CASE DOCKET ANALYSIS: AN EFFECTIVE CRIME INFORMATION PRODUCT FOR CRIMINAL INVESTIGATORS, CRIME ANALYSTS AND CRIME RESEARCHERS

Johan van Graan and Marcel van der Watt

ABSTRACT
The use of case docket analysis as a crime information product is often documented as significant to many criminal fact-finding activities. Despite the often theoretical reference to case docket analysis in literature, such as research papers and crime reports, the understanding and real-life experiences of criminal investigators, crime analysts and crime researchers regarding the practicability of this product remain silent. Insight into the dynamics of case docket analysis could inform these role-players of the value of case docket analysis as an effective crime information product. This article explores and describes criminal investigators’, crime analysts’ and crime researchers’ first-hand understanding and operational experiences about the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of case docket analysis to assist in uncovering the hidden transcripts in crime data and translating such data into usable empirical evidence. The data was generated from a sample of Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences (FCS) Unit detectives, experts from the Investigative Psychology Unit (IPU) of the South African Police Service (SAPS) and crime analysts and information managers attached to the SAPS’s Crime Information Management Centre (CIMC) and Organised Crime Unit. The experiences of the selected sample were probed by means of semi-structured interviews. From the results of this research it was confirmed that docket analysis serves to understand holistically the different dynamics and contributing factors of crime, fuel policing and investigative decision making, analyse specific crime incidents in terms of, amongst others, modus operandi, possibilities for linkages and narrows down the scope of an investigation. This study concluded that case docket analysis is information-driven and a viable and effective crime information product that has the potential to narrow the focus of criminal investigation. Finally, this article recommends the implementation of a more specific and analytical approach to case docket analysis as opposed to a generalised and haphazard approach. It is the view of the authors that the aforementioned approach would contribute significantly to a more pragmatic methodology which gives due credence to criminal investigation as a systematic and organised search for the truth.

Keywords: Docket analysis; police dockets as crime information source; operational experiences of crime investigators and crime analysts.

INTRODUCTION
Case docket analysis is generally viewed amongst investigators as either an administrative function conducted by those in a supervisory role or a reactive initiative undertaken after a sudden increase in a specific crime has been identified, in an attempt to explain the causes thereof. Staggering arrays of crime information products to reduce the level of criminal activity in society have been generated by professionals, politicians and lay people in the so-

1. This article was extracted from a Masters dissertation titled: The value of docket analysis in stranger rape investigations: A case study in Port Elizabeth (Van der Watt, M. MTech in Forensic Investigation, UNISA, 2012).
2. Senior Lecturer, Department of Police Practice, School of Criminal Justice, College of Law, University of South Africa, E-mail: vgraajg@unisa.ac.za
3. Lecturer, Department of Police Practice, School of Criminal Justice, College of Law, University of South Africa. E-mail: vdwatm1@unisa.ac.za
called ‘fight against crime’ (Van der Watt, 2012: 30). One such crime information product is case docket analysis, which is an information-driven product that can be used to narrow the focus of investigations into crime (South African Police Service (SAPS), 2002: 2).

Goldsmith, Mcguire, Mollenkopf and Ross, as well as Hirschfield and Bowers (as quoted by Govender, 2011: 122) acknowledge case docket analysis as a crime information product used by criminal investigators. However, SAPS investigators in general are not familiar with the process of analysing case dockets, though case docket analysis represents a great, yet unrecognised stride forward in the investigation of crime (Pockpas, 2010: 76). Govender (2011: 120 & 124) concurs with Pockpas stating the “absence of an “information culture” in the police underlies the problems affecting crime analysis, particularly how crime information is processed at station level”. The capability of effectively implementing case docket analysis at station level, among other information products, is hampered “due to a shortage of investigation analysts at station level and the lack of knowledge of information products such as case docket analysis by investigators, who do not task crime analysts to provide them with specific products to support them in the investigation of their cases”. In support of Pockpas (2010: 76) and Govender (2011: 120 & 124) a recent case docket analysis of 90 closed and unsolved gang rape cases committed by strangers in Port Elizabeth between January 2007 and January 2008 highlighted two distinct patterns, indicative of repeat gang rape offenders, which were identified through the content analysis of these cases (Van der Watt and Van Graan, 2013). The study by Van der Watt and Van Graan (2013) indicated the significance of case docket analysis as a crime information product in criminal investigation. Govender (2011: 117) furthermore emphasises the significance of the quality of processed crime information pointing to the fact that the quality of the processed crime information depends largely on how well the SAPS can store and access crime information.

Case docket analysis was initiated by the Crime Information Analysis Centre (CIAC) at the SAPS Head Office in early 1995 (Locke, as quoted by Pockpas, 2010: 59). Case docket analysis is currently done by the Management of Information Officer (MOI) at station level (Pockpas, 2010: 59). According to Louw (as quoted by Govender, 2011: 118) the CIAC in the SAPS are centralised at police stations, under the administrative control of the Station Commissioner.

DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Case docket
A ‘docket’ is an official document in which a record is kept of a reported crime and the investigation conducted into such a crime (SAPS, 2002: 2).

Crime information products
Crime information products can be used for strategic and tactical purposes. Strategic crime information products usually involve the collection and study of information covering a period of several years. They are generally more research-oriented, involving inferential and multivariate statistics; they include crime trend forecasts, resource allocation and situational analysis. Tactical crime information products involve pattern detection, linkage analysis for suspect-crime correlations, target profiling and offender movement patterns. The main difference is the timeliness of the crime information data (Goldsmith, Mcguire, Mollenkopf & Ross, as quoted by Govender, 2011: 121).

For the purpose of this study ‘crime information product’ specifically refers to case docket analysis categorised under tactical crime information products.
Case docket analysis

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The following research questions centred on the participants’ first-hand understanding and operational experience of case docket analysis:

1. What is the meaning of the concept ‘case docket analysis’ in criminal investigation?
2. What is the value of case docket analysis for criminal investigators, crime analysts and crime researchers in criminal investigation?
3. Why is case docket analysis conducted in criminal investigation (purpose)?
4. How could case docket analysis be applied to uncover the hidden transcripts in crime data and translating such data into usable empirical evidence?
5. What are the limitations of case docket analysis in criminal investigation?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Research design and approach
Empirical research was conducted in this study since it was deemed the most suitable to answer the identified research questions which involved human beings with their actions, social interventions and organisations (Mouton, 2001: 52). Empirical research also enhances the production of knowledge based on experience or observation and is described by Maxfield and Babbie (2005: 6) as a way of learning about crime and criminal justice. A qualitative approach was followed since it allowed the use of semi-structured interviews and extensive examination of the literature.

Data collection and sampling procedures
The results of the study originated from semi-structured interviews conducted with FCS members in Port Elizabeth, the IPU and members attached to the CIMC in Port Elizabeth. The interview schedules were tested prior to implementation. This study was conducted between 1 January 2007 and 31 January 2008. The authors made use of three samples:

Sample A included 19 detectives attached to the Port Elizabeth FCS Unit. Sample B included experts at the IPU of the SAPS. The Unit consists of three functional members of which two members were included for the purpose of this study. Sample C included eight crime analysts and information managers attached to the SAPS’s CIMC and Organised Crime Unit in Port Elizabeth who is regarded as experts in case docket analysis. These members (six of the eight participants) were stationed as follows:

- Three participants were stationed at the CIMC regional office at Mount Road Police Station;
- Two participants at Walmer Police Station; and
- One participant at Swartkops Police Station.

The two remaining participants (two of the eight participants) performed duties at the Organised Crime Unit in Port Elizabeth. These two participants met the criteria for Sample C and both performed duties as information managers and crime analysts at the Organised Crime Unit.
The use of the three samples ensured that the experience of a broad spectrum of crime investigators and analysts was explored in terms of the use of docket analysis as a crime information product.

**Data analysis**
Data was qualitatively analysed applying the example of Berg (2004: 39), who defines data analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of action: data reduction, data display, and conclusions and verification.

**Data reduction**
After the authors had collected all the data, the volume of information was narrowed down by using the research questions as a point of departure. This allowed for a more manageable form of data from which themes and patterns could be identified and grouped. The researcher had made use of this data-reduction process from the outset of the research by discarding useless and irrelevant information, which is in accordance with Berg’s statement that the data reduction and transformation process occurs throughout the span of the research (Berg, 2004: 39).

**Data display**
Index cards similar to the two-card method described by Berg (2004: 24) were used. The authors used various types of index cards to display data as an organised, compressed assembly of information, which allowed the authors to draw conclusions analytically. Types of index cards included author and topic cards, including cards displaying contradictions and contentious issues. The information was then formally grouped, after which it was displayed alphabetically for easy access.

**Conclusions and verification**
After the data-reduction and data-display processes, conclusions by the authors began to emerge and become clearer. Verification consists of confirming conclusions to ensure that they are real and not just wishful thinking on the part of the researcher (Berg, 2004: 40). Verification was achieved by the researcher retracing the steps used to arrive at the conclusion. The authors also recorded the procedures used to reach the conclusion in order to ensure replication of the study, should the need arise.

**THE CONCEPT CASE DOCKET ANALYSIS**
Police dockets are the case files that contain all the relevant information about a recorded criminal case and generally include basic facts and demographic information about the incident, statements by victims and witnesses, details of the activities undertaken by the police officers dealing with the case and the progress of the case through the criminal justice system (South African Law Commission, 2001: 92). Case docket analysis involves the analysis of this information in police dockets (SAPS, 2002: 2). The authors identified numerous similarities between the meaning of case docket analysis and that of crime analysis described by Canter (2000: 4) as the collection and analysis of data pertaining to a criminal incident, offender and target.

Specifically referring to the context of policing, Manning (2008: 17) states that crime analysis covers a wide range of practices. Manning (2008: 4) alludes to crime analysis as an ‘umbrella concept’ and defines it as a family of products designed to gather information on the temporal, spatial and social aspects of crime, describe their patterning, make them available generally and direct police resources in order to reduce the levels shown. Detectives’ records for the reporting, investigation and disposition of crime are among the
aspects considered in crime analysis (Manning, 2008: 4). The authors concur with Manning (2008: 4) and view case docket analysis as one of the products that form part of the larger ‘family’ that contributes to crime analysis.

THE PURPOSE OF CASE DOCKET ANALYSIS
According to Mistry, Snyman and Van Zyl (2001: 21), case docket analysis is often used in criminological investigations and is intended to give an insight into crime, how the crime was investigated and how the case was closed by providing information on the nature and circumstances of the crime, the profiles of the perpetrator and the victim, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, the previous criminal record of the offender and whether or not the case proceeded to trial. Similarly, the Case Docket Analysis Learner Manual (SAPS, 2002: 2), states that the primary aim of case docket analysis is to increase one’s knowledge about crime. Canter (2000: 4) argues that one of the most important purposes of crime analysis is to identify and generate the information needed to assist in decisions regarding the deployment of police resources to prevent and suppress criminal activity.

The following example of the purposes for which case docket analysis is conducted is contained in the literature:

- To provide detailed information about certain types of violent crimes and to assess the usefulness of police information in adjudicating possible claims for victim compensation (South African Law Commission, 2001: 92);
- To evaluate and investigate what contributes to SAPS members killing their spouse or partner (Independent Complaints Directorate, 2008: 10);
- To establish the extent and pattern of female homicide in South Africa (Mathews, Abrahams, Martin, Vetten, Van der Merwe & Jewkes, 2004: 1); and
- To explore how information relating to a specific criminal case was collected, processed and utilised for investigation purposes and to determine the nature and extent of problems related thereto (Govender, 2008: 8).

According to the Case Docket Analysis Learner Manual (SAPS, 2002: 2-3), the results of a case docket analysis can serve a number of purposes, which include to:

- Serve as a guideline when resources, manpower, etc. need to be allocated at all levels of command;
- Provide explanations for the causes of crime or giving an indication of factors associated with certain crimes;
- Provide information with a view to focusing on crime-prevention strategies; and
- Identify a common modus operandi which could be indicative of the presence of serial offenders or a group of offenders.

THE CASE DOCKET ANALYSIS PROCESS
Case docket analysis is not undertaken in isolation. Owing to the fact that case docket analysis is a type of research or information-gathering process, the nature of the research process needs to be considered. In addition to this, case docket analysis is dependent on selecting a sound sample, the drafting of detailed questionnaires and the exhaustive analysis of the results obtained from these questionnaires (SAPS, 2002: 3).

The following steps as described in the Case Docket Analysis Learner Manual (SAPS, 2002: 3-20), lend structure to the case docket analysis process and were evident in studies conducted by Deasy, Badenhorst and Strumpher (2003); Independent Complaints Directorate (2008); Mistry et al. (2001); South African Law Commission (2001) and Vetten and Haffejee (2005):
Step 1: Choosing a research topic
As a point of departure, the researcher or crime analyst must identify and choose a topic on which the study or research will be based. Fouche and De Vos (2000a: 55) refer to three considerations when selecting a self-initiated theme or topic, namely:

- Curiosity: The choice of a research topic can be prompted by mere inquisitiveness about an interesting or atypical phenomenon;
- Theory testing: The choice of a research topic is motivated by the testing of existing models and theories; and
- Generation of hypothesis: Here the researcher will investigate phenomena about which few established models or theories exist and the attempts to generate new models or hypotheses.

Step 2: Formulation of the problem
This step includes the selection of units of analysis, the research goal and the research strategy (Fouche & De Vos, 2000b: 64). According to the Case docket analysis of the Learner Manual (2002: 5-6), the units of analysis may consist of individuals (i.e. various individuals involved in a case such as the victim and the offender), groups (i.e. gang rapists), organisations (i.e. crime syndicates responsible for the trafficking of women and children) and social artefacts (i.e. social interaction such as crime). The research goal will indicate what the researcher would like to achieve by doing the case docket analysis and it therefore needs to be clear and target orientated. Best practice has indicated that the research strategy employed in a case docket analysis should be of a quantitative nature (SAPS, 2002: 5). However, the authors disagree and argue that a qualitative research strategy proved invaluable in analysing behavioural interaction between perpetrators and victims of crime such as rape (Van der Watt, 2012; Van der Watt and Van Graan, 2013).

Step 3: Data collection
Data is the result of information gathering and can be described as a collection of facts. The data for the purpose of case docket analysis will include all the available information that is contained in the police crime docket. This information is then included in a questionnaire designed for this purpose, after which it is processed and analysed (SAPS, 2002: 7). It is further stated by the Case Docket Analysis Learner Manual (SAPS, 2002: 8-19) that the preparation for data collection in a case docket analysis includes the consideration of a sound sample and a detailed questionnaire. Sampling involves a process of systematically selecting cases for inclusion in the case docket analysis. Decisions on the sample size are usually contingent upon factors, such as available time, the number of officials required to perform the task and the degree of precision.

A questionnaire or pro-forma is always used when dockets are analysed and is designed by bearing the problem in mind. Once the sample of dockets has been obtained, a questionnaire is completed for each docket (SAPS, 2002: 12-13).

Step 4: Data processing and analysis
According to the Case Docket Analysis Learner Manual (SAPS, 2002: 19), a well-known, simple and widely used format for data capturing is an Excel spread sheet. If no sophisticated data analysis products are available and the data set is not too large, a manual system, using a matrix, can be used. The data is then prepared in a similar way to Excel, but is done by hand. The entire questionnaire may cover a few pages in landscape form, or separate tables for each question. The tables provide the following information:
• Frequencies: The distribution of data in terms of victim or offender personal data, i.e. according to race, occupation, standards of education, etc., as well as frequency patterns in the data, e.g. most victims of rape were between the ages of 20 and 25;
• Comparisons: Differences in the data obtained from stations or specific areas; and
• Associations: The establishment of links, i.e. between the use of alcohol and the place of assault.

Step 5: Compilation of the report
The report will basically be a summary of the entire research process and will include sections on the research methodology employed and the findings of the case docket analysis. It is also advisable that a copy of the questionnaire be attached to the end of the report (SAPS, 2002: 20).

THE BENEFITS OF CASE DOCKET ANALYSIS
Case docket analysis can provide some useful information about the nature of violent crime, as well as the responses of the criminal justice system to it (South African Law Commission, 2001: 92). According to Mistry (in Mistry et al, 2001: 21), case docket analysis has the following benefits:

• The information contained in the docket is relatively accessible;
• Information in a docket is ‘source data’ rather than information processed through an information system, such as the police computer records. This means that there are no secondary data capturing errors;
• Dockets provide some understanding of the nature of the crime and details of the victim and perpetrator;
• They indicate the manner in which cases are closed;
• Dockets indicate how well and for how long cases are investigated;
• The level of experience of the investigating officer is apparent from the dockets; and
• Information such as prior convictions, outcome, location, time, place and day of the crime, injuries sustained and weapons involved is provided.

Case docket analysis provides an alternative avenue for obtaining more complete information in order to explain crime and crime trends. As dockets contain a complete record of investigations conducted into a specific crime, important information can be obtained about the risks associated with a specific crime (SAPS, 2002: 2).

THE LIMITATIONS OF CASE DOCKET ANALYSIS
According to Mistry (in Mistry et al, 2001: 22), case docket analysis has the following limitations:

• Dockets are often incomplete.
• Statements are often incomplete.
• Handwriting is often illegible or difficult to read.
• The language used is often poor.
• The full dynamics of the crime and its impact on the victim’s life cannot be determined.
• The reason for the perpetrator committing the crime cannot be determined.

The South African Law Commission (2001: 92, 95) noted similar limitations in their case docket analysis and stated that the quality of information contained in dockets fundamentally influences the usefulness of the analysis. The following problems are referred to:
It is the experience of the authors that the abovementioned limitations referred to by Mistry (Mistry et al, 2001: 22) and the South African Law Commission (2001: 92, 95) are rather shortcomings pertaining to the content of the dockets and not to the limitations of case docket analysis as a product. However, the authors are mindful of the fact that it is the shortcomings that are evident in dockets that could arguably limit the effectiveness of case docket analysis as a product. In a similar view to Mistry (in Mistry et al, 2001: 22) and the South African Law Commission (2001: 92, 95), Deasy et al. (2003: 3) argues that the most inhibiting factor in their research was that the statements in dockets were incomplete and illegible. This contributed to the fact that their study was far more time consuming than they had originally anticipated. With an emphasis on the importance of data in crime analysis, Canter (2000: 4) states that it is critical that the data be relevant, reliable, accurate and timely.

FINDINGS
The findings present participants’ understanding and first-hand experiences of case docket analysis. These findings will be presented in six categories. Firstly, participants’ understanding of case docket analysis will be presented where after participants’ participation in training interventions relating to case docket analysis will be presented. Participants’ views on the purpose of case docket analysis and how to conduct such an analysis will follow. Lastly, participants’ experience on the viability of case docket analysis and the limitations of this crime information product are discussed.

CASE DOCKET ANALYSIS AS A CRIME INFORMATION PRODUCT
Understanding of the concept case docket analysis
To the question ‘According to your experience, what is case docket analysis?’ the participants from Sample A responded as follows:

- The analysis of docket content with a focus on statements in order to identify linkages or patterns and similarities in dates and times of the incidents, modus operandi, crime scene, approach taken by the suspect and the verbal interaction between the suspect and the victim (eight participants);
- The reading of dockets to identify serial offenders and linkages between dockets (three participants);
- The screening of dockets for specific predetermined types of information (three participants); and
- The determination of what investigation is outstanding by reading the dockets and to establish priorities for investigative decision making (five participants).

Both participants in Sample B responded to this question by stating that it is a concentrated study of the content of a sample of dockets in the search of information that could assist in the compilation of a linkage analysis or the identification of patterns and similarities among cases that could be indicative of a serial offender.
The participants from Sample C responded as follows to this question:

- The categorisation of specific information gleaned from dockets in order to prove or disprove a hypothesis about a specific crime situation (two participants);
- Analysis of all the available data obtained from dockets (three participants);
- Subsequent to the reading of the dockets, the identification of links between crimes as well as the association between criminals to enable structured planning to combat and prosecute the perpetrators (one participant); and
- Physical reading of dockets in order to connect crimes and to identify suspects by means of their modus operandi (two participants).

In harmony with the literature, the common theme identified in the responses by the participants is that case docket analysis involves the reading and study of dockets for the purpose of obtaining information specified and required by the analyst or ‘reader’ of the dockets.

Training interventions undergone by participants relating to case docket analysis

It was important to establish the extent to which participants have access to training interventions which focus on case docket analysis. Furthermore, the authors held the basic premise that any structured or formalised training intervention would contribute to an understanding of the value of docket analysis as a crime information product and would be more readily used as such.

The question ‘Have you received training on case docket analysis?’ was asked to participants from Samples A, B and C. The authors have tabled the responses of the participants as follows:

Table 1: Participants trained in case docket analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Sample A</th>
<th>Sample B</th>
<th>Sample C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>One participant</td>
<td>One participant</td>
<td>Six participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18 participants</td>
<td>One participant</td>
<td>Two participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Compiled from information gathered during interviews with Sample A, Sample B and Sample C participants, 2010).

The following table depicts the type of training received by those participants who stated that they had been trained in case docket analysis:

Table 2: Type of training received by participants in case docket analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Sample A</th>
<th>Sample B</th>
<th>Sample C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic introduction during the Detective Learning Programme</td>
<td>One participant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-service training</td>
<td></td>
<td>One participant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIMAC: Crime Information Management and Analysis Course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Six participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Compiled from information gathered during interviews with Sample A, Sample B and Sample C participants, 2010).

Table 1 and Table 2 were compiled from the historical information supplied by the participants. Participant Two of Sample B and Participants Three and Four of Sample C had
not been trained on case docket analysis, but stated that they were self-taught and had become more skilled in the product as they used it. The remaining 18 of the 19 participants of Sample A who were not trained in case docket analysis and did not use the product in the course of their duties and therefore had little exposure to the practical application of the product.

**Purpose of case docket analysis**

To the question ‘According to your experience, what is the purpose of case docket analysis?’ participants from Sample A responded as follows:

- To identify similar modus operandi, link similar cases and identify serial offenders (six participants);
- To determine how, why and by whom a crime was committed (three participants);
- To obtain relevant information which could guide investigative decision making and to establish what investigation is outstanding (five participants);
- To establish crime patterns and crime hotspots as well as the time period during which most crimes are committed (three participants);
- To make an arrest and to get a conviction (one participant); and
- To narrow down the scope of investigation and determine priorities for resource usage (one participant).

Both participants from Sample B who responded to this question, stated that it is a deliberate search for consistencies in elements such as the modus operandi of the suspect; the type of victim approached; dates and times of offences; and the phases of the crimes, i.e. what happened before, during and after the crime was committed with the ultimate goal of assisting the investigating officer.

Participants from Sample C responded as follows to this question:

- To be of assistance to the investigating officer, to establish patterns and similarities in modus operandi and to identify and link suspects to the crime (five participants);
- To increase knowledge, to provide information and to identify similar modus operandi (two participants); and
- To establish linkages (one participant).

Participant One and Participant Two of Sample C (2010) are in agreement with the Case Docket Analysis Learner Manual (SAPS, 2002: 6) and state specifically that the goal of doing a case docket analysis must be ‘predetermined, very specific and not vague’.

According to Mistry et al. (2001: 21), case docket analysis is often used in criminological investigations and is intended to give an insight into the crime, how the crime was investigated and how the case was closed by providing information on the nature and circumstances of the crime, the profiles of the perpetrator and the victim, the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, the previous criminal record of the offender and whether or not the case proceeded to trial. Similarly, the Case Docket Analysis Learner Manual (SAPS, 2002: 2), states that the primary aim of case docket analysis is to increase one’s knowledge about crime. Canter (2000: 4) argues that one of the most important purposes of crime analysis is to identify and generate the information needed to assist in decisions regarding the deployment of police resources to prevent and suppress criminal activity.

From the feedback received from participants (Samples A, B and C) during the interviews, it is evident that their viewpoints are similar to those found in the literature with regard to the purpose of case docket analysis. From the literature and responses by the participants, it is argued by the authors that the purpose of case docket analysis is to serve
both strategic and operational levels. Strategically it serves to understand holistically the different dynamics and contributing factors of crime and to fuel policing and investigative decision making. On an operational level, case docket analysis serves to analyse specific crime incidents in terms of, amongst others, modus operandi, possibilities for linkages and narrowing down the scope of an investigation.

**How is case docket analysis conducted?**

To the question, ‘According to your experience, how is case docket analysis conducted?’ participants from Sample A responded as follows:

- By physically reading through dockets and making notes of important aspects, such as modus operandi and the dates and times when crimes were committed (13 participants);
- By physically reading through the docket and interviewing victims, as well as the investigators (five participants); and
- I don’t know (one participant).

The viewpoints shared by participants of Sample A to the abovementioned question, are not entirely consistent with the literature as to how case docket analysis should be conducted. Although the majority of the feedback by participants covers the basic elements, such as the reading of dockets and identification of specific aspects, there is clearly a lack of technical knowledge among participants of Sample A as to how case docket analysis should be conducted. The feedback from participants also does not indicate an understanding of case docket analysis as a step-by-step methodical process. This lack of understanding among participants of Sample A as to how case docket analysis is conducted could be ascribed to the fact that only one of the 19 participants had received introductory training on case docket analysis. Furthermore, there are no designated members at the Port Elizabeth FCS Unit who perform case docket analysis as a function.

Participants from Sample B responded as follows to this question:

- It is the physical reading of dockets and basically the ‘breaking up’ of all the available information contained in the docket in order to identify similarities (one participant); and
- It entails the use of a matrix or questionnaire to categorise information contained in the dockets under different headings in order to identify consistencies in statements, types of victims and the physical, verbal and sexual behaviour of the suspect. It also entails the study of documents, such as the J88 and photographs (one participant).

The feedback given by participants from Sample B is more consistent with the literature than the feedback given by participants from Sample A. Participants from Sample B are more descriptive on how case docket analysis should be conducted and mention the use of a questionnaire which guides the process of case docket analysis. The superior knowledge shown by Sample B of how case docket analysis should be conducted as opposed to participants from Sample A could be ascribed to the fact that they (Sample B) use case docket analysis in the identification of serial rape and murder when the IPU is approached for assistance.

Participants from Sample C responded as follows to this question:

- It is guided by a purpose, after which a questionnaire or matrix is developed that is guided by the anticipated outcome of the case docket analysis. A time period is established which will dictate how big the sample of dockets for analysis will be. The
matrix or questionnaire is then applied to each docket and specific information is extracted from the dockets. The process may include a revisit to the crime scene or interviewing of witnesses (three participants).

- It starts with the collection of all relevant dockets and extraction of relevant information, i.e. all parties involved in the crime incident, modus operandi, description of suspects, vehicles, etc. This information is then analysed for predetermined purposes (two participants).

- It involves the obtaining of the relevant CAS numbers, requesting of the relevant dockets and the physical reading and filtering of dockets. A questionnaire is then applied to the dockets and relevant information relating to modus operandi, dates and times of the crimes is accumulated and compiled in a report (three participants).

Feedback given by participants of Samples B and C to the question ‘According to your experience, how is case docket analysis conducted?’ is consistent with the literature in that it is emphasised that case docket analysis is a methodical process with very specific predetermined goals and objectives (SAPS, 2002: 3–20). Participant One from Sample B and Participants One, Two, Five, Six, Seven and Eight from Sample C also referred to the use of a questionnaire which is applied to the sampled dockets in order to extract the relevant information which is then used in decision making. From the feedback received from Samples B and C, it is evident that the participants of these samples are acquainted with the use of case docket analysis as an investigative product. Furthermore, the feedback from the participants of Samples B and C shows more depth and understanding of how case docket analysis is conducted in comparison to the feedback received from the participants in Sample A.

**Value of case docket analysis in criminal investigation**

To the question, ‘According to your experience, would you consider case docket analysis to be a viable investigative tool in criminal investigation?’ all the participants from Samples A, B and C unanimously answered ‘yes’. The researcher specifically aimed this question at criminal investigation in general, to draw on both the possible current and past experiences of participants regarding case docket analysis as a crime information product. For the purpose of this question the authors then narrowed the scope to focus only on the value of case docket analysis in stranger rape investigations.

To this question participants from Sample C responded as follows:

- It helps with the interlinking of different clues to create a ‘bigger picture’ and assists in narrowing down the scope of an investigation (three participants);
- It assists in the identification of similar patterns in a sample of cases and highlights specific points of interest (one participant);
- It establishes linkages on suspects and their modus operandi (three participants); and
- It promotes the easy management and use of information (one participant).

Case docket analysis can provide useful information about the nature of violent crime, as well as the responses of the criminal justice system to it (South African Law Commission, 2001: 92). According to Mistry (in Mistry et al, 2001: 21), case docket analysis has the following benefits:
The information contained in the docket is relatively accessible; 
Information in a docket is ‘source data’ rather than information processed through an information system, such as the police computer records. This means that there are no secondary data capturing errors; 
Dockets provide some understanding of the nature of the crime and details of the victim and perpetrator; 
They indicate the manner in which cases are closed; 
Dockets indicate how well and for how long cases are investigated; 
The level of experience of the investigating officer is apparent from the dockets; and 
Information such as prior convictions, outcome, location, time, place and day of the crime, injuries sustained and weapons involved is provided.

Case docket analysis provides an alternative avenue for obtaining more complete information in order to explain crime and crime trends. As dockets contain a complete record of investigations conducted into a specific crime, important information can be obtained about the risks associated with a specific crime (SAPS, 2002: 2).

The feedback received from Sample C on the value of case docket analysis in criminal investigation is consistent with some of the benefits of case docket analysis as mentioned in the literature. Using the term ‘value’ when posing the question to participants, facilitated the provision of information from participants’ own experiences rather than creating an expectation of correct answers when asking them about specific ‘benefits’ of case docket analysis. For the purpose of this research, the researcher equates the terms ‘value’ and ‘benefits’ with one another. This question was only posed to Sample C, as these participants are the experts in case docket analysis in a range of different crimes and investigations and therefore, once again, the focus on criminal investigation in general before narrowing the focus to stranger rape investigations.

Limitations of case docket analysis in criminal investigation
To the question, ‘According to your experience, what are the limitations of case docket analysis in criminal investigation?’ the eight participants from Sample C mentioned the following:

- A lack of sufficient content in dockets regarding witness statements, photographs, identikits;
- The poor quality of statements, which were often incomplete and illegible; and
- Evidence that detectives did not visit crime scenes which adversely affected the quality and accuracy of the information contained in these dockets.

The feedback received from Sample C on the limitations of case docket analysis in criminal investigation is consistent with the limitations of case docket analysis mentioned in the literature. However, the feedback from the participants reflected shortcomings in the content of the dockets and not the limitations of case docket analysis as a crime information product. This question was only posed to Sample C, as they were experts in case docket analysis covering a range of different crimes and investigations and therefore the focus on criminal investigation in general, before narrowing the focus to stranger rape investigations.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The following recommendations are made, based on the findings of this research:

- An improved understanding amongst criminal investigators of the importance to conduct case docket analysis in criminal investigation, both individually and as part of the larger detective unit, could encourage a more specific and analytical approach to
case docket analysis as opposed to a generalised and haphazard approach. Such a dedicated approach could contribute significantly to a more pragmatic methodology which could give due credence to criminal investigation as a systematic and organised search for the truth. Docket analysis is an information-driven product and not merely an administrative function conducted by those in a supervisory role or a reactive response to crime. As a result, a thorough understanding of this crime information product could serve to understand holistically the different dynamics and contributing factors of crime and how crime could be addressed.

- It is imperative that formal training on case docket analysis should be provided to all SAPS criminal investigators and not limited to specific criminal investigators. As a result, the lack of technical knowledge among criminal investigators could be largely eliminated. This crime information product should form part of the SAPS Detective Learning Programme and should be implemented as standard operational procedure for SAPS detective units. The implementation of this crime information product would facilitate the development of expertise in the application of case docket analysis among criminal investigators and may result in improving the quality of investigations and higher conviction rates.

- Due to the fact that case docket analysis is a methodical process with very specific predetermined goals and objectives, it is important to capacitate designated personnel who would be responsible for conducting case docket analysis, especially at specialised units such as the FCS. This approach could enhance responsiveness and effectiveness in the application of docket analysis; and

- Shortcomings in case dockets limit the effectiveness of case docket analysis. Particular attention should be given to the quality of case dockets such as incomplete and ambiguous statements. Increasing the skill and professionalism of detectives, with specific reference to case docket contents, should continuously remain a priority for the SAPS.

CONCLUSION
Criminal investigation is a systematic fact-finding process which is dependent on different crime information products, both scientific and traditional, to gather evidence for the purpose of assisting a court of law to come to a conclusion. One such crime information product is case docket analysis which involves a step-by-step fact finding process. Case docket analysis is information-driven and has the potential to narrow the focus of investigation into crime.

LIST OF REFERENCES


ENDNOTES
1. CIAC is a sub-division of the Crime Intelligence Division of the SAPS with its primary function being to analyse all relevant crime information and its optimal dissemination for improved decision-making to address crime.

2. The FCS Unit investigates incidents of family violence (intra-familial, victims of 18 years and older), such as assault with the intention to do grievous bodily harm and attempted murder, child protection (victims under the age of 18 years), such as, rape, incest, indecent assault, attempted murder, kidnapping, abduction, crimes with regard to the sexual exploitation of children, and child pornography and sexual offences (victims of 18 years of age and older), such as, rape and incest. Crimes against women and children are categorised by the SAPS as priority crimes.

3. The IPU specialises in psychologically motivated crimes such as serial rape and serial murder with their jurisdiction covering the entire country. They conduct docket analysis in cases where it is suspected that a
serial offender might be active. Information gathered from the docket analysis is used by the IPU to compile an offender profile and a linkage analysis which will serve as an investigative tool for the investigating officer.

4. The CIMC serves as the crime information nodal point and is responsible for the management, analysis and dissemination of crime information to relevant police stations and units for response purposes.

5. The Organised Crime Unit’s mandate includes the investigation of organised crime most often committed by syndicates and include crimes such as drug trafficking, armed robberies and exploitation of endangered species.

6. Legal form belonging to the Justice Department, specifically designed to document relevant medical findings (by a qualified medical practitioner) of injuries sustained by a victim of crime for court purposes. Injuries are usually of an interpersonal nature such as rape and indecent assault.