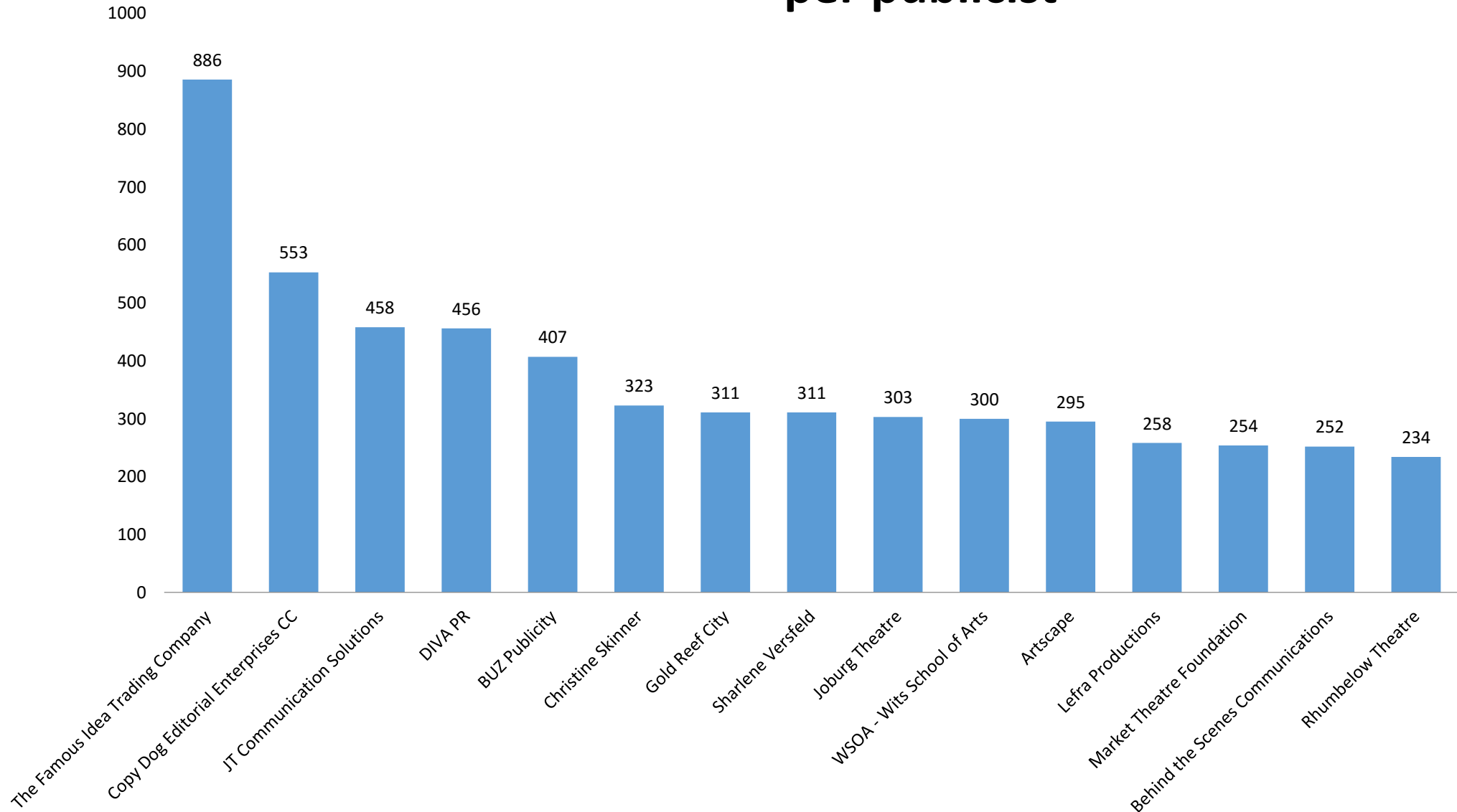


**THE ROLE OF THE PUBLICIST IN
PERFORMING ARTS ORGANISATIONS
IN SOUTH AFRICA: 2010 - 2016**

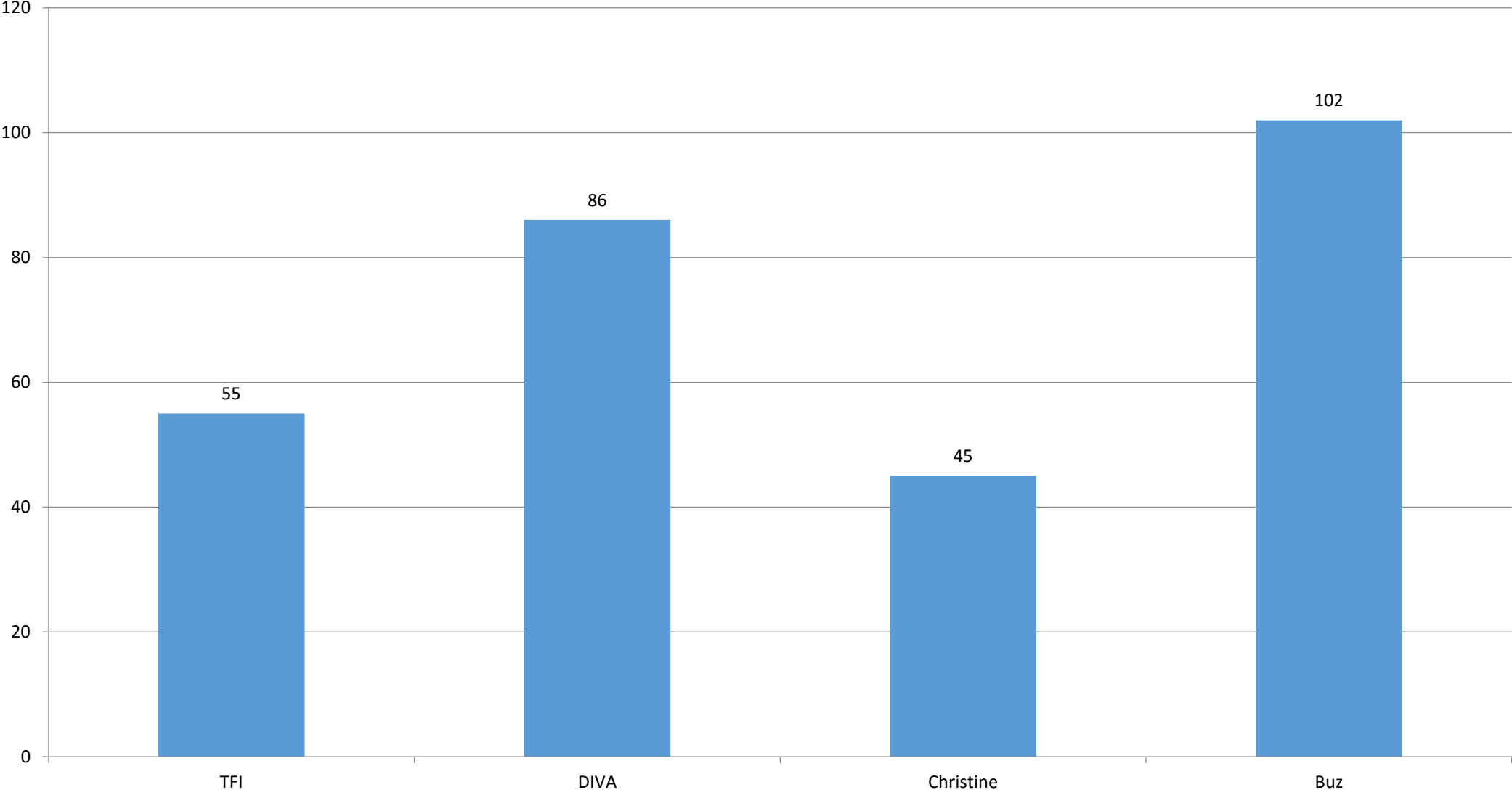
Fiona Gordon

Connecting Art and Audiences

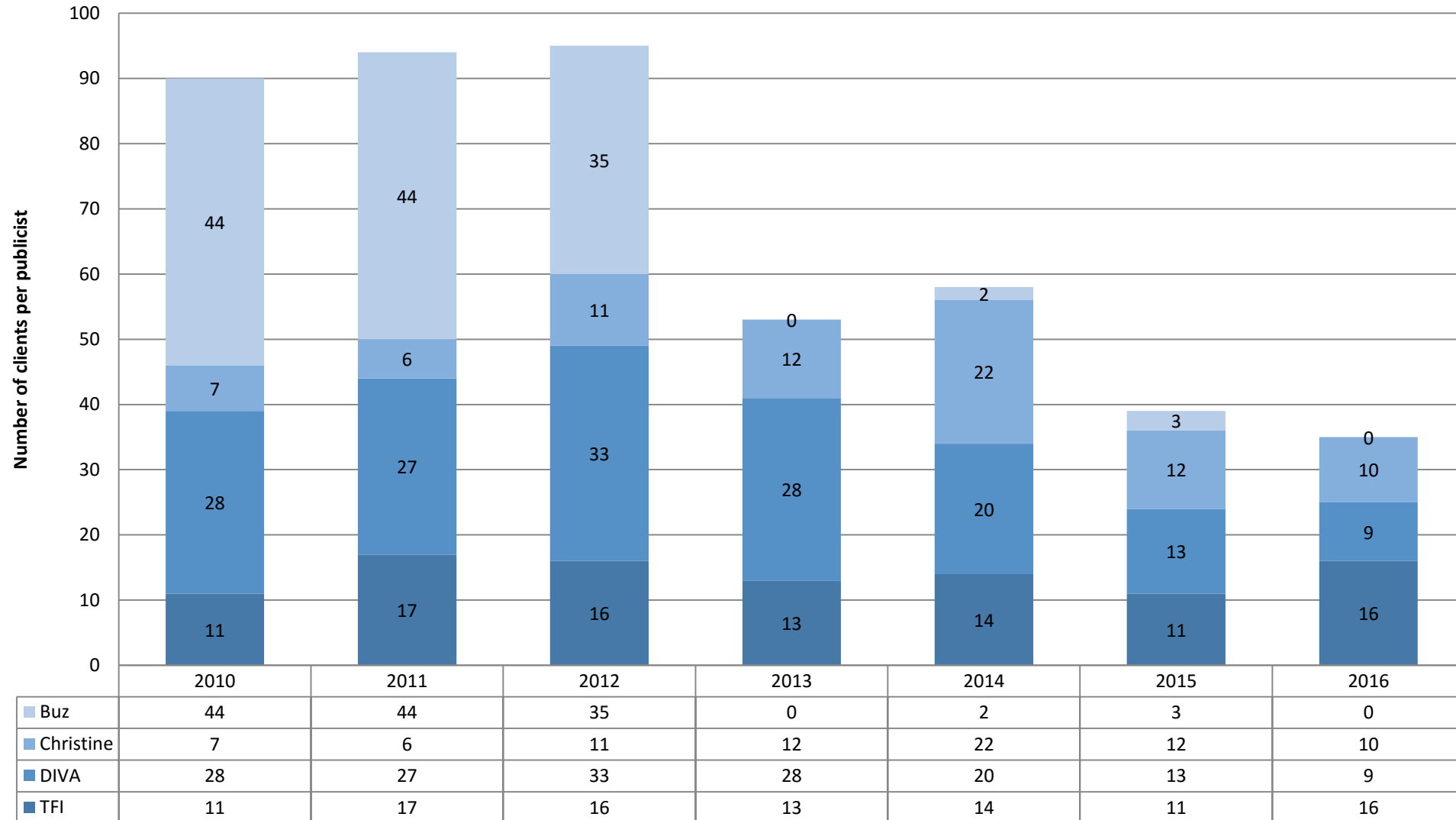
Number of press releases issued per publicist



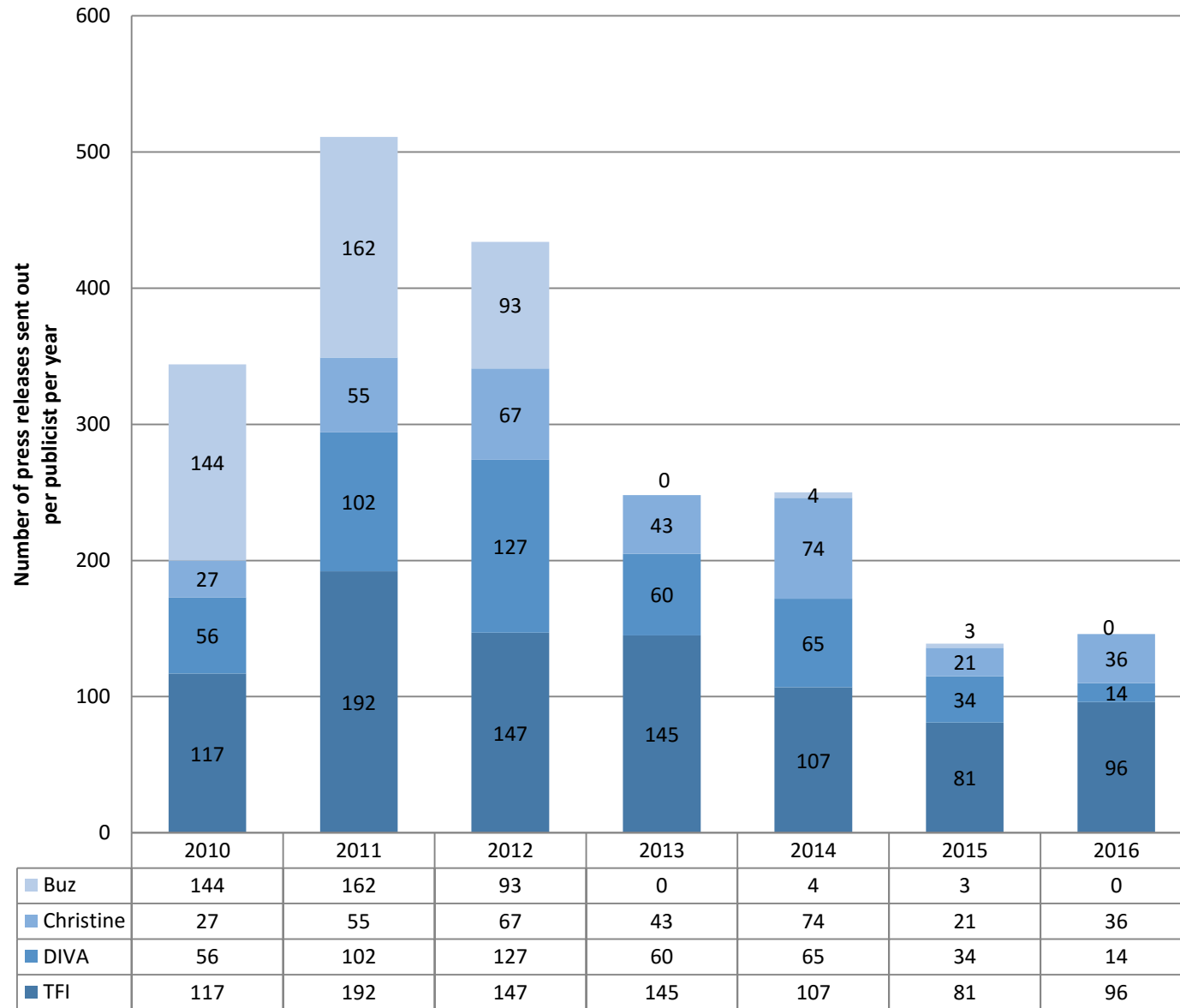
Overall number of clients per publicity company: 2010 - 2016



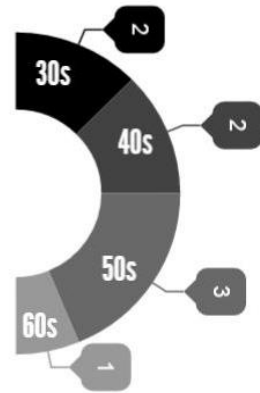
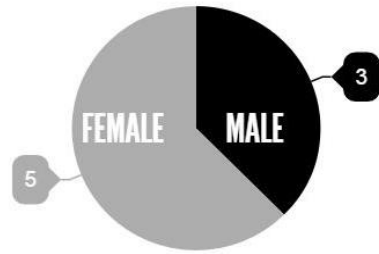
Number of clients per publicist per year: 2010 - 2016



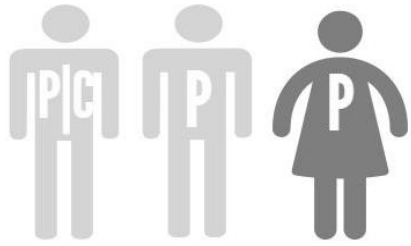
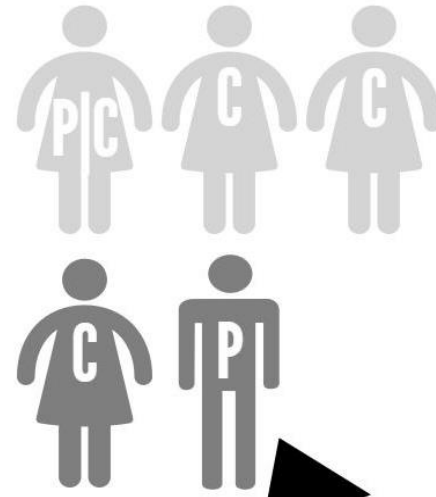
Use of Artslink by 4 Publicists 2010 - 2016







■ CPT (37.50%)
 ■ JHB (62.50%)



TDM'S THREE DEFINING PERIODS



Source: Adapted from Johnson, Christensen and Kagermann (2008); Eyring, Johnson and Nair (2011)

1994

1996

2007

2008

2010

2017

P

roduct

lace

romotion

rice

eople

rocess

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE?

“arts management is not just marketing to maximise ticket sales; it builds public interest on the basis of reputation and distinction within the relevant social space, a space that comprises not only actual and potential audiences (as ticket buyers), but also critics, experts, politicians, sponsors and patrons, and partners” (Bendixen 2000, 11).

**NEWS, PREVIEWS, REVIEWS
and THREATS TO ARTS COVERAGE**

“It’s not the publicist’s job to sell tickets – there is often misunderstanding about this – it’s not about them getting about bums on seats, but almost single-handedly, they are responsible for *enabling* that process”.

- Galloway (2017)

SUM OF THE PARTS =

CHANGING BUSINESS MODELS

P

product

place

promotion

price

people

process

effective
stakeholder
engagement
through
strategic
leadership

As long as artists are
making work,
there will be a need for
ways to connect them to
their audiences.

HOW?:

- **Planning and processes**
- **Effective engagement tactics**
- **Programming and Communications Strategy**

As long as the public wants access to information, there will be a need for mechanisms of curating and distributing that information.

AMPLIFICATION OF MESSAGING:

- Quality Content**
- Friends and Followers**
- Audience Feedback Mechanisms**
- Monitoring**

What is the primary currency in the context of connecting the audience and the art?

INFLUENCERS

Eliciting positive reactions from the external world is a highly complex, long-term arts-management task far beyond mere advertising and public relations.

(Ellis and Mishra 2004, 11)

The intermediary role traditionally played by the publicist in channeling information from artists to the media is no longer of the significance that it once was, in that there are many more channels through which the public can and do get their information.

That does not necessarily mean that the role of the intermediary is negated, merely that it requires different skills, and a different approach.

While it is clear that relationships are currency in the context of connecting the audience and the art; the fundamental relationship in this context is perhaps then no longer the relationship between the publicist and the editor (or media), but rather the relationship between the programming process, and the arts promotions process. Again, this does not mean that the role of the publicist is no longer valid; but rather that the person directing communications (and therefore audience and stakeholder perceptions of and relationships with the organisation) should be positioned at a high strategic level inside arts organisations with scope to fully engage with programming from inception, using their expertise to contribute to the value chain through the leveraging of feedback mechanisms and audience engagement strategies; rather than at a more operational level, merely 'implementing' from outside of the organisations. While recognising that funding is a challenge, and not all organisations might be able to afford the services of someone in this position full time or even on a regular basis; this speaks not necessarily to an approach to employment or business models, but rather the necessity for an alternative framing of the role of the communications professional within the context of arts organisations in South Africa.