they can create new products and additional streams of revenue.

In summary, adaptive selling helped my practice weather elements of the perfect storm, which comprised rapid advances in digital advertising, an anemic economy, and an emerging public perception that newspapers are passé. To shield against these elements, adaptive selling has helped my practice stabilise revenue, particularly for obituary and commercial advertisements, because it helped advertisers distinguish their content. However, with the rapid deterioration of Barbados' economic conditions, which in January 2017, saw its debt-to-GDP ratio spike to nearly 175 per cent (with arrears added to contingent liabilities), making it the world's third highest country with debt-to-GDP ratio in the world, after Japan and Greece (Budget speech delivered June 11, 2018), adaptive selling has proven ineffective in increasing revenue in my practice. Despite these limitations, adaptive selling has made my classified advisors more responsive to the needs of advertisers, which has helped to further safeguard my practice from being a victim of its own success.

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## APPENDIX A



### **Participant Information Sheet Guidelines for thesis *Increasing Revenue in a Declining Market: A Case Study in Barbados***

#### **1. Synopsis**

My study, *Increasing Revenue in a Declining Market: A Case Study in Barbados*, forms part of my thesis for my Doctoral programme in Business Administration of The University of Liverpool, which would seek to enhance the selling skills of classified advisors and sales executives at the Nation Classified, so that they can fully capitalise on new and existing opportunities in the marketplace.

Given that Barbados' economy is only expected anemic growth - less than 0.5 in the first six months of 2015 – which has significantly contracted consumer spend, coupled with micro and smaller clients transferring their advertising to social media, there is a need for classified advisors to engage in more adaptive approaches to selling, so that proposed products and services can be specifically tailored to needs of advertisers.

#### **2. Invitation Paragraph**

You are invited to participate in a research study, which seeks to enhance the product quality of Nation Classified, and improve the selling delivery of its staff, so it can utilise more opportunities in the marketplace, while according greater value to clients. My research is seeking to analyse some of the issues and challenges that classified advisors encounter when selling traditional and non-traditional classified products, so that they can further enhance their skill set in line with international best practices. These practices will enable the Department to accrue new revenue, within a declining market.

Before you decide to participate in this study, it is necessary to understand what it will involve.

We want you to feel very comfortable and relaxed in participating in this research; you are free at any point in time to withdraw from the exercise. All participant responses will be encrypted, recorded anonymously and kept strictly confidential. The final thesis will be viewed by me, the principal researcher; my two supervisors at The University of Liverpool; and the panel of external examiners, who will ask questions during my defense of my final thesis. The thesis will also be available to library users (the public, students, teachers, researchers, and library staff) at The

University of Liverpool's library. This study is separate and distinct from the researcher's professional role.

Against this backdrop, I would like to seek your permission to participate in my study, which would help to enhance the performance of the Department. Your participation is purely voluntary and you are free to decline participation or withdraw at any time during the course of this study.

Should you decide to participate, the information that you provide will be kept in the strictest confidence. Your identity will be kept anonymous.

In the context of my research, my relationship with participants will be as a researcher only. As a manager, I will respect your decision to withdraw, which will not have any impact on my relationship with you, in my capacity as your direct reporting supervisor, which is the Classified Manager of the Nation Publishing Co. Limited and your position as Classified Advisor.

Carefully read the following information and feel free to contact us should you need any further information or clarification.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**3. What is the purpose of the study?**

The nature of this study is to help sustain the viability of Nation Classified. Over the past five years, sales have fallen consistently. This decline has led to the company downsizing its staff, so that it can reduce expenses to ensure its very survival in a severely contracted economy. Against this background, it necessary to gather intelligence from management, sales staff and clients of Nation Classified, with the view of enhancing the quality of the Department's existing products or services, while identifying innovative concepts to provide added value to its clientele, which in turn would further sustain business.

**4. Why have I been chosen to take part?**

You have been selected by the researcher (Chay Davis) to participate in this study due your professional experience and practical knowledge about Nation Classified. With this intelligence, you can help to crystalize issues and identify new opportunities, which would lead to improving the competitiveness of the Department.

**5. Do I have to take part?**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary; we respect your decision to withdraw at any time during this study. If you do decide to participate, we will ensure that interviews will be conducted at your convenience, so that we can minimize any inconvenience to you.

All gathered responses will be coded and would not be linked to any participant, who will also be identified anonymously and pseudonymously. Consequently, your identity would be fully protected.

**6. What will happen if I take part? What are the methods?**

Should you decide to participate in my study, you can expect to verbally answer questions, which relate to the following:

Managers and sales staff of Nation Classified:

- I. Identifying possible work related issues at Nation Classified, which may impede revenue.*
- II. Recommending improvements to the processes and structures at Nation Classified with the view of improving its competitiveness*
- III. Suggesting ideas for new products or services that can help generate new revenue for Nation Classified*

On your approval your responses will be audio recorded for transcription purposes only. Your identity will be kept strictly anonymous and will be referred to as “Respondent A, B, or C” or pseudonymously such as Pansy, Paula, and Patricia etc.

**7. Who are the researchers and who will be carrying out the tests?**

All interviews will be conducted by Chay Davis, the principal investigator.

We envisage that each interview, which would be conducted corporately or and individual, is expected to last approximately 30-45 minutes, which would be dependent on the length of responses by the interviewee.

**8. Expenses and / or payments**

We do not anticipate that participants will incur any costs or expenses through their involvement in this study. Consequently, participation will be purely on a voluntary basis.

**9. What are the responsibilities of participants?**

Participants are free to answer questions of their choosing. However, participants are expected to answer questions openly. Audio recordings of the interview will only be conducted if participants give their consent. If you feel uncomfortable with your interviews being recorded, we will not conduct any recordings, but will transcribe them instead. However, in the event that you still feel uncomfortable, you are welcome to withdraw from the study.

**10. Are there any risks in taking part?**

There are very little or no perceivable risks participating in this study. However, some participants may feel a slight level of discomfort in divulging issues that may impact on your selling practices to the principal researcher, Chay Davis, who is also their direct manager. We would only ask information, which relates to the central theme of this study. This study is separate and distinct from the researcher’s professional role.

Another risk that respondents may experience involves dedicating 30 minutes of their personal or professional time to participate in this study. To minimize this issue, we propose to conduct interviews at your convenience.



**11. Are there any benefits in taking part?**

A host of direct and indirect benefits can be derived by participating in this study. These benefits exist at both a personal and professional level. The research would lay the groundwork for the launch of more new products and services, creating incremental revenue for Nation Classified, which would provide greater value to its clientele and broaden opportunities for sales staff to increase their commissions and help the department to achieve budget.

**12. What if I am unhappy or if there is a problem?**

If you are unhappy, or if there is a problem, please feel free to inform the student investigator, Chay Davis at telephone number 430-5514 (work direct), 262-2429 (mobile), 416-2429 (home), [chaydavis@nationnews.com](mailto:chaydavis@nationnews.com) (work email) or [davischay@hotmail.com](mailto:davischay@hotmail.com) (home email) and he will try to help.

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint which you feel you cannot come to him then you should contact the Research Governance Officer at [ethics@liv.ac.uk](mailto:ethics@liv.ac.uk). When contacting the Research Governance Officer, please provide details of the name or description of the study (so that it can be identified), the researcher(s) involved, and the details of the complaint you wish to make.

**13. Will my participation be kept confidential?**

As stated in item eight (8), all participation will remain confidential.

**14. What will happen to the results of the study?**

New concepts and products coming out of the study will be shared with respondents and management of the Nation Publishing Co. Limited. Results of the research will be made available for publication in an academic journal.

**15. What will happen if I want to stop taking part?**

Participants can withdraw at any time without explanation. Results up until the period of withdrawal may be used, if the participant is happy for this to be done. Otherwise participants may request that they are destroyed and no further use is made of them. A decision to decline or discontinue will not negatively impact on the participant's relationship with the researcher in anyway.

**16. Who can I contact if I have further questions?**

You can contact the principal researcher at the following addresses:

Mr. Chay Davis,  
Principal investigator,  
71, 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue,  
Well House,  
St. Philip  
(Home): 416-3920 (Home)  
(Work) 430-5514  
(Mobile) 262-2429

(Work email) [chaydavis@nationnews.com](mailto:chaydavis@nationnews.com)

September 5, 2015

## APPENDIX B



### Committee on Research Ethics

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#### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:** *To increase the revenue of the Nation's Classified department in a down turned market*

**Researcher(s):** Mr. Chay Davis

**Please tick box**

1. I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated [DATE] for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
3. I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.
4. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.
5. I understand and agree that my participation may be audio recorded and I am aware of and consent to your use of these recordings for the following purposes **(which must be specified)**
6. I agree to take part in the above study.



## APPENDIX C



### Survey to investigate the Selling Techniques of Classified Advisors

#### Introduction

*Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research that forms part of my Doctorate in Business Administration with the University of Liverpool. My thesis which is 50,000-words focuses on improving revenue in the Nation Classified Department through adaptive selling practices among classified advisors. To investigate this phenomenon, I am expected to conduct interviews with each classified advisor, so that I can attain unique insights into his or her selling practices. In this capacity, my function will only be that of a researcher. The information gathered will only be the purposes of my thesis.*

*Your comments, which will be kept strictly confidential, will be used only for the purpose of my research. Responses will be encrypted, which will be identified by pseudonyms only. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary; you are free to withdraw at any time you want. For more information on what is expected of you, please refer to the Participant Information Sheet.*

#### Characteristics

**Sex:** (Male) (Female)

**Job position:**

**Age range:** (18-24) (25-34) (35-44) (45-54) (55-64) (65 or older)

**Education:** (No schooling completed), (Nursery School to primary school level), (Secondary school level), (Associate degree level), (Bachelor's degree level), (Master's degree level), (Professional degree level), or (Doctorate level)

Tenure at the Nation Publishing Co. Limited:

**JOB SATISFACTION**

**1. What I enjoy most about working as a classified advisor is:**

- I. Ensuring that clients are happy with my service delivery:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
  
- II. Providing emotional support to grieving clients:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
  
- III. Resolving the problems of clients:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
  
- IV. Helping clients grow their business  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
  
- V. Other:.....  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**2. What I dislike most about my work as a classified advisor is:**

- I. Working with difficult clients:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
  
- II. Sourcing new business:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
  
- III. Cross selling to other publications  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
  
- IV. Conducting callbacks to clients:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
  
- V. Other:.....  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**3. I become motivated as a classified advisor because of:**

- I. The commission that I receive on headlines and other sell ons:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
  
- II. The recognition from management :

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

III. The satisfaction that I receive when I help clients:

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

IV. The freedom I receive to create new products:

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

V. Other:.....

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**ADAPTIVE SELLING:**

Adaptive selling is defined “as the altering of sales practices during a customer based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation” (Spiro and Weitz, p.62, 1990). These practices include selling up, presenting clients with mock up advertisements, particularly those that are customized.

**1. I mostly engage in adaptive selling practices when I:**

I. Upsell obituary notices:

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

II. Upsell in-memoriam notices:

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

III. Upsell business related advertisements:

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

IV. Upsell all advertisements:

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

V. Other:.....

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**2. It is easier for me to engage in adaptive selling when I:**

I. Conduct research into the products or services of clients:

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

II. Have a strong relationship with my clients:

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

- III. Am passionate about a product or service:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- IV. Can produce mockup ads:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- V. Other:.....  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**3. It is easier for me to engage in adaptive selling when my manager adopts an:**

- I. Autocratic style:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- II. Democratic style:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- III. *Laissez-faire*:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- IV. *Coaching Style*:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- V. Other:.....  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**APPLYING SELLING TO STIMULATE SALES:**

**1. Certain advertisements are easier to upsell than others:**

- I. Sell obituary notices:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- II. Sell in-memoriam notices:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- III. Sell business related advertisements:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- IV. All advertisements:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)



- V. Other:.....  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**2. Adaptive selling is most challenging when I am:**

- I. Unfamiliar with services or products of the client:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- II. Selling to private clients:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- III. Selling to commercial clients:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- IV. Selling to families of the deceased:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- V. Other:.....  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**3. I can better enhance my adaptive selling skills through:**

- I. Formal training:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- II. Mentoring:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- III. Role playing exercises:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- IV. Reading relevant manager literature:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- V. Other:.....  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**4. It is easier for me to upsell an in-memoriam notice when I produce:**

- I. No mockup:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- II. An in-memoriam notice of another deceased:

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

- III. A generic mockup:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- IV. A customised mockup:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- V. Other:.....  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**5. It is easier for me to upsell an obituary notice when I present to my client:**

- I. No mockup:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- II. An obituary notice of another deceased:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- III. A generic mockup:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- IV. A customized mockup:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- V. Other:.....  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**6. It is easier for me to upsell an in-memoriam notice when I start the process:**

- I. One month earlier:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- II. Three week earlier:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- III. Two weeks earlier:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- IV. One week earlier:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- V. Other:.....

(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

**7. It is easier for me to upsell when I engage with clients:**

- I. On the telephone:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- II. Face to face:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- III. Via email:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- IV. Via third party:  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)
- V. Other:.....  
(1. Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

## APPENDIX D

My line of questioning was based on Sofo et al's (2006) schema of 10 types of reflective questions, which can uncover rich and unique insights for interviewers into multiple dimensions of their organisational problem.

**Table 37 - Example of qualitative questions**

<b>Code F - Seeking further details type questions</b>		<b>Purpose of question</b>
Question	Please help me understand if the prime motivation of a sales person is to earn and ultimately increase his or her commission, why is it then that our classified advisors stated that they were primarily motivated by the need to help advertisers grow their business?	Expanding on information already provided
Response from Subject B	<i>"Hmmm, that's a difficult question to answer [Pausing for approximately 10-seconds]. I suppose it is important to open a relationship first than immediately look for a sale. "...when you strike up a strong rapport with your client, they are more likely to return to you to conduct their business" (September 11, 2017).</i>	
'Subject A'	<i>"I tend to agree. While I recognise that every client is different and has different advertising needs, I try to be warm and friendly towards them, so that I can win their trust and maintain their loyalty. It is this confidence that gives me more business" (September 11, 2017).</i>	
<b>Code A - Action or Anticipatory questions</b>		<b>Purpose of question</b>
Question	What can be done to better motivate classified advisors to earn their commissions?	To identify the best intervention to address the situation
Response Subject A	<i>For me personally, I always advise younger salespersons with no responsibilities, if you want to do well on the job – get yourself into debt!" (September 11, 2017).</i>	
<b>Code P - Probing questions</b>		<b>Purpose of question</b>
Question	How do you go about conducting your research?	To fill in the gaps of missing of missing data
Response Subject C	Once I have time and dealing with a first time client which happens a lot. I tend to do some research. <i>"When I conduct research, particularly if I am servicing an unfamiliar account, I usually view what the client did previously in AMP or Élan [Booking software], so that I don't under charge" (September 13, 2017).</i>	
Subject B	<i>"When I do research it's usually to see what the client has done before, so that I can recommend improvements to his or her artwork" (September 13, 2017).</i>	

<b>Code E - Probing questions</b>		<b>Purpose of question</b>
Question	The company invests several thousand dollars on formal corporate training every year, yet classified advisors gave equal preference to engage in free one on one coaching. Can you explain this finding?	To make judgments about worth, value and wholeness of a situation
Response Subject B	<i>Compared to training “I have always found that my senior colleagues provided me with richer and relevant knowledge when they coach me, since they know my strengths and weaknesses and are definitely familiar with my [organisation]” (September 13, 2017).</i>	
<b>Code F - Seeking further details type questions</b>		<b>Purpose of question</b>
Response Subject C	<i>“I prefer participative coaching, since it allowed me to enhance my knowledge in a supportive environment, where I can ask my coach questions. Ultimately, it enables me to be better at what I do” (September 13, 2017).</i>	Expanding on information already provided
Response Subject B	<i>“Like my colleague, I definitively prefer participative coaching, cause I can learn in a stress free setting without being self-conscious of being reprimanded if I get something wrong. (September 13, 2017).</i>	
Response Subject C	<i>I also love the personalised one-on-one experience of coaching, because you have enough time to ask questions. That said though, I equally love formal training, because you get to leave the office, can hear from someone who can provide a fresh and independent perspective” (September 13, 2017).</i>	

Source: Author’s own work

## APPENDIX E



### **Survey on Nation Classified** *We Value Your Opinion*

This survey, forming part of a study with the University of Liverpool, seeks to understand your preferences when booking display or worded advertisements with Nation Classified.

The results from this survey will be used to improve future products and services at Nation Classified.

- All collected data will be anonymous and used strictly for academic research purposes.
- There are no risks involved with completing this survey.
- The collected data will be stored securely and protected by a password for up to a year and then destroyed.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the Nation Publishing Co. Limited at 430-5514 (direct) or 262-2429 (mobile).

#### **Question Title**

##### **1. Age range:**

(18-24) (25-34) (35-44) (45-54) (55-64) (65 or older)

##### **2. Sex:**

(Male) (Female)

##### **3. Education:**

Education: (No schooling completed), (Nursery School to primary school level), (Secondary school level), (Associate degree level), (Bachelor's degree level), (Master's degree level), (Professional degree level), or (Doctorate level)

##### **4. Which sector best describes your business?**

(Funerary Services) (Services) (Education) (Contractor) (Recruitment) (Real Estate) (Auto Dealer) (Other)

## **5. Service Delivery:**

**Please select the statements that best represent how you feel about the service of Nation Classified:**

I am satisfied with the level of responses I receive from my advertisements at Nation Classified  
(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

I am satisfied with the amount of thought that goes into producing my advertisement from classified advisors  
(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

I prefer my classified advisor to be proactive in creating advertisements which provide maximum results:  
(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

I am satisfied with the service delivery from my classified advisor:  
(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

My classified advisor is friendly and approachable  
(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

I prefer when my classified advisor recommends other advertising options in the Nation's print or electronic publication or media.  
(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

## **6. Creativity**

**Please respond to the statement that best represents how you feel about the creativity of the Nation Classified:**

I prefer my advertisements to stand out from other advertisements:  
(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

I prefer to place high impact advertisements  
(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

I always receive a better response when I add features to my advertisement such as colour, images, photographs and headlines:  
(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

I prefer when classified advisors are creative when designing my advertisements  
(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

## **6. Value for money**

**Please respond to the statement that best represents how you feel about value for money Nation Classified provides:**

(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

Nation Classified represents good value for money:

(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

I am willing to pay a little more for added features such as adding colour, images, photographs and headlines:

(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

I receive better results from my advertisements when I pay for added features such as colour, images, photographs, and headlines:

(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)

Advertisements that include added features (such as colour, images, photographs and headlines) provide me with better value for money, when compared to advertisements without added features:

(1.Strongly disagree) (2. Disagree) (3. Uncertain) (4. Agree) (5. Strongly Agree)



## APPENDIX F

Blackford (2010) identified seven types of 'difficult clients', which were defined as 'the angry or hostile client', who expresses his or her frustration in the form of misdirected anger towards staff; 'the principled or zealous client', who is impractical and overly idealistic; 'the overinvolved client', who has unreasonable expectations about the product or service; 'the emotionally needy or dependent client', who may be emotionally fragile or insecure; 'the dishonest client', who engages in fraudulent practices; 'the depressed or mentally unstable client', who may refuse to engage with staff; and 'the unwilling client', who refuses to accept advice, since they come with their own preconceived notions. Given these diverse descriptions, it was necessary for me to elicit the views of my classified advisors to determine what they constituted by 'difficult clients'.

## APPENDIX G

### CUSTOMER SERVICE CHARTER OF THE NATION CLASSIFIED

#### Ten Commandments of Making Ordinary Moments Extraordinary

##### **Smile as part of our 'uniform':**

1. Greet every client with eye contact and a warm genuine smile – whether in person or on the phone. A smile transcends any language or cultural barrier. A smile is infectious and paves the way for positive interaction between yourself and your clients.

##### **People love to hear their names:**

2. When a client hears their name it is like music to the ears. Let's create a harmonious environment by addressing our client by his or her name – rather using worn out expressions such as *sir, madam or mam*.

##### **Open a relationship rather than close a sale:**

3. Successful businesses are built on relationships; *so let's make building them our business*.

##### **Telephone etiquette:**

4. Answer phones within 3 rings with a smile. Eliminate the transfer of calls wherever possible.

##### **Email etiquette:**

5. Respond warmly to all emails within 1 hour, even if you are confirming receipt. Action emails within a 24 hour period, wherever possible.

##### **We deal with people first:**

6. Treat every client with dignity and empathy. See them as a *human being* with visible or hidden emotions such as fear, anger or sadness.

##### **Live up to your true name:**

7. Be an advisor not only in name, but also in *deed*. (See back for further details)

##### **Dress for success:**

8. Our personal appearance is part and parcel of our brand. When we look our *best*, we can perform at our *best*.

**Listen more talk less:**

9. Most people think “selling” is the same as “talking”. Top performers know that careful listening is the key to unlocking their success. *We were born with two ears and one mouth, so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.*

**Start the same way we finished:**

10. After starting right, let’s finish right and make that lasting positive impression on our clientele (both external and internal).

Thank your client for choosing The Nation and hand them what could be one of their most prized possession – your business card.

‘Top the icing on the cake’ by encouraging them to enjoy their day.

**(Sorry guys, 10 Commandments wasn’t enough, finally)**

**Enjoy life:**

11. Take time to enjoy your family, friends and interests. When you’re happy in life, it normally ‘flows over’ to our work.

**Be a Sommelier:**

A bartender (like an order taker) waits behind the bar for customers, and fulfills requests for drinks on demand.

However, a sommelier (Advisor), that’s a different story. A sommelier is more consultative in nature, asking questions of their customers, and making a final recommendation based on their customers’ responses.

A sommelier combines product knowledge with his or her ability to uncover buying motives.









**Table 38 - Comparison between bartender and sommelier**

<b>Bartender Vs. Sommelier</b>		
<b>Order taker:</b>	<b>Item:</b>	<b>Advisor:</b>
Does what the customer asks	(1)	Does what's best for the customer
<i>Gives</i> great information	(2)	<i>Gets</i> great information
Passive	(3)	Proactive
<i>Waits</i> for the phone to ring	(4)	Makes the phone ring
Sells canned products	(5)	Customising products to suit the needs of clients <i>(Tailor makes the right 'product,' to fit the 'right client', to achieve the right results')</i>
Thinks within the box	(6)	Thinks outside of the box
Meets clients expectations	(7)	Wows clients - exceeds their expectations

## APPENDIX H

Four variations of worded advertisements are depicted below. The first on the left is a standard advertisement, which comprises only three headlines. This advertisement, which is the lowest priced option, provides minimal returns to the advertiser and my practice. The second and third variants depict high impact advertisements, which provide maximum returns to the advertiser and my practice. Advertisers report that they receive greater traction when they place this type of content. However, the fourth variation represent the highest impact advertisement, since the embed Quick Response code enabled advertisers to reach consumers via newspaper, web, and social media.

The first sample depicts the type of advertisement, which is sold by ad-takers, whereas the final three, particularly the fourth, depict the advertisements, which are sold by adaptive sellers.

<p><b>BROWNE'S AUTO ZONE</b> PARTS FOR BMW Mitsubishi Suzuki Call 424-9291</p>	<p><b>BROWNE'S Auto Zone Ltd. PARTS FOR</b></p> 	<p><b>BROWNE'S Auto Zone Ltd. PARTS FOR</b></p> 
	 <p>TOYOTA</p>  <p>MITSUBISHI</p>	 <p>TOYOTA</p>  <p>MITSUBISHI</p>
	 <p><b>SUZUKI</b></p> <p>Call: 424-9291</p>	 <p><b>SUZUKI</b></p> <p>Call: 424-9291</p>
	<p><b>Sample A</b> US\$150.00 for 30-days</p>	<p><b>Sample B</b> US\$200.00 for 30-days</p>

**BROWNE'S**  
**Auto Zone Ltd.**  
PARTS FOR



Call: 424-9291

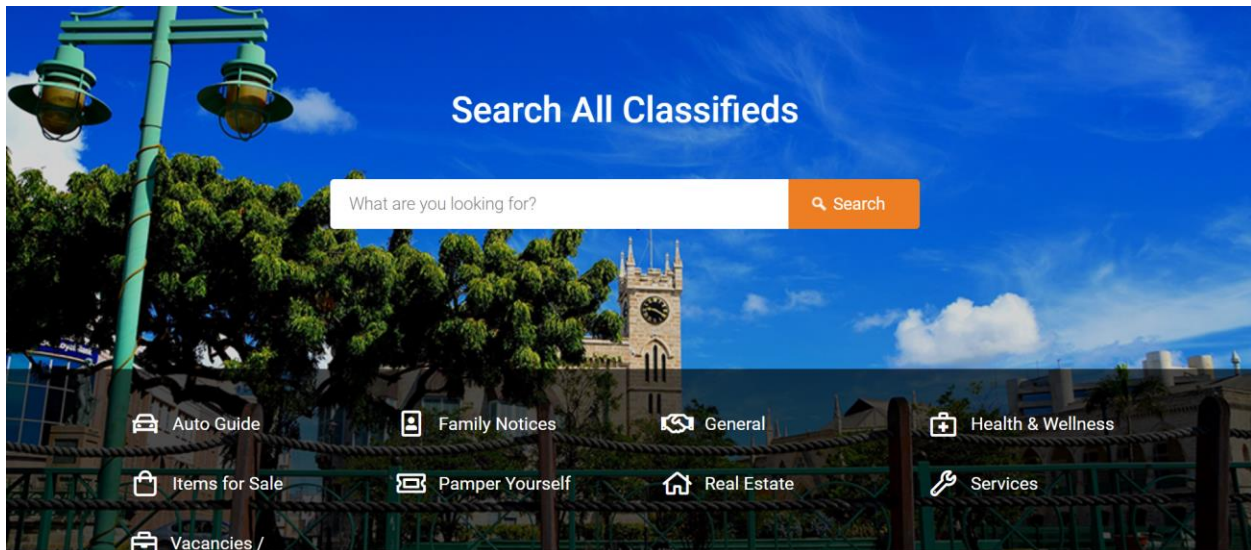


**Sample D**

\$750.00 for a \$30-day worded newspaper advertisement, an additional \$10.00 for the QR code and \$212.00 for the bundled web package inclusive premium listing on landing page, preferential placement on webpage and sharing on *Facebook*

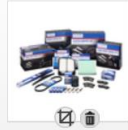
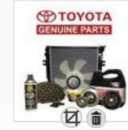
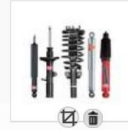
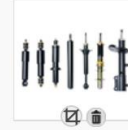
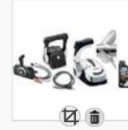
**Sample D (Continued)**

Classified website depicted part of our bundled package linked to the newspaper.





\$0.00 each



[? Help](#)



## APPENDIX I

Below are three variations of obituaries. The first sample depicts the standard worded obituary, which details basic information about the funeral service, but offers very little emotional value to the advertiser.

The second sample depicts the standard display obituary, which like its worded counterpart, details basic information about the funeral service, but carries some emotional value. The third sample depicts a display obituary, which details artwork that carries high emotional value.

The first sample depicts the type of obituary, which is sold by ad-takers, whereas the final two, particularly the third, depict obituaries, which are sold by adaptive sellers.



**Death is announced of Maxwell, Adrian Clairmonte aged 62, also known as 'Gentle Giant',** late of Apt 1, Clapham Road, Christ Church and formerly of No 10 Culloden Road, St. Michael. Retired Technical Operations Officer. Son of the late Gwendoline Rosita Arthur and Clement Irvin Arthur. Brother of George, Clement, Barbara, Michael and Adrian Hollingsworth. Uncle of Nicole Hollingsworth-Greenidge, Kenola, Ke-asha and Kemuel Greenidge, Julia, Diamond, Donte and Ashley Hollingsworth and Thandeka Smith. Relative of the Bentham, Cox, Walcott, and Wilkinson families. Friend of Michael Brathwaite, the Starcom and Caribbean Media Corporation families. Former husband of Vita Padmore. The funeral of the late Adrian Clairmonte Maxwell, leaves Tudor's Funeral Home, The Ivy, St. Michael on Monday February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 12:30pm for Bethel Methodist Church, Bay Street, St. Michael where relatives and friends are asked to meet at 2:00pm for the Service. The cortege will then proceed to Westbury Cemetery. The organist and choir are asked to attend. Flowers may be sent to Tudor's Funeral Home, no later than 12:15pm on Monday. The body will repose for viewing in the Chapel of Tudor's Funeral Home on Sunday from 4:00pm until 6:00pm. Condolences to the family of the late Adrian Clairmonte Maxwell may be posted online at [www.tudorsfuneralhome.com](http://www.tudorsfuneralhome.com)

**Sample A**  
Specifications: 1.3" x 6"  
US\$45.00 for 1-day

aged 62, also known as 'Gentle Giant', late of Apt 1, Clapham Road, Christ Church and formerly of No. 10 Culloden Road, St. Michael. Retired Technical Operations Officer.  
**Son of** the late Gwendoline Rosita Arthur and Clement Irvin Arthur.  
**Brother of** George, Clement, Barbara, Michael and Adrian Hollingsworth.  
**Uncle of** Nicole Hollingsworth-Greenidge, Kenola, Ke-asha and Kemuel Greenidge, Julia, Diamond, Donte and Ashley Hollingsworth and Thandeka Smith.  
**Relative of** the Bentham, Cox, Walcott and Wilkinson families.  
**Friend of** Michael Brathwaite, the Starcom and Caribbean Media Corporation families.  
**Former husband of** Vita Padmore.  
The funeral of the late **Trevor Clairmonte Hollingsworth**, leaves **Tudor's Funeral Home**, The Ivy, St. Michael on Monday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018, at 12:30p.m. for Bethel Methodist Church, Bay Street, St. Michael where relatives and friends are asked to meet at 2:00p.m. for the Service. The cortege will then proceed to Westbury Cemetery. The organist and choir are asked to attend. Flowers may be sent to **Tudor's Funeral Home**, no later than 12:15p.m. on Monday. The body will repose for viewing in the Chapel of **Tudor's Funeral Home** on Sunday from 4:00p.m. until 6:00p.m. Condolences to the family of the late **Trevor Clairmonte Hollingsworth** may be posted online at [www.tudorsfuneralhome.com](http://www.tudorsfuneralhome.com).

**Sample B (Black and white generic display obituary)**  
Specifications: 7" x 5.2" or quarter page  
US\$250.00 for 1-day

**Adrian**  
Clairmonte  
Maxwell

aged 62, also known as 'Gentle Giant', late of Apt 1, Clapham Road, Christ Church and formerly of No. 10 Culloden Road, St. Michael. Retired Technical Operations Officer.  
**Son of** the late Gwendoline Rosita Arthur and Clement Irvin Arthur.  
**Brother of** George, Clement, Barbara, Michael and Adrian Hollingsworth.  
**Uncle of** Nicole Hollingsworth-Greenidge, Kenola, Ke-asha and Kemuel Greenidge, Julia, Diamond, Donte and Ashley Hollingsworth and Thandeka Smith.  
**Relative of** the Bentham, Cox, Walcott and Wilkinson families.  
**Friend of** Michael Brathwaite, the Starcom and Caribbean Media Corporation families.  
**Former husband of** Vita Padmore.

The funeral of the late **Trevor Clairmonte Hollingsworth**; leaves **Tudor's Funeral Home**, The Ivy, St. Michael on Monday, February 26th, 2018, at 12:30p.m. for Bethel Methodist Church, Bay Street, St. Michael where relatives and friends are asked to meet at 2:00p.m. for the Service. The cortege will then proceed to Westbury Cemetery. The organist and choir are asked to attend. Flowers may be sent to **Tudor's Funeral Home**, no later than 12:15p.m. on Monday. The body will repose for viewing in the Chapel of **Tudor's Funeral Home** on Sunday from 4:00p.m. until 6:00p.m. Condolences to the family of the late **Trevor Clairmonte Hollingsworth** may be posted online at [www.tudorsfuneralhome.com](http://www.tudorsfuneralhome.com).

**Sample C (Full colour display customised obituary)**

Specifications: 7" x 5.2" or quarter page

US\$450.00 for 1-day