SOCIAL MEDIA AS A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN CAPE TOWN

By

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DECLARATION

I, **Aline Mwilambwe Kasongo** declare that the content of this dissertation represents my own unaided work, and that the thesis/dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of social media as a communication strategy in a selected university in Cape Town, South Africa. It critically examines first year marketing students' and staff's practices and experiences towards the use of social media within the department of marketing and communication at Cape Peninsula University of Technology in the Western Cape. The study is guided by the fact that most students make use of these platforms to communicate with their peers and staff to engage with one another. Furthermore, some staff members make use of social media to connect with students and keep them updated on departmental and university information. Social media is interpreted as web-based service which is set on the conceptual and technological base of Web 2.0 (Kaplan & Haentein, 2010; O'Reilly, 2005). Moreover, social media is an effective tool that helps in delivering information. Hence, various types of social media play different roles with the main purpose of sharing information with a wide range of people. Universities have been using social media as a tool for communication where students can adapt to university life by interacting online with their peers and faculty members Yu et al. (2010).

The study also makes use of the qualitative research method, case study design that is positioned within the interpretive paradigm. The data collected was analysed using critical dissertation analysis. Based on the findings from the study, the department can improve their way of communicating through social media platforms. Some of these suggestions have a written strategy which is followed by staff members, who update their information more often on social media platforms and making these social media platforms accessible. The study concludes that the use of social media can enhance and attract students to engage and participate communication process with the institution, different department and among themselves. Strategizing the use of social media also gives an opportunity to the university to be known outside.

Keywords: Social media, communication, communication strategy, social media platforms, university.

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Social media platforms are utilized for communication between stakeholders, such as suppliers, customers, users, competitors, businesses, universities, and research institutes (Smith et al., 2007; Grewal & Levy, 2013). Bennett (2012) states that social media and internet technology play a big role in the operations and successes of an organisation. Roblek et al. (2013) emphasize that when an organisation uses social media, they add value through their knowledge by providing their information to the public, which could enable the stakeholders to participate in the decision-making processes. In view of this, social media is an important tool for all organisations since it gives an opportunity to the organisations to communicate, listen and learn from their stakeholders (Grewal & Levy, 2013; Smith et al., 2011).

According to Margaryan et al. (2011), the 21st century is evolving, where the students in today's world are constantly dependant on new innovations and the internet. As the web and social media are giving new ways to student to engage and utilise this platform for educational purpose in higher education, the utilization of social media is getting basic as these platforms are turning out to be part of students' ways of life now. In this regard, Yu et al. (2010) state that universities use social media as a communication tool where students can become accustomed to university life by interacting with their peers and faculty staff. Ajjan and Hartshorne (2008) also add that social media provides the opportunity for universities to make information available to forthcoming students assisting them in decision making. It also helps to facilitate communication with current students and to offer an amicable and progressively open pictures of the institution.

However, Constantinides and Stagno (2012) assert that even though a lot of young people use social media, most of them listed it as the last aspect of informing their

decisions about their future university studies. Nonetheless, when it comes to admission and recruitment, higher education institutions use social media (Nyangau & Bado, 2012).

According to Zaidieh (2012), universities are utilizing social media for purposes, such as sharing information, broadcasting special events, creating a dialogue as well as connecting with their students or forthcoming students. An essential aspect of social media is that it facilitates the process of two-way communication within the university. Unlike websites, the social media platforms give the opportunity to universities to connect with the public and to get their input because it is conversation that matters. Parusheva et al. (2018) add that social media plays a major role in sharing data among students, gathering information for examination, offering individual academic interests to others, connecting with students, recognizing their opinions during guidelines and setting group work. In addition, Ahmed (2011) states that universities by all means seem to be making arrangement for the social web by introducing the instruments for virtual learning portals or as a stand-alone application. Moreover, communication through social media is essential within higher education institutions as it actively involves eventual students in the communication process through social media platforms. Social media therefore portrays a university as "*live*", conveying and thinking about current and future students (Jakste & Kuvykaite, 2012).

Furthermore, Jakste and Kuvykaite (2012) state that, one of the most vital structures of universities is its approachability to society dependent on the richness of knowledge and their application. With universities communicating through social media, it is important to survey the explicitness of activities of universities. This particularity is principally reflected by the intended interest groups. Balakrishnan and Gan (2016) argue that the percentage of infiltration of the web gives various chances to universities to improve their educational offer and to develop communication with their target groups. The social media proves to be valuable for universities and as such, need to be nearer to their present and forthcoming students to show an open and adaptable picture.

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This research therefore seeks to attain a better understanding of the role of social media as a communication strategy between first-year students of the marketing and communication department at Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The marketing and communication Department provides different communication platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Blogs and Twitter which enable messages to reach the different stakeholders. Hence, conducting this research and providing an overview of the research on the role of social media as a communication strategy establishes a foundation for the study and provides efficient and helpful insights for the institution.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Pick (2013) states that social media is gaining significant importance in all the sectors. Employees, students and the public marketers can use Facebook or Twitter for many purposes at various working places such as a company, organisations and institutions. However, Roblyer et al. (2010) state that higher education institutions tend not to adopt new technologies because the implementation of new technologies is influenced by the accessibility and reliability of helpful instruments as well as the cultural and social conditions in which the innovation is connected. Therefore, higher education institutions focus more on using technological tools that help to improve endeavours identified with how they teach, how they give support to students, and how they direct students through projects of study.

According to Johnson et al. (2012), due to new technological changes, higher learning institutions are not able to understand, use and communicate with the students that are entering their institutions. Moreover, Ronald and Piet (2013) emphasize that due to the technology disconnect, institutions may fail to inform and solve problems which affect their students. Even though these institutions use social media, they are not able to utilize the power of social media, which can enable them to connect with students and enhance a positive image of their institution. As technology is still improving, it is important to study the role of social media as a communication strategy in the marketing and communication

Department of CPUT and if it is useful in the communication process with first-year students as the adoption of high technology has become an essential area of research.

1.3. RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.3.1. Aim

This research seeks to identify and explore the role of social media as a communication strategy within the Department of Public Relations at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town.

1.3.2. Objectives

The study tries:
- To explore the communication strategies used by the marketing and communication department with first year students.
- To discover the different social media platforms used in the marketing and communication Department.
- To investigate how marketing and communication first year students use the university social media platforms and
- To determine the benefits and disadvantages of using social media in an institution of higher learning.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUB-QUESTIONS

1.4.1. Main research question

What is the role of social media as a communication strategy in the marketing and communication department of CPUT?

1.4.2. Sub-research questions
- What are the communication strategies used by the marketing and communication department first year students?

- What are the social media platforms used in the marketing and communication Department?
- How do first-year marketing and Communication students use the university's social media platforms?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing social media in an institution of higher learning?

1.5. Significance of the research

Previous studies conducted focused on different aspects of social media such as its impacts on the academic performance and student's behaviour in institutions of higher learning (Carey, 2017; Constantinides & Stagno, 2012; Nyangau & Bado, 2012; Manca & Whitworth, 2018). Changes and innovations happen fast in the technology sector. Therefore, analysing social media as a communication strategy within the Marketing and Communication Department at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology adds value to existing research.

1.6. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study centres on the Marketing and Communication Department at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Western Cape, South Africa. The research used 13 participants, who consisted of 10 first-year students and 3 staff members.

1.7. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPT
- **Social media**

Social media is interpreted as web-based service which is set on the conceptual and technological base of Web 2.0 (Kaplan & Haentein, 2010; O'Reilly, 2005). According to Baruah (2012), social media can be utilized by organizations for different reasons, which include promoting new services or products, helping them to communicate during crisis by utilizing web-based social networking to their advantages. Moreover, social media

have platforms that enable the users to share, create and exchange different content (Kaplan & Haentein, 2010).

- **Communication**

According to Keyton (2011), communication is the process where two or more people create meaning by expressing and interpreting the messages they highlight. By expressing the messages, an idea is presented in the mind of the communicator. On the other hand, the receiver interprets the message by conceiving it (Cleary et al., 2008). Keyton (2011) contends that communication is not only a transmission of information but also a common understanding that takes place between people. Genc (2017), on the other hand argues that in the communication process, not only is information transmitted but also the needs, thoughts, feelings and observations are involved.

- **Communication strategy**

Hallahan et al. (2007) define communication strategy as the fixed utilization of communication by an organization to accomplish its mission. In addition, communication strategies are tactics that are used for conveying information linked to various aspects, such as a problem, occasion, condition or audience. They serve as the outlines for interacting with the public and stakeholders.

1.8 Brief Overview of Chapters

The study is structured into six chapters outlined as follows:

Chapter 1 focuses on the scope of the study and meaning of the research being led by curtailing current comprehension and contextual information about the topic.

Chapter 2 is an overview of what other researchers have studied on the topic that gives a picture to the readers on how the research fits within the field of study.

Chapter 3 gives an overview of the methodology: the techniques used to find, select and analyse information gathered in order to understand the problem.

Chapter 4 reports on the presentation and the analysis of the data collected.

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Chapter 5 focuses on the discussion of findings from the data collected through focus group, interviews and observation.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion and recommendation.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter laid the groundwork and provided a framework for the research. It presented the investigator's intentions and why the study was conducted. The chapter also gave a background to the topic and the problem statement was contextualized to inform and explain what motivated the study. It also highlighted the research questions and the sub questions. Moreover, the scope of the study was shown to the readers to be aware of where the study was conducted and who participated. A definition of key concepts was given as well as a brief overview of each chapter.

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CHAPTER 2.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This research examines the role of social media as a communication strategy. Moreover, it looks at different social media platforms used. Social media is a significant means for all organizations as it allows organizations to communicate, listen and learn from their stakeholders (Grewal and Levy, 2013; Smith et al., 2011). The main objective of this research is to provide a better insight to the role that social media plays as a communication strategy within the Department of Marketing and Communication at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. This chapter elaborates on the social media theoretical framework and presents relevant literature on social media and Communication strategies.

2.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework explains the relevant models and notions of a research subject and relates to the frontier areas of the considered knowledge. This study is underpinned by the adaptive structuration theory (AST).

2.2.1 The Adaptive structuration theory (AST)

This theory was founded by Anthony Giddens. He emphasizes the progression of regular social practice which persistently makes social structure. It addresses the aspects of human conduct with regards to innovation-based on social structure. In other words, the theory examines the method of the human use of computer frameworks and the form of the assembly computer communication (Gable, 2006). DeSanctis and Poole (1994) adapt Giddens's theory by emphasizing that AST looks at the change procedure from two perspectives:

- The kinds of structures that are given by the cutting-edge innovations and,
- The structures that develop in human activity as individuals collaborate with these advances.

According to Jones and Kartsen (2008), this concept can be utilized to dissect the appearance of different advancements. In view of this, it is a significant theory to dissect the usage and infiltration of new media innovation. Group structures are made from the societal or chronicled

presumptions which decide how individuals convey their guidelines and the improvement of resources during continued communication. Conversely, Schmitz et al. (2016) state that researchers who want to describe a group's creation or evolution accurately, do not start from generalizations or assumptions, but need to study every group on an individual basis.

Poole and McPhee (2005) emphasize that the adaptive structuration theory has three aspects in every social system or social interaction, which are: meaning, power and norms. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: **A summary of the adaptive structuration theory**
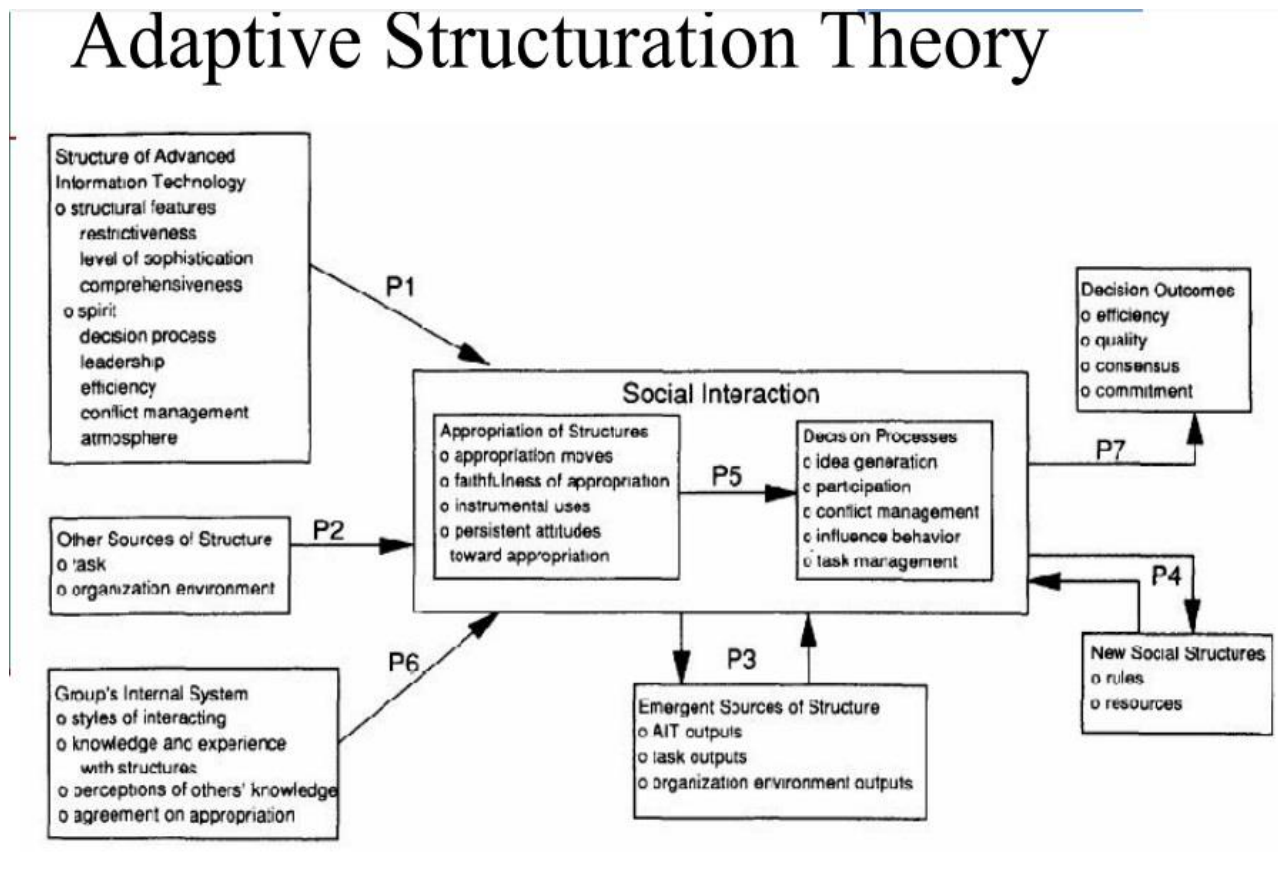
Source: Poole and DeSanctis (1994)

Description of the figure above.

Three factors define how the technological instrument generally interacts with the users.

1. **Structure of the technology**: where we have features such as structural features, and spirit features where we take a gander at the choice procedure, authority, conflict management, productivity, peacemaking, and the environment

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2. **Additional sources that provide structure:** where we look at the organization's environment and social structure.

3. **The Users**: It deals with the perception that the users have, the knowledge, the acceptance and the expertise.

These factors determine if the users use the tool for their proposed purposes or not. Moreover, there are two appropriations such as faithful appropriation (where the users make use of a technological tool for its proposed purposes) and unfaithful appropriation (where the users do not make use of the technological tool for its proposed purposes). Hence, from the decision process, ideas are made, and the actions and behaviors are influenced, and therefore prompting the decision's outcomes. In this regard, the new guidelines of control, social structure and innovative structure are made. This last stage considers quality, agreement, responsibility and a progressively characterized dimension of effectiveness.

LeRouge and Webb (2004) point out that AST acknowledges the degree of technology appropriation that can affect outcomes and ultimately fuel the change process for its intended purpose. Schmitz et al. (2016) highlight that technologies are not just genuinely developed by their designers, but they are also socially built by the interpretive activity of consumers who offer significance to the innovation each time they prepare it. Therefore, using adaptive structuration theory in this study helps in understanding the difficulties of collaboration between innovation and groups (Public Relations Department and first-year students). It also tasks result in variations in how social media is used. Based on AST, technology and duty were believed to influence perspectives when the different features were monitored, and which influenced the results of communication (Gopal, et al., 1993). In conclusion, this study uses this theory as it is a decidedly multifaceted theory in the communication field which helps with examining the process by which organizations establish rules, use resources, determine how technology is brought into human interaction and how the external people adapt to the communication and the channel that an organization uses.

2.3 COMMUNICATION

Keyton (2011) states that the word communication originates from the Latin expression "communis", which stands for "common". He elaborates that communication is a process of

transmission and comprehension of information starting from one individual to another (Cleary et al., 2008; Keyton 2011; Babatunde, 2015). Based on the above definition, communication happens when there is a typical comprehension while the exchange of information occurs. Furthermore, Obisi (2003) and Genc (2017) argue that understanding the spoken or written word is not the only factor in communication, but the transmission of words, feelings, attitudes, gestures and actions are also important factors. They further indicate different functions of communication as seen below.

2.3.1. Functions of communication

According to Beytekin and Arslan (2013), communication is a different ground that has various objectives to improve individual objectives and execute different functions. See figure 2 below:
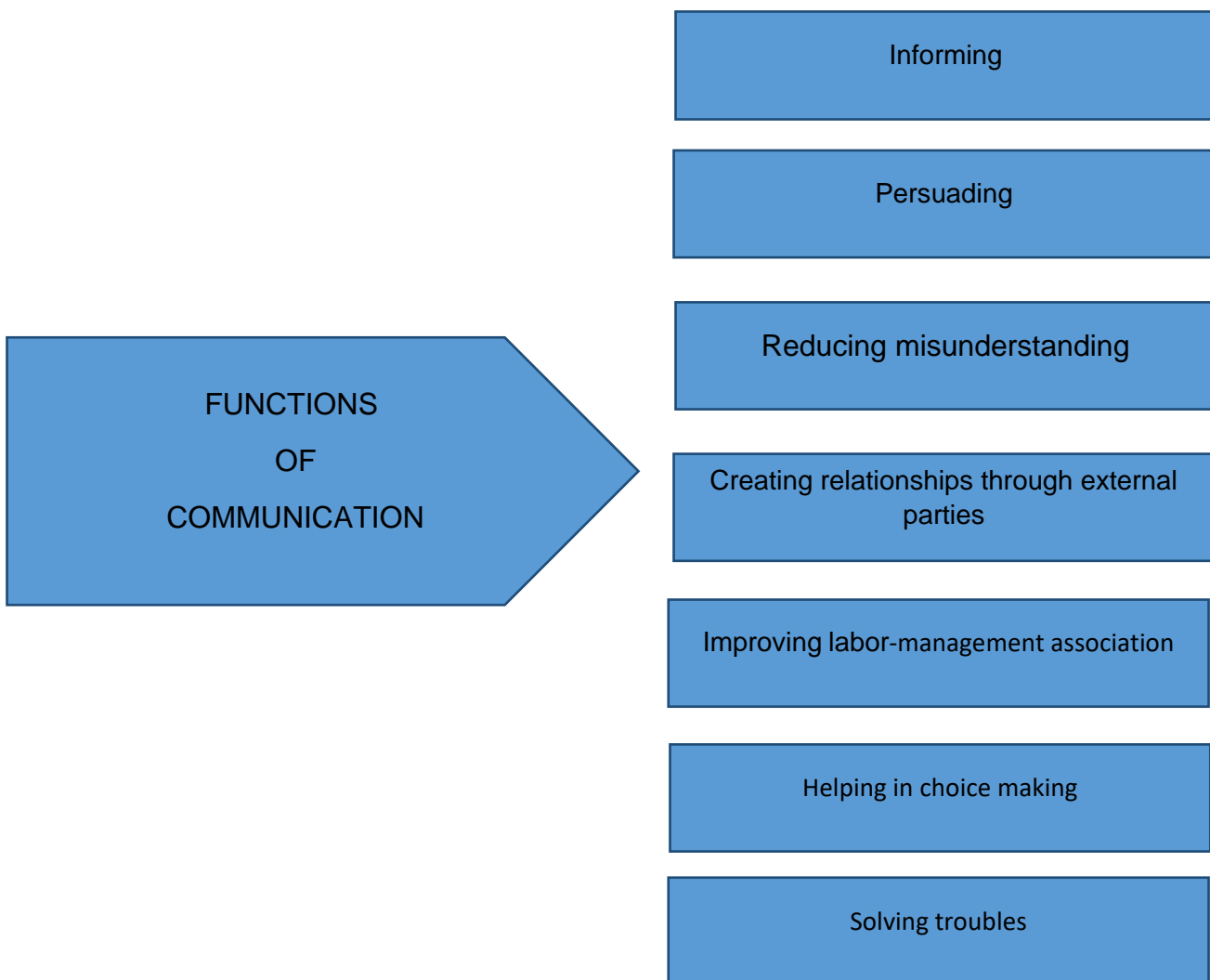
These functions help in different ways:

i. Informing

The main work in correspondence is transmitting messages to other people, which takes place verbally or non-verbally. Verbal messages can be written or spoken while non-verbal messages are transmitted through body language, motions, pose and so forth.

ii. Persuading:

Persuading is part of the functions of communication used in businesses by management and employees to motivate their suggestions, ideas, and opinions to be accepted.

iii. Reducing misunderstanding

Without proper communication in the organization, misconception, separation, conflict and so on, may occur. In order to overcome and avoid controversies, misunderstandings and disagreements, a proper communication needs to take place.

iv. Creating relationships through external parties

Communication helps in making connections not only with internal parties but also with the outside world such as clients, government, investors, general community, and suppliers. Survival of an organization is guaranteed through communication with internal and external parties.

v. Improving labour-management association

It is vital to have a decent bond with labour management in order to achieve the organization's goals. One of the main purposes of communication is having a growing relationship with labour management. As such, communication brings all the parties to cooperate and express themselves

vi. Helping in choice making

In order to make decisions, management requires information. The purpose of communication is to supply applicable information in time to the management with the aim of making suitable decisions.

vii. Solving problems

Organizations are faced with a lot of challenges in their everyday activities and the accomplishment of business goals relies and depends on how these issues are resolved. Hence, communication becomes a vital instrument in problem solving.

2.3.2. Managing external communication

Tankosic et al. (2017) contend that organizations are made and planned by the communication procedure as well as being kept up by individuals who communicate with one another. Individuals need to communicate and after that, they need to impart to complete the coordination and control of their activities. The perspective in which communication happens is represented in the organization. In any case, it is more than that, it is additionally a perspective which partially determines what and how it communicates. Thus, information from outside is brought through external communication into the organization and out of it.

It is imperative to note that external communication has different aims some of which take place outside the boundaries of an organization or a business.

- **Information collection:** gathering the information in the organization externally.
- **Community relations:** To preserve the relationship with an outside world such as the community in order to achieve the organizational goals
- **Shareholder relation:** The owners of an organization are investors. The top managerial staff is at risk to advise all the business undertakings to the investors. Therefore, it is essential to have decent external communication.
- **Relation with government:** Rules and regulations made by the government are to be followed by every organization.
- **Contracts with customers:** External communication is necessary to bond with customers. Therefore, an organization needs to know what the customers want and do not want to intensify the sale of its goods or services.

2.3.3. Communication process

According to Scherer (2010), communication processes can be analyzed from two perspectives, which is the social connection between the correspondent and the receiver. On the other hand, the second aspect is the result of communication and the influence it has on

the recipient. Furthermore, Scherer (2010) highlights that the communicator and the recipient do not only participate in the communication process as the communicator and the recipient, but also belong to different social groups and have to connect to a relevant network of social relations.

Babatunde (2015) posits that the communication process begins with a selection of intended messages which means the messages that need to be transmitted and encoded are put into a transmittable form, such as gestures and words. Also, the encoded message is transmitted through a channel where the receiver decodes the sender's message to give it meaning. The communication process can be seen in figure 3 below.

Figure 3: Communication process
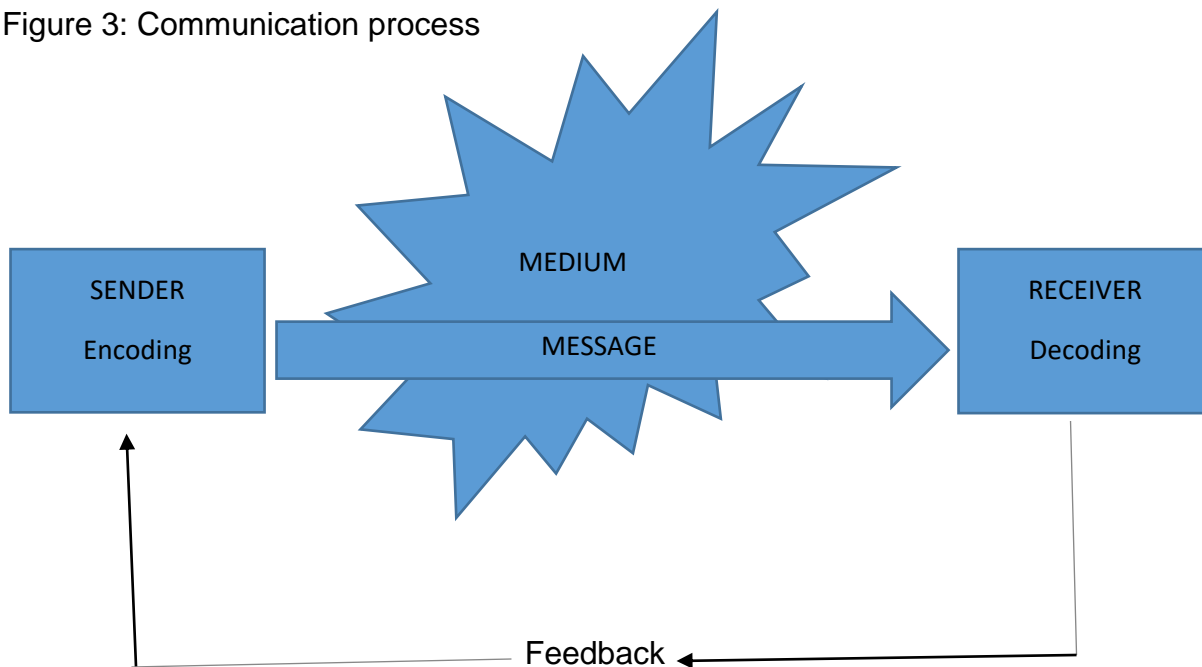
Source: (Cheney, 2011)

Based on figure 3 above, there are two elements in a communication process: the correspondent and the recipient. The correspondent encodes or creates the message by selecting words, descriptions, or actions with which to form message which appears as verbal or nonverbal. The message is transmitted through a channel, which is a communication carrier. The communication takes place through a medium which can be through a conversation, email, etc. The receiver then interprets the message into meaningful information and provides feedback. Feedback is the reaction to the sender's message which allows the correspondent

to know if the message has been received and understood. The quality of communication is defined by the elements in the communication process. An issue among the elements in the communication process can diminish communication effectiveness (Keyton, 2011). This means that information should be set into a message that can be appreciated as the correspondent anticipated.

When feedback is not provided, the communication process is considered as one-way communication. Two-way communication happens when there is response to the message sent. Communication relies on the capacity of sending messages but also getting the messages. Hence, the capacity to listen adequately extraordinarily improves the communication procedure. Belichenko and Matvienko (2012) concur that communication in an organization works in combination with a general flow of information that can support people and groups to accomplish their objectives.

2.3.4. Communication strategies

Communication strategy is the plan of arranging how to share information. Companies or organizations put strategies in place to create awareness while providing information to the stakeholders or they may use a strategy that activates communication with the stakeholders by helping the stakeholders participate in decision-making processes. Therefore, the correct information must be sent to the relevant stakeholders as it plays a role in influencing the company's reputation and image.

Different researchers have been investigating communication strategies. However, Selinker (1972) was the first scholar who suggested that the inter-language needs to be regarded as supportable. He was a pioneer who had a great influence on the next researchers of the communication strategy field. Littlemore (2003) examines communication strategies from a linguistic view by classifying communication strategies into functional strategies, substitution strategies and re-conceptualisation strategies. Lin and Chien (2010) highlight in their study that these strategies are effective and have proved that they contribute to the non-native speaker's communicative competence.

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Communication strategies consist of pre-structured programmes that are planned annually, such as campaigns, or actions that need to be taken. Moreover, it includes the outcomes of problems or situations and stakeholder concerns in the environment. For that reason, the stakeholders who play a big role in the organization need strategic communication to ensure that the organization maintains a good image (Hallahan et al., 2007). According to Nakatani (2005), some stakeholders' communication strategies include:

- **A persuasive strategy:** It changes and turns the knowledge and stakeholder's behavior which favours the organization. It relates to understanding the organization or company's services, values and decisions, which are made through methods such as corporate publicizing and crusades.

- **An informational strategy:** It informs the stakeholders of the availability of information by using different ways, such as social media and newsletters. It is a one-way proportioned communication which implies that correspondence is constantly one way and communicated by the organization to its partners and it contributes to the comprehension of the motives behind these choices

- **A dialogue strategy:** This consist of both the organization and its partners coming into a mutual exchange of ideas and opinions through dialogue. This strategy helps the organization to consult and incorporate the stakeholders in the decision-making; it considers both parties, which is a process of understanding and making mutual decisions in order to build long-term relationships. The organization uses strategies which are of interest to the stakeholder group. Moreover, it enables a profitable relationship with the stakeholders.

Lam (2006) highlights that organizations or companies' relationships are symmetrical as their role is to communicate the relevant information to the relevant stakeholders. In order to facilitate successful exchange, the three strategies need to use various channels to speak with the partners and change essentially depending on the media or channel's capacity. Lim (2015) emphasizes that the channels used by organizations provide instant feedback between the organization or company and their stakeholders, which helps the organization to adapt to the messages based on the responses by expressing the message in different ways.

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According to Cornelissen (2014:52), direct interaction with the stakeholders is needed and rich communication is significant while applying the dialogue strategy. Nevertheless, poor communication such as one-way communication relates to an enlightening strategy as there is no requirement for the partners' immediate response. Companies or organizations put strategies in place to create awareness while providing information to the stakeholders or they may use a strategy that activates communication with the stakeholders by helping the stakeholders participate in decision-making processes. Therefore, the correct information must be sent to the relevant stakeholders as it plays a role in influencing the company's reputation and image.

2.4. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is an internet-based platform constructed on Web 2.0 (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) report that social media is a Web 2.0 application that originates from an ideological and technological foundation and helps to create and exchange content. It also has an open online conversation and interaction which is different from the traditional Internet. On the other hand, Siddiqui and Singh (2016) say that social media does not only allow an exchange of information, but it is an electronic tool which is inexpensive and helps everyone to publish and access information or build relationships widely. Dolan at al. (2017) posit that social media has turned into a predominant media platform that links one-third of the world's population and has an incredible effect on how information is being transmitted and exchanged. Subsequently, organizations need to grow new approaches in organizational communication, while social media is becoming the most important tool for communication.

Ngai et al. (2015) posit that the term 'social' means different activities which take place among people whereas media is a tool that helps the technologies to execute such activities. In addition, McFarland and Ployhart (2015) state that social media is gradually developing, and as new types of social media are created, everyone uses a platform which is based on Web 2.0 that helps different users to access any information. Also, social media is considered as an interactive media which is used by different organizations. Borgman (2015) and Doolin et al.

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(2002) opine that social media does not only give one-sided information, but stakeholders participate in the engagement and interaction process.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) use the World Wide Web (WWW) as a platform whereby individuals can no longer create and circulate applications and content. However, they are ceaselessly adjusted by all users in a participating and collaborating platform. Even though Web 2.0 does not denote a procedure update of the World Wide Web, there are a lot of essential functionalities that are important for its functioning.

As per Hansen, et al. (2011), social media in technology has enhanced intensely better methodologies for communication. Harris (2009) points out that there are truly many media platforms such as social networking, shared photographs, digital recordings, spilling recordings, content informing, web journals and group exchange. Sponcil, and Gitimu, (2013) state that social media satisfies diverse communication requirements for various users. Communicating using the PC encourages interaction by enabling users to stay in contact with relatives and friends advantageously, to discover a social event, and to get information about other users' activities on social media sites.

2.4.1. Social Media platforms

Baruah (2012) states that social media is a communication platform that contributes to its relationship between an organization and its stakeholders in an online environment. Besides, while organizations are using social media platforms, they are increasingly reaching their stakeholders through the social web which enables them to convey messages about their products and services. Grewal and Levy (2013) and Boyd and Ellison (2007) argue that social media can be categorized into three sites which enable people to make a public profile within a limited system, by having other users with whom they share connections.

Christensen (1997) states that platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, are becoming unquiet technologies for building cutting-edge models of management. Mollen and Wilson (2010) add that these features help organizations to have mutual interactions with the stakeholders; moreover, they enable the stakeholders to influence the organization and build

relationships (Schau et al., 2009). Alternatively, WhatsApp is a social network where the information is accessed rapidly. Messages can be sent unlimitedly with on-going conversation with many people simultaneously (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014). Yeboah and Ewur (2014) concur that in higher education, WhatsApp is used to enhance discussions and help to share information between the lecturers and students.

Yates and Paquette (2011) emphasize that social media manages all the information in the online environment. They list some social media platforms by giving their roles, namely, YouTube, which shares videos and photos, and Facebook which connects people through conversations and wikis by building textual and visual websites, while Google Docs manages document spreadsheets. Besides, registered users can upload and share information and change anything from anywhere with an Internet connection. Moreover, Gordon and Berhow (2009) argue that Twitter can be utilized to raise consciousness by endorsing the substance and getting quick criticism, finding new crowds and advertising. Consequently, advertisers in advanced education should check out this platform. It is important to note that social networking sites are virtual systems which empower people to relate and collaborate on a given topic on the web (Grewal and Levy 2013).

a. Facebook

Facebook was made in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg at Harvard University. This network was at first limited to students and later turned into a worldwide site, available for anybody with an email address. Facebook has turned out to be one of the seven most widespread sites in the United States with users all over the world (Bosch, 2009). The utilization of this technological instrument during classes has positives outcomes, both on the nature of learning and the inspiration for learning. According to Davidovitch and Belichenko (2018), Facebook groups encourage communication between students who cultivate positive social atmosphere and share learning materials.

Considering this, Facebook can turn into a profitable asset to help students' educational communication and cooperation with staff in the faculty (Roblyer et al., 2010). Mazman and Usluel (2010) argue that the utilization of Facebook as a tool for education may be clarified by the impacts on the users, alongside with the implementation of the procedures of Facebook.

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McCarthy (2010) on the other hand, examines physical integration and virtual learning in order to improve the skills of first year students. With a highlight on the utilization of social network to help learning and instructing in advanced education, students were drawn into a university culture of social and educational interaction between peers. Despite all these advantages, Facebook can also be a distraction as students sometimes go to sites that are not in connection with the lesson, checking and sending emails, social networking, and playing smart games (Gehlen-Baum and Weinberger, 2012; Kraushaar and Novak, 2010).

b. LinkedIn

LinkedIn started in 2003 as a social network site in order to be in connection virtually between professionals, without being in the same physical area. It was later opened up to the world in May 2011, and since then, LinkedIn has introduced numerous new features such as newsfeed, users content, the facility to connect with professionals, with an improvement of user's engagement and time spent on the site. Albrecht (2011) posits that LinkedIn enables students to reinforce their own image also enables them to shape the message they are sending in any way they wish. LinkedIn enables students to feature key points of education or experience to potential bosses in the field they wish to work in. According to Cooper and Naatus (2014), social media in the advanced education classes if used properly, can improve the communication procedure and enable students to associate with professionals on subjects of interest or in the subjects they are studying. They can take part in related discussions on LinkedIn through groups and influence newsfeed as well as see what others are saying in the subjects of interest. However, LinkedIn has now turned out to be one of the most famous and beneficial social networking sites on the web. Presently, it has more than 260 million users in more than 200 nations (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

c. WhatsApp

As indicated by Barhoumi (2015), the technology advancement in the world has prompted the improvement and beginning of WhatsApp in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koom. Barhoumi (2015) said it was created to encourage great connection, communication and engagement in educational and non-educational perspectives. WhatsApp is a social media platform that allows its operators to get and send texts, place calls both video and audio, and transfer recordings with different phones operating systems (Hindu, 2011; Barhoumi, 2015). WhatsApp's active

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users are more than350 million (Bouhnik and Deshen, 2014). WhatsApp's capacity to give affordable connection and collaboration has kept on developing in application and benefits as main connection, communication, and relations tactics (Fogg, 2010; Bouhnik and Deshen, 2014).

Following the relentless utilization of this application, it also has entered the education framework and the scholarly world. Previous studies (Bouhnik and Deshen, 2014; Barhoumi, 2015) have shown that class WhatsApp groups are utilized to communicate with students, sustaining a social environment in class, having exchange and collaboration between the students. Another advantage of WhatsApp is the likelihood it gives the teacher to turn out to be progressively used with students and to impact on student's discourses. Furthermore, WhatsApp has academic advantages in the accessibility of the teachers, the opportunity for students to learn outside the classroom, and a quick access to educational materials.

Furthermore, Williams, et al (2012) argue that a quick development of social networking influences individuals and organizations with the effect on learners being the most sensational. Different investigations on WhatsApp use guarantee that youths and college students make use of the application generally to keep in contact with individuals they know, instead of initiating new connections (Lampe et al., 2006; Pempek et al., 2009). In the same light, Madge et al. (2009) report that although learners use WhatsApp to stay in contact with friends, they explicitly join WhatsApp groups and Facebook's university pages in order to upgrade their social incorporation.

Although researchers emphasize the utilization of WhatsApp as a mobile and an instructive means that advances education through interactions, cooperation and as well collaboration, it also has its demerits (Lu and Churchill 2014; Barhoumi and Rossi, 2013). To start with, not all students have cell phones that empower the utilization of the application. Besides, there is a lot of messages and the need to manage inappropriate language which is always a challenge especially to second and third language users of a given language. According to Kalpidou et al. (2011), first year students at the university have a significant enthusiastic connection with WhatsApp. They invest more time in WhatsApp and Facebook and end up with less friends,

compared to students in higher classes. Finally, students have exclusive standards that the teacher may use to address their questions rapidly and easily and if not, then it becomes a problem to them (Nitza, and Roman, 2016).

d. Instagram

Even though Instagram has restricted functions, it tends to be helpful in language classrooms. Instagram offers a contextualized visual information that can help in language study classes. These guides are particularly valuable since they offer visual components that can help visual students. Additionally, utilizing Instagram in classroom can help to connect with students socially, as the tool itself offers a space for students to communicate and socialize with one another beyond the classroom limitation. Socializing on Instagram is essentially done through the likes and comments which are not underestimated by Instagram users (Mansor and Rahim (2017). Al-Ali (2014) posits that Instagram uses an mLearning tool for language activities such as speaking, writing, grammar and vocabulary skills. In the same light, Handayani et al. (2018) contend that Instagram gives a better understanding for students with high and low motivation. They focus on how to utilize Instagram in order to build students' capacity in writings. They conclude that Instagram is a powerful site to use in building students' grammatical and vocabulary precision. This is also supported by Mansor and Rahim (2017) say that Instagram is a successful instrument for students' interaction while examining task-related content.

e. Media-sharing site

Media sharing platforms empower people to upload and share photographs, recordings and videos on the web. Individuals can see the files uploaded by others, improve them with tags, and comment on the posts (Baruah 2012). According to Baruah (2012), these sites serve different points. These sites fall under categories which are Video sharing sites such as youtube.com, Photo- sharing such as Flicker.com, slide sharing like slideshare.com, archive sharing like docstoc.com etc. For users of the web, these sites help as free content which can be downloaded and used with no charges involved. Moreover, the users create and generate content such that videos and PowerPoints can be shared and transferred in YouTube and slide share which help individuals without access to the educational resources.

Blogs

Blogs are platforms that help users to showcase their writing and sentiments to be seen by others. Blogs are characteristically composed of a single individual about an explicit topic which are generally updated continuously with sections shown backward in a chronological order. They can either act naturally facilitated or put on blogging sites, for example, Blogger, WordPress or Tumblr. Baruah, (2012) holds that blog is from the word weblog which is an online journal where a person, groups, or partnership introduces recorded actions, beliefs, or thoughts. Blogs or weblogs are profitable tools in instruction in a constructivist model. Blogs support E-learning, build up channels for formal communication among teachers and students, support social connections and give to students an individual media to get learning experiences (Lara, 2005). There are numerous sites that enable users to make sites free of charge or without any charges like Wordpress.com, Blogspot.com, and blogger.com. Anybody can make a blog on these sites which can be made available to anybody by composing the web site or the Uniform Resource Locator (URL). Another well-known subcategory of blogs is microblogging.

2.4.2. The use of social media platforms by students within an institution

Social media and networking advances can possibly reproduce a learning condition among students and lecturers. Learning can be experienced as an interestingly social undertaking; course substance can be co-made by a network of students, where the teacher is a student alongside students (Chen and Bryer, 2012). Furthermore, social media is currently used by colleges as chosen platforms in which students can regulate to the college lifestyle by interfacing on the web with peers and faculty (Hung and Yuen, 2010). Gray et al. (2010) agree that the finest intentioned colleges provide students with a structured and compelled commitment towards social media. Hence, together with other institutions for example, schools, libraries and exhibition halls, colleges are believed to face doubt and a developing loss of confidence among more youthful ages.

Griesemer (2012) holds that incorporating social media approaches in the course adds to extending students learning outside the classroom and which is particularly simple for students

to have a group study. Numerous educationalists accept that colleges are in a good position to make use of online networking practices to assist the cooperative formation of learning among students and the additional wide-ranging network (Moskaliuk et al., 2009). A better approach to look for information has emerged utilizing social networks in both formal and informal learning. Formal learning is characterized as a progressively organized instructive framework composed in successive time frames from secondary schools to colleges including scholarly examinations and particularly students preparing for professional and specialized learning programs at all ages (Cheung et al., 2011).

As indicated by Cheung et al. (2011), informal learning is considered as the learning procedure through which every individual learns and gains frames of mind, qualities, information, and abilities from his/her day to day experience and social environment. This is likewise called learning based on interaction (Wodzicki et al., 2012) or a lifelong learning (Longworth, 2003). Numerous studies demonstrate that students use OSNs (online social networking) mostly for socialization purposes, for trading perspectives or thoughts, and for entertainment purposes (Pempek, 2009; Sharma, 2016; Tess, 2013). However, these types of activities can be integrated into educational procedures (Wodzicki, 2012). In a research on students' frames of mind and perception of web-based social networking, Lewis (2010) finds that a number of classes in school, utilize social media as first source to get news, and online networking coursework significantly affect students' attitudes and their way of thinking.

2.4.3. The use of social media in different countries in the world within an institution

In most countries, social media is utilized for communication. Lately, researchers started to analyze the utilization of online networking from various dimensions. For instance, Sohn and Choi (2011) realized that acquiring social help is a solid motivation for Koreans using Facebook. In the United States, students put more importance on entertainment as a reason for frequenting social media.

Additionally, in Malaysia, it was uncovered that there is a positive connection between high social media utilization rates and the performance of students (Ainin et al. 2015). Furthermore, Tower et al, (2014) examined the effects of social media on learners at Griffith University in

Australia. In their study, Tower et al saw an improvement on students' effectiveness in the learning process and they stated that online social networks (OSNs) have turned into a significant helpful instrument for their learning process. They argue that OSNs can help students to build up and figure out how to learn on more profound levels. Hence the conclusion that OSNs is a good support for students to develop learning to deeper levels.

In another study, Madhusudhan (2012) found that more than 160 researchers of theory and social examinations in Delhi University in India indicated that they like using OSNs for their research studies as a device that assists them with their research. Comparable opinions were communicated by pharmacology students in Boston University (Camiel, et al., 2014) as they perceived Twitter as a tool equipped for encouraging the development of their own learning system, called PLN (individual learning system).

2.4.4. Use of social media platform in South Africa

The utilization of electronic platforms, particularly social media (SM) with the goal of sharing information among Further Education and training (FET) students is censured by different researchers (Rau, et al, 2009; Sarachan and Reinson, 2011). An arbitrary selection of lecturers at a South African FET college demonstrated that most of the studies from non-Information Technology offices are against the use of electronic platforms, particularly social media, with the goal of learning broadcasting among students and lecturers. These lecturers contend that social media platforms such as Facebook are disrupting and unhelpful. However, Kabilan, Ahmad and Abidin (2010) observe the inverse to be valid, suggesting that a social media platform like FB can acquire positive outcomes with scholarly performance if it is well directed.

In South Africa, most young people are of the opinion that even though they are dependent on web-based networking media, it is interfering seriously with their studies. Given a sample of 1435 South African students, 85% think that online networking upgrades their academic performance. Also, 83% of students opine that web-based life positively affect their social activities while another 81% guarantee that web-based life improved their personal lives (Shava and Chinyamurindi, 2018). Just 10% of the 1435 students think that internet-based life is a consistent issue getting in the way of their studies. Another investigation by Shava (2016)

details that studies in South Africa accept that social media plays a big role in their academic lives, particularly during the assessment time frame.

2.4.5. Benefits and disadvantages of social media within an institution

Lee and McLoughlin (2010) suggests that the characteristics of social media maintain the improvement of student's self-directness, an ability that is basic on planning long lasting students for the present workforce. Additionally, social media carries with it the opportunity for students to interface and team up outside of institutional limits just as to increase useful experience for the workforce. By using internet, grown-up students similarly are fortunate to handle their learning environs and hence become increasingly autonomous and lifelong learners (Rahimi, van lair Berg and Veen 2013). Baruah (2012) adds that one of the most significant advantages of SM is the web sharing of knowledge and information between various groups of people. This internet-based sharing of information also enhances interpersonal skills among individuals mainly within educational institutions.

Furthermore, Veletsianos and Navarrete (2012), give a significant list of potential risks that may emerge when using social programming in adult education. This incorporates a task that worries teachers and students, the absence of trust in peer's feedback, proprietorship issues with regards to open and shared spaces, trouble in adjusting freely available devices, and trouble ensuring the privacy of students. Moreover, Liu (2010) proposes that internet-based life sites may be more helpful for informal learning as opposed to formal learning. This is because 91% of the students in their investigation have never utilized such devices to speak with teaching staff, and 43% reveal that web-based life sites have no potential for scholarly work (Liu 2010).

2.5. SOCIAL MEDIA AS A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Strategic communication as characterized by Hallahan et al. (2007) is the deliberate utilization of communication by organizations in order to satisfy its main goal. Most of the times, communication strategy is lined up with organizations' general strategy and incorporates publicizing and advertising (Hallahan et al., 2007). The purpose of communication strategy is to transmit information which facilitates the interaction and joint understanding between several

categories of audience. Therefore, in the new age, an increasing number of audiences are reached faster through communication techniques (Costea, 2012). Bordeianu (2012) reports that online communication is a meeting point between an organization and its online readers which is logically comprised in the communication strategy of that organization. Li and Bernofff (2011) state that in the communication strategy, social media is based on the post concept which is not at a persistent value. Moreover, social media must be browsed regularly in order to adjust to the changes.

Companies or organizations use various tools in their communication with their stakeholders according to their needs and situations. They can communicate various kinds of information to accomplish numerous targets through social media. In this regard, Gronroos (2008) reports that communication has to be steady across all the canals which help to dodge discrepancies and confusion. This means that despite communicating strategically by using social media on all the platforms that help to disseminate the messages, the information must be the same in order to be clear to all the stakeholders.

Wendling et al. (2013) note that old-style media sources for instance radio, newspapers, and television were used to convey important information. However, social media has platforms among which Facebook and Twitter are mostly used by companies or organizations to communicate and inform the public while receiving feedback from them. Hence, companies or institutions use social media as part of the communication method with the public (Anderson & Rainie, 2010).

Badea (2014) posits that online networking procedure ought to be built up inside the general organization's system and that of communication. The rise of the internet and online life has tremendously affected the hypothesis and practice discipline (Chung et al., 2007; Wright et al., 2010). Blanchard (2011) characterizes a completely conveyed social media strategy as a totally incorporated communication correspondence that fortifies the effect of each role inside the organization by using the intensity of human systems. According to Berende et al. (2011), making social media a means of communication should begin by characterizing all the organization's business system, procedures and objectives. On the other hand, Chu and Choi (2011) state that communication must be constant over all networks in order to avoid mistakes

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and differences. Hence, paying little heed to the correspondence methodology and the channel used by an official site, must be the equivalent so that it becomes clear to consumers.

Moreover, numerous strategic communicators additionally held onto internet-based life as a significant tool to improve issues of management, observe the environment, and two-way communication (Wright and Hinson, 2010). Social media site utilization is so predominant among undergraduate students. There is a presumption by numerous experts and organizations that they realize how to utilize them as strategic tools (Lewis, 2010). Meanwhile web-based life users such as organizations, media, etc. have a lot of instruments to use in communication with their customers. This depends on the necessities and conditions of how they can spread various information to accomplish different objectives through the social media. The use of word of mouth, brand awareness, and brand engagement are very common.

Hennig-Thurau at al. (2004) characterize word of mouth (electronic) as any helpful or destructive report made by potential, real, or previous customers about an item or a service of an association which is made available to countless people and foundations using the internet. Moreover, Chu and Choi (2011) by checking the exchanges between customers, organizations see the disappointment and can then make arrangement on how to come up with solution. This is a significant point in building up a reliable customer's service and is a piece of qualitative measurement process. Based on Linnebjerg and Nielsens' (2011) investigation, the following table was developed to clarify which quantitative indicator might be surveyed in connection with electronic word of mouth and assessment of three key social media platforms: see figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Word of mouth social media indicators

Facebook	• Number of posts in the timeline (wall) and comments • Number of likes • Number of shares • Frequency of appearance in timeline of friends
Twitter	• Number of adding to favorites • Number of retweets • Number of tweets addressed to the current account (@NN) or by using a specific hashtag (#NN) • Frequency of appearance in timeline of friends
YouTube	• Number of likes/dislikes • Number of reposts/shares • Frequency of appearance in subscribers lists • Number of comments on the wall

Source: Linnebjerg & Nielsen (2011)

Organizations use social media mostly to inform their customers about products or services, which is referred to as brand awareness. This examines the number of individuals that are getting the opportunity to see the brand, the number of people who truly watch it and those who review it (Sterne, 2010). Awareness is the initial move towards creating customers dedication (Larson and Watson, 2011). Berende et al. (2011), point out that brand awareness additionally produces informal correspondence among clients. The indicators that encourage Brand Awareness best are reflected in figure 5 below.

Figure 5. Brand Awareness indicators in Social Media

Facebook	•followers\fans •posts about the brand •page views •shares that lead to stated above
Twitter	•subscribers • tweets about the brand •page views •tweets using a specific hashtag (#NN)
YouTube	•channel subscribers •about the brand •video views •reviews/ratings

Source: Linnebjerg & Nielsen (2011)

Social media strategy is contemplating at taking into consideration the level of commitment and participation of the organization in order to cultivate a discourse among brand and customers. Li and Bernoff (2011) observe that organizations should not only pay attention, but they should persistently engage with customers. The following indicator for Brand Engagement is displayed in figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Brand Engagement indicators in Social Media

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Facebook	•comments •active users •likes on friends' feeds •user generated answers •page views
Twitter	•replies • active users
YouTube	•comments •subscribers •replies (video) •video views
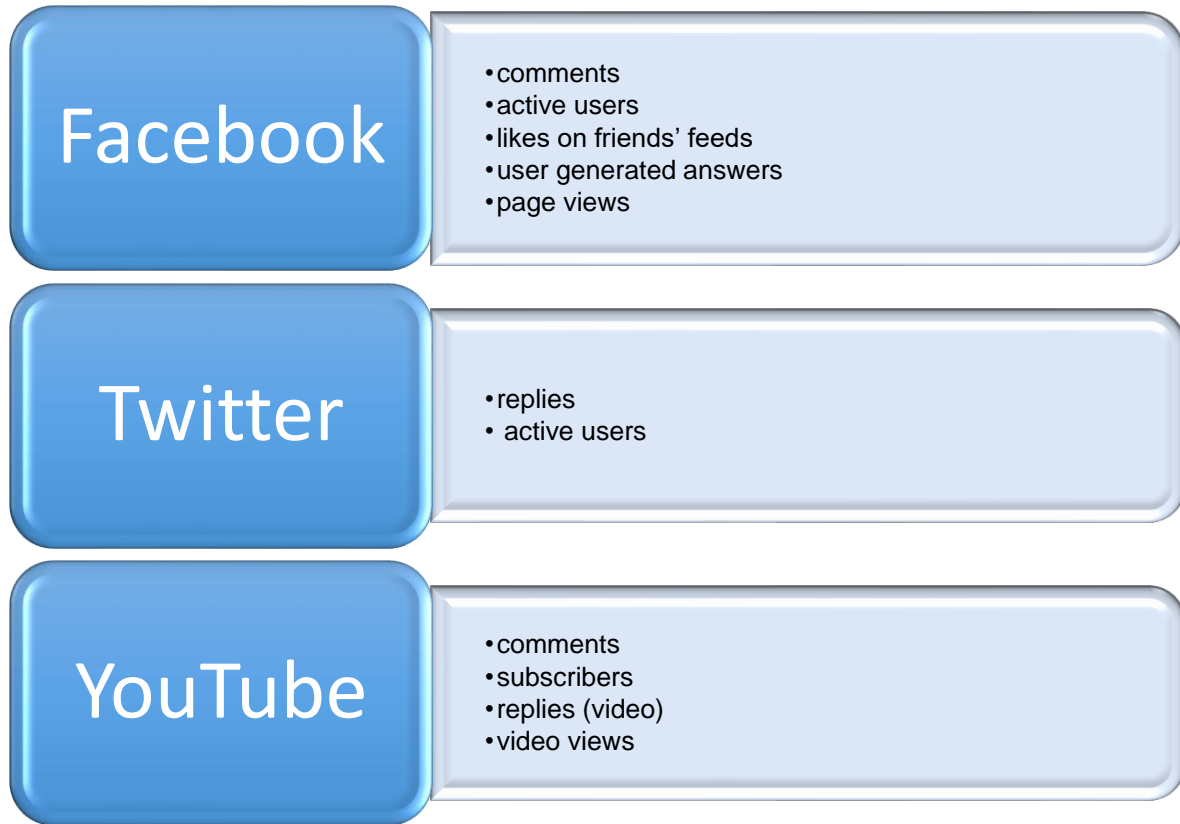
Source: Linnebjerg & Nielsen (2011).

The relationship between word of mouth, brand engagement, brand awareness can be seen in figure 7 below.

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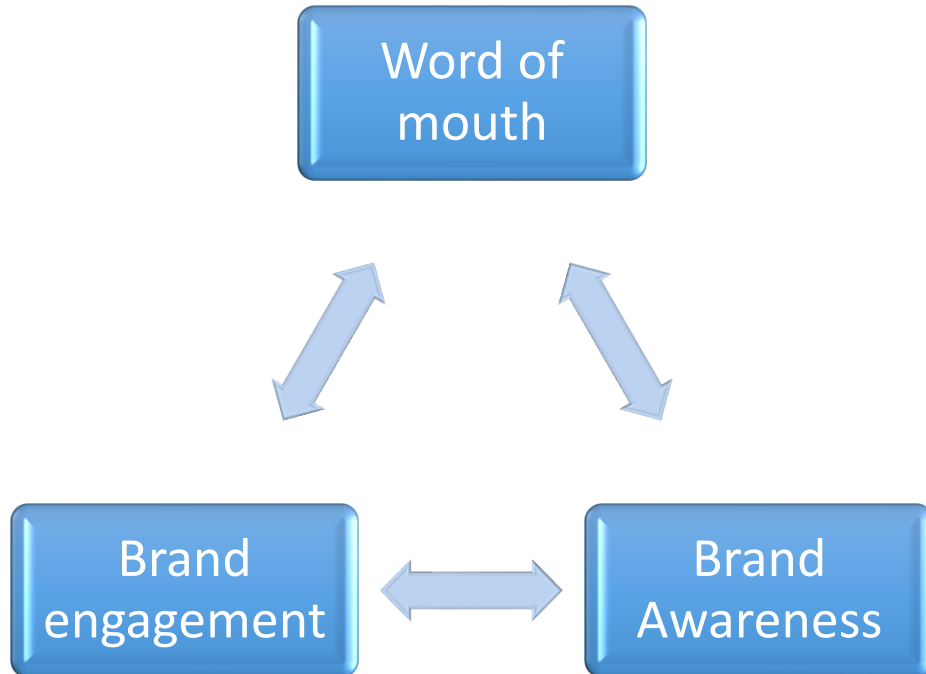
Linnebjerg and Nielsen (2011) show that brand engagement and awareness as well as word of mouth are interrelated and identified with one another in different ways. While word of mouth impacts both on brand engagement and awareness, the brand awareness creates brand engagement and word of mouth.

2.7. CONCLUSION

This chapter starts with the theoretical framework that underpins the study. It also provides an explanation of social media with its theoretical background providing the history of diverse social media platforms and the introduction of some of the platforms that occurred differently such as Facebook, twitter, YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp Etc. Furthermore, it defines key concepts one of which is the social media and also explains how it is used within institutions and for what purpose. Furthermore, the chapter looks at social media as a communication strategy within any institution since the purpose of the communication strategy is to transmit information which facilitates communication and mutual understanding among various audiences.

CHAPTER 3

THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

To understand different aspects of the world, both common sense and research are involved. Nevertheless, research consist of a clear, systematic approach on gathering information through a procedure of testing out preconceptions (Hancock et al., 2009). This procedure starts with determining a research question. It is then important to direct to choose a research design which tends to explore the research questions. Choices made at this point consist of considering what sort of information should be gathered, how it would be gathered, who would be welcome to participate and how the information should be examined. This chapter explains the methodological approach that is used in this study. It focuses on the research paradigm, research design, research approach, sampling and sample size, data collection and procedure as well as the data analysis.

3.1. RESEARCH PARADIGM

This investigation used an interpretive research paradigm which helped the investigator to perceive the world through recognitions and encounters with the participants. In looking for the investigation responses, the investigator followed informative worldview used to create and decipher his/her comprehension while gathering information. Interpretivism in this situation tried to comprehend a specific setting which was socially constructed (Thanh and Thanh, 2015). Cohen et al. (2003) state that interpretivists believe that an understanding of an investigation can take place through the individuals who are part of the topic which is being investigated. Elliott and Timulak (2005) buttress that being interpretive is seeing "*why"* the phenomenon happens and *"how"* it can unfurl after some time. Therefore, the interpretivist researcher aims at exploring and understanding the phenomena inductively by moving from an observation of a single occurrence to a more extensive speculation and hypotheses. By applying an inductive methodology, the

researcher starts with explicit perceptions and measures and later moves to recognizing subjects and patterns in the information (Soiferman, 2010).

Qualitative research uses a range of interrelated interpretive characteristics such as ontology, epistemology, methodology, which eases a better understanding of the world experienced by the researcher (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). In line with this, Edge and Richards (1998) highlight that in the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher sees himself or herself as a participant in the topic under investigation. Holliday (2007) concurs that this helps the researcher to have a deeper look into the situation under study. On the other hand, Myers (2009) says that the objective of interpretive investigators is to enable entrance into the real world (regardless of whether given or socially constructed). Based on this, the interpretive paradigm is deemed necessary because it allows the investigator to get a deeper comprehension of the issue under investigation. There are advantages and disadvantages of using the interpretivist research paradigm:

Advantages

- Firstly, the advantage of interpretivism is that the interpretivist researchers investigates the phenomena by having a diverse view and they don't only define objects, human or events, but also profoundly know them in social context. Also, interpretivist researchers make use of some key methodologies such as case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, etc. in order to gain an insider's insight of the research's object by providing more authentic information which is related to the topic of research (Tuli, 2010).
- Secondly, as a key strategy for interactive interview which enables the researcher to prompt and study things that we can't watch, researchers can analyze an interviewee's opinions, ethics, preferences, insights, perspectives, emotional state and points of view (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). Hence, collecting valuable data to help researchers to have a better insight for further action.

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Disadvantages

- The aim of an interpretivist is to gain deeper understanding of phenomena within the context instead of generalizing the outcomes to other individuals and other contexts. Based on this, it tends to have a gap while looking at the validity and utility of research outcomes while using scientific processes. (Cohen, et al, 2011).

- Its ontological view is subjective rather than objective. Study outcomes are conclusively impacted by the researcher's very own understanding, own belief system, perspectives or cultural preference which can lead to bias (Mack, 2010).

- The absence of keeping an eye on the political and philosophical impact on knowledge and social reality as another shortcoming. Interpretivism focuses on the comprehension of existing phenomena rather than looking into problems linked to empowerment of people and societies (Mack (2010).

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This research used a case study design. It focuses on a single case study which is the Marketing and Communication Department at Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The study examines how the Marketing and Communication Department uses social media to connect with students and students with one another. Crowe et al. (2011) state that the case study approach gives more information by using "why", "how" and "what" queries. The case study can give more understandings to the existing gaps in the case study conveyance or why one implementation structure may be picked over another. Hougghton (2015) adds that case study helps in clarifying both the procedure and the result of a phenomenon through entire perception, remaking and examining the cases being studied. On the other hand, Hyett (2014) states that case study is characterized by enthusiasm for an individual case rather than the techniques for request being utilized. Thomas (2011) asserts that the case study approach explores or investigates a real-life phenomenon by giving comprehensive data collection and using several sources of data. Baxter and Jack (2008) elaborate more by putting case studies into categories which are explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive.

- **Explanatory**

This kind of case study is used when the researcher seeks to answer questions that explain the supposed relations in actual involvements difficult for the investigation.

- **Exploratory**

This kind of case study is used to investigate those circumstances in which the assessment of the intervention does not have a clear or single set of outcomes.

- **Descriptive**

This sort of case study is used to define an interference into the factual. It also has the possibility to manage basic to complex situations. It helps the researcher to answer "how" and "why" type questions, while considering how a phenomenon is affected by the context in which it is found.

The multiple data collection and analysis strategies create and comprehend the case planned by the specific situation and new data. Thus, the case study is suitable for this investigation as the existing motive is not to take up a general view but to analyse and comprehend the situation within the Marketing and Communication Department among its first-year students.

3.3. RESEARCH APPROACH

After examining the literature, three well-developed research approaches emerged: exploration, description and explanation. These approaches vary in terms of data collection, the formulation of the research questions and the origin of their hypotheses (Saunders et.al, 2009). This study intends to explore the role of social media as a communication strategy. A qualitative research approach helps in understanding the human experiences in specific settings (Rahman, 2017). Hancock, et al. (2009) argue that a qualitative research illuminates social phenomena. This implies that it helps researchers to comprehend the social environment where they are involved and why things happen the way they do. It is about the social side of our reality and tries to address

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questions regarding why individuals act the way they do, how musings and mentality are shaped.

Rahman (2017) gives a solid argument of qualitative research by saying that it has the capacity to give complex written report on how individuals experience a certain subject. It identifies elusive elements like ethnicity, socioeconomic status, social standards, gender characters and belief, which are parts in the research. According to Saunders et al. (2009), research that focuses on gaining a new understanding of complex phenomena is exploratory in nature and the qualitative researcher depends on the interviewees to give detailed feedback on questions regarding the way they have developed and shaped their knowledge (Jackson et al. 2007) . Based on this, the study uses the qualitative approach as it emphasizes the exploration of the topic and allows for a deeper insight into the topic. This approach helped the researcher to examine the role of social media as a communication strategy in the Marketing and Communication Department.

3.4. SAMPLING AND SAMPLE SIZE

Sampling is a "demonstration, procedure, or strategy of choosing an appropriate sample", or a part of a population in order to define the parameters or features of the whole population. This helps the researcher to determine the population by observing just a portion of population. Cresswell (2008) states that although there are no clear rules for sample size, sampling in qualitative research mainly relies on small numbers with the purpose of an in-depth study to ensure a purposefully derived sample. Therefore, being an interpretive study, purposeful sampling which is a sample that depends on the decision of the researcher as she identifies those who give the best information for the success of the study. The researcher focuses on those with similar opinions to obtain the required data. For this reason, the research used only 20 participants who were 15 students and 5 staff members; this number was selected to look for in-depth information based on the phenomenon of interest.

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3.5.   DATA COLLECTION AND PROCEDURE

Creswell (2008) indicates that researchers use a variety of methods to collect qualitative data categorised into four: observations, interviews and questionnaires, documents, and audio-visual documents. Gillham (2000) agrees that data collection is a critical factor in helping to conduct research. In addition, the use of data collection depends on the research objectives and the advantages and disadvantages of each method. Therefore, this study made use of 3 tools of data collection: Interview, Focus group and Observation.

3.5.1. Interviews

Interviews are usually used as qualitative data collection instrument and could be structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews (Punch, 2009; Robson, 2011). Punch (2009) states that the researcher evaluates the types of interviews to determine which type to use in his or her research which matches the aim and objectives of the study. According to Dornyei (2007), interviews provide a deep understanding of the topic, emotions as well as the perceptions. In order to collect data for this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to prompt and investigate deeper into the phenomenon (Corbetta, 2003). A semi-structured interview question was drafted as part of the data collection instrument. This was flexible as the researcher had the opportunity to ask follow-up questions from the participants to get a deep understanding (Alshenqeeti, 2014). For the purpose of this research, 15 students and 5 staff members were interviewed. These staff members were purposefully selected for the interview because they have a knowledge and experience in this topic of the study based on their number of years within the department. However, Creswell (2009) holds that interviews have both advantages and disadvantages

Advantages
- High return rate
- Never incomplete answers
- Controlled answering order
- Relatively flexible

Disadvantages

- Time-consuming
- Small scale study
- Never 100% anonymous
- Potential for subconscious bias and inconsistencies.

3.5.2. Focus group

The study also made use of focus groups to help the researcher examine the different points of views of the participants. The aim of the focus groups was to gather information from a purposefully selected group of students with a common experience and knowledge on the topic (Nyumba, et.al, 2017). Dilshad and Latif (2013) posit that focus groups aim at gathering qualitative data in a social context to enable the researcher to comprehend the subject from their viewpoints. The focus groups also provide details about the impressions of participants on the topic. It has some advantages and disadvantages:

- Conversation is more impulsive and truthful.
- It involves an active process.
- Participants' opinions are valued.
- There is a great capacity to gather rich and detailed information.
- It enables participants to provide thoughts or alter views after conversation with other interviewees.

Disadvantages:

- Challenging or complex matters may lead to participants' revelation.
- Main participants may influence the group dynamics.
- Deficiency of control may lead to discussion on unrelated topics.
- Group data are complex to evaluate than individual interviews
- Some groups may be tired and over casted.
- Poor organization can lead to waste of time and energy

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Greenbaum (1993) says that the initial phase in having a focus group interview is to decide the reason for the study and who should be studied. In determining on who to take in the investigation, the researcher should look for who has the information needed. In this regard, participants were chosen purposefully for the focus group and not randomly. Some part of deciding, the intention is to consider the information that the researcher would get from the participants in order the assemble information on who they are and what they want. Considering this, Focus group helped the researcher to uncover first year student's understanding and experiences of the topic. Three focus groups were used, each with 5 students.

3.5.3. Observation

According to Kawulich (2005), observation enables the researcher to define words that interviewees might have used in the interviews. It also helps the researcher to observe events that participants might not be able to share as it might not be appropriate in the interview. Observation is more than just gathering information from the environment; it is not inactive collection of information like a video camera or recording device. But the researcher's brain is engaged just as eyes and ears, in order to arrange information that can make sense to them (Anderson, 2010). Sullivan and Sargeant (2011) state that observation is an instrument that is used in investigating the social world, and should be taken into consideration in circumstances where in-depth explanation of a setting and the implications and value of its occupants that need to be investigated. Observation should be approached in organized ways, both as far as the procedures used to collect the data, and the procedural considerations of the ethics of research, reliability and validity. There are advantages and disadvantages of using observation in research which are:

Advantages:

- it bears access to the "backstage culture"
- it considers point by point depiction
- it improves the nature of information gathering and understanding and encourages the improvement of new research questions

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- it provides opportunities for viewing or participating in unscheduled meetings.

Disadvantages:

- Researchers may benefit diverse comprehension of what they perceive, in light of the key informant(s) utilized in the research.
- It is time consuming and may include enormous measure of idleness.

Observation in research is about being involved without interacting with the people under study. This helps researchers to identify and guide relationships with participants, by learning how people in the study interact and how things are organized (Kawulich, 2012). In this light, the researcher made use of observation in order to gather data and information that participants might not be able to share through the interviews or focus group discussion. Moreover, the researcher observed activities on the Marketing and Communication Department social media platforms, by looking at the interactions that took place, the communication content as well as students' reactions to the communication. The researcher developed an observation guide to enable him/her to make notes at regular times.

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is the arrangement and interpretation of verbal or visual material in making statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is spoken in it. Hence, meaning- making can refer to individuals or social meanings. Additionally, a qualitative data analysis is applied to find and portray issues in the field or structures and procedures in practices (Flick, 2013). Kawulich (2015) demonstrates that three things happen during the analysis: information are sorted out, diminished through a summary and classification, and patterns and themes are identified and connected. DeSantis and Ugarriza (2000) define a theme as a theoretical element that brings meaning and identify repeated experience and its variation indication. Akinyode and Khan, (2018) state five steps analysis procedures which are: Data Logging, Anecdotes, Vignettes, Data Coding and Thematic Network.

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- **Data Logging**

This is the procedure through which the data gathered from individual interviews, focus group discussions, observation or other forms of qualitative data collection is recorded in a sheet. The procedure is otherwise called information documentation which is the accompanying level after collecting data (Khan, 2008; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Data logging intended to effectively document the data gathered through each type of data collection, emotions, view and experiences just as expectation and ongoing thoughts regarding the topic. The procedure should be very collaborative to a point that requires the investigator to return and verify unique information to link occurrences and classify precise matters.

- **Anecdotes**

This is to restructure the information record in order to make a complete report of the data collected. Khan (2008) considers the Anecdote as a consecutive series of changing activities which helps the investigator to generate themes in the study. The investigator writes an anecdote by listing the uninterrupted information from the interviewees. This is then supported by the researcher's observation and data collected from the focus group discussion.

- **Vignettes**

This focuses on a detailed explanation of the research setting, participants and themes. It helps the researcher to rearrange the different ideas (Khan, 2014). This also provides more details that can help the readers to have a better understanding of the investigation (Creswell and Miller, 2000).

- **Data Coding**

Creswell (2012) defines coding as the method of dividing and arranging content to create clarifications and complete topics in the data. Attride-Stirling (2001) argues that it is the procedure through which researchers collect content linked with specific themes or thought. It aims at decreasing the data and arranging them into reasonable and significant transcripts sectors. Data coding in qualitative research refers to assigning names or

encryptions to various segments of script that is linked to various issues. Creswell (2012) emphasizes that coding helps to sort out information into groups or themes with the goal that information from various sources can be effectively structured and looked at. With themes coded as such, a researcher can later analyse and recover interesting segments and have them as individual documentations.

- **Thematic Network**

Thematic networks investigate the comprehension of a topic or meaning of an impression (Attride-Stirling, 2001). According to Creswell (2012), themes are "as hard-to-classify, ordinary, major and minor, unexpected". To him, the hard-to-classify ideas are those that deal with thoughts that cannot easily fit into a common theme. The ordinary themes are those that can be easily found while major themes are those that portray the main ideas. There are also minor themes which are secondary ideas inside the database. Also, there are unexpected themes which are not projected to surface in the study. The thematic network is a web-like system which helps in establishing standards and processes used to organise themes. According to Houghton et al. (2013), this technique of arranging and showing the information enables the researcher to look at the responses to every topic and specific question separately. Thereafter, the researcher arranges the ideas into codes or categories (O'Connor and Gibson, 2003).

3.7 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Ibrahim (2012) opines that thematic analysis is viewed as a suitable guide for any investigation that seeks to find an explanation. It gives a methodical component to data study. To this effect, it enables the investigators to relate a study of the recurrence of a subject with one of the entire contents. Also, thematic analysis enables the researcher to define exactly the connections among notions to link them with replicated information. By utilizing thematic analysis, it is likely to interface the different ideas and views of the participants and contrast them with the information obtained in various circumstance at various occasions while conducting the research. According to Maguire and Delahunt (2017), thematic analysis is the procedure of finding arrangements or themes in qualitative data. Looking at the learning and

teaching perspective, the advantage of thematic analysis is that it is more of a methodology than a method (Clarke & Braun, 2013). It implies that it is not knotted to a certain epistemological or hypothetical viewpoint as other qualitative methods, resulting to an entirely adaptable strategy and gives the diversity of work in learning and teaching.

Clarke and Braun (2013) also say that in order to engage with an investigation or comment on a subject, a thematic analysis distinguishes significant and captivating subjects and examples with regards to data. A decent topical investigation decodes and comprehends information of data which is more than just summarizing information. Miles and Huberman (1994) say that the thematic analysis procedure entails three connected stages: data reduction, data display and data conclusion.

The first stage of data analysis is data diminution which improves, emphases, remove and organize data where the deduction can be made and confirmed. It contains the procedure of choosing, shortening and converting the data. Reducing and transmuting qualitative data can be completed either by selection or summary. The process of data diminution is completed such that deductions are defined, and substantiations are finalized, and the data is coded.

The data display is a second stage of the Miles and Huberman Model (1994). This complements the former and cannot be disjointed from data reduction. Data display is the planned, summarized and gathering of information that intends to comprehend the information that is gathered. Data display manages data, allows to organize notions and the opinions (Miles & Huberman 1994).

The last stage is data drawing and conclusions that give some recommendation to assist the researchers to conclude by presenting data in diverse ways such as:

a. Putting together or creating classes of data that can be grouped together

b. Finding correlations between features and variables

c. Structure theoretical rationality and constancy, which should be used in exploring the legitimacy of the results in order to fit in the theoretical outline of the research (Miles & Huberman 1994).

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According to Stirling (2001), thematic analysis has five steps:

1. Coding the material which is to decrease the data. It can be conducted by dividing the manuscript into adaptable and meaningful text sections, by using of a coding framework.
2. As soon as the manuscript is coded, the subjects are categorized.
3. The analysis is then constructed
4. The network is described and explored with an additional degree of concept obtained in the expository procedure. In order to take the analyst more profound into the importance of the writings, the subjects must be investigated. Once they have been built, the analyst returns to the initial content and interprets with the guide of thematic analysis.
5. The principal themes are summarized, and clear patterns developed in the exploration.
6. The substantial themes, notions, patterns and constructions that occur in the content are explored. This takes the researcher back to the initial research questions as well as the theoretical interests sustaining the study that are addressed with contentions grounded on the observations that rose in the investigation of the writings.

3.8 REFLEXIVITY

Reflexivity refers to paying attention to the experiential and subjective aspects of the study which involves the awareness idea (Gilgun, 2010; Steier, 1991). Dowling (2006) holds that the investigator should be capable of explaining the procedure of the study. Hence, the researcher should be aware of how the behaviour is perceived and how her personality may influence the observation and interpretation of data collection. Based on this, the researcher transparently considered the participants preconceived opinion which helped her with the findings.

3.9 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Shenton (2004) states that while conducting a trustworthy study, qualitative researchers need to consider the four criteria of credibility and trustworthiness, transferability, dependability and conformability.

Credibility: In this case, the research method was set, and the researcher familiarized herself with the culture of the participant and the organization. She was also honest with of the participant throughout the data collection.

Transferability: The research findings are transferable only if they appear suitable to the new contexts outside the actual study context. Transferability is analogous to external validity.

Dependability: Dependability is like reliability. It deals with the uniformity of observing the same finding under similar circumstances.

Confirmability: This deals with the data-oriented approach.

Hence, the researcher used the listed criteria and ensured that the study showed what it intended to prove and that the outcomes of the study can be applicable to other cases.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Nilesh (2013) states that ethical norms help to serve objectives of the investigation and apply to the individuals who lead the research or other insightful or inventive actions. In addition, he states that there are many reasons to follow research ethics some of which are to eradicate the falsification of the research data, encouraging the truth and evading errors in the research. Furthermore, ethical standards endorse values that are indispensable in collaborative work such as trust, accountability, mutual respect and fairness. Therefore, this research applied the code of ethics, as stipulated below:

- Honesty: The investigator did all within his/her means to honestly report the data, results, methods and procedures.

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- Objectivity: She tried to evade/reduce bias in the data analysis and data interpretation as well as to elude the revelation of personal interests that may have affected the researcher.
- Openness: The investigator shared the data, results, ideas, tools and resources with the participants.
- Consent form: S/he gave out consent forms to the participants which included their consent to participate and to be audio-recorded.

3.11 CONCLUSION

The methodology is the most important part of any research because it is used as a guide that the researcher needs to follow on how to go about the study or topic. For example, utilizing observation as an additional tool to interview and focus group in this research, permitted the researcher to explore how participants react to information via social media platforms and their convictions. Although the investigation relied on the research questions, utilizing more than one data collection tool assisted in acquiring more extravagant information and approving the findings.

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CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The study investigates the role of social media as a communication strategy1 at Cape Peninsula University of Technology within the Marketing and Communication Department. As participants in this study, the researcher used 15 students and 5 staff members in the marketing department. In order to keep the confidentiality of the participants, the researcher used codes to represent the different participants. The chapter outlines the description of the University and particularly the Department where the research is conducted. This chapter also gives a presentation and analysis of the information collected through interviews, focus group and observation. The researcher did well to present the advantages and disadvantages of social media based on the participants' responses from the interviews and focus group discussions.

4.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH SITE

The researcher chose the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) as the research site. The University is in Cape Town and has six different campuses. However, only one of the campuses was used and this is because it houses the Faculty and Department of interest. Therefore, the Cape Town campus situated in District six was used for the purpose of this study. The Department of Marketing and Communication from the Business Faculty was chosen specifically because it fits within the scope of this study. Hence, the study focuses on 1st year students in the Department of Marketing and Communication. This study aimed at exploring the role of social media as a communication strategy in an institution of higher learning in Cape Town. The Marketing and Communication Department in the Business and Management Science Faculty (FBMS) at CPUT was chosen since it uses different social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Flickr, News Feeds, and Blogs) as channels of communication.

4.3. CODING, PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

The study used interviews, focus group discussion and observation to gather the information required for the study as the researcher investigated the role of social media as a communication strategy within the institution. This section is divided into three segments: the first segment is the interviews conducted with students and staff members, the second segment is the focus group discussion with the students and the third segment is the observation by the researcher. For ethical reasons, the researcher seeks to protect the participants identity, thus he/she uses different codes to present the different participants: **S1-15** is used to represent the 15 students who participated in the research while **St 1-3** is used to represent the staff members. Given that the researcher made use of two focus group discussion, the codes **FG1** and **FG2** are used to present the two groups. Furthermore, the actual words of the participants during the interviews are presented word verbatim and in italics. For the purpose of this research, three strands of data are used from the students' interviews and two strands from the staff to support the different themes that emerged.

4.3.1. The use social media platforms

Social media platforms specifically are used to share information among internet users. The first question asked was 'what are the social media platforms used'? This question was asked to interrogate the communication platforms being used by the Marketing and Communication Department. This question was posed as the researcher needed to know if students are familiar with all the platforms used within the department. Below are some of the responses that came through from the students:

4.3.1.1. Segment 1- interviews
The question bellow helped to elicit the theme of social media platforms

Question. What are the social media platforms used by the Marketing and Communication Department?

S1:   *The ones that I know is Facebook, WhatsApp, twitter, YouTube.*

S4: *Facebook, I've seen something on Instagram, and I am not sure about twitter.*

S6: *Ok I know, there is email, we have Facebook and there is an Instagram pages as well about CPUT lifestyle.*

St1*: We basically work with the message that we have by using newsflash or any other form of platform such as Facebook which is targeted to students with specific information.*

St2: *Facebook, yeah, we use Facebook a lot for our events, both reviews and previews. We do something on twitter.*

Looking at the responses above, at least each students is familiar with some of the platforms used by the Department even though most of them are only aware of either one or two social media platforms used by the department of Marketing and Communication at CPUT. However, it is evident that students are not aware of all the social media platforms used by the Department as some of the respondents were not quite sure of all the platforms. This is evident in the next question and the responses that came from the participants below.

Question: How and why do 1st year students utilize social media platforms?

The question above was directed to students only as the researcher wanted to understand why the students utilized the social media platforms put in place by the department.

S5: *I am making use of it in case things changes such timetable, since we're writing exams now the date has been moved so also found out about it through social media page.*

S8: *I really don't use the department social media platforms, the only social media platform that I use for academic purpose is WhatsApp, I communicate through it when we have group project*

S10: *I use these social media platforms to inform others about important matter like timetable, come up event, news and sharing notes among ourselves, communicate among ourselves and with the staff.*

Going through the responses from the students, the researcher realized that there are some platforms provided by the Department for the students to use as a channel of communication. While some of the participants do not really use these channels, other students use them in order to be updated when it is required by either a lecturer or when they have a group project.

4.3.1.2. Segment 2- Focus group

The following quotations came from the focus group discussion with students

FG1: *We usually create a WhatsApp group where we send information regarding assignments.*

FG2: *We use sometimes YouTube where we go through some videos just to understand better what we have been studying because in our days we find almost everything on YouTube even some marketing lesson.*

Some of the responses emphasized that the participants used social media platforms to organized group projects without having a face- to- face meeting. They hold that using a WhatsApp was efficient and convenient and was also used as a supplement to their learning process.

4.3.1.3. Segment 3- Observation

The researcher observed that not all the students are aware of the social media platforms put in place by the Department to enable them to communicate with their peers and staff. It was further observed that the departmental social media platforms were allocated to one staff member. This made it even complex as some of the staff members were not even aware of all the social platforms put in place.

4.3.2. Benefits of social media

4.3.2.1. Segment 1- Interviews

The question asked to elicit this theme was: **List the benefits of using social media within the institution?** By asking this question, the researcher wanted to understand the positives of students and staff using these platforms, and what motivated them. The responses below came from the participants:

S5: *It helps students and staffs to connect anytime and to educate ourselves like library, YouTube, it also help in increasing the visibility of the institution and of course improve technology ability.*

S8: *I would say social media offer two-way communication as there is always interaction while communicating through it and you also get feedback whenever you ask a question.*

S9: *Social media platforms have the potential to increase our university awareness just by sharing our experience through some platform provided by the university.*

St2: *I would say students have the ability to access these platforms wherever they are through their cellphone and using social media platform as the a form of communication we know we can reach them wherever they are.*

St3*: For me I think collaboration and communication is very important between students and staff and I think having social media as a channel can contribute to that aspect, I think it does encourage collaboration and foster the creativity to produce shared knowledge that benefit every students.*

Looking at the responses above, one can see that there are many different reasons that made students to use the different social media platforms. One of the reasons as indicated above is that the platforms allowed students to be updated within the department and institution. However, it was realized that it does not only keep them updated but rather has a two way communication process as some of the participants mentioned that social media platforms help them not only to communicate but get feedback quickly when they make use of social media platforms as a channel of

communication. It is worth mentioning that the platforms are incorporated with some lecturers making it interesting to encourage student engagement.

4.3.2.2. Segment 2- Focus group

Question: what are the advantages of using social media within the institution?

FG1: *Yeah if I missed class, I just send a message in our WhatsApp group and I ask what I missed in class and I get a reply spontaneously.*

FG2*: Some of our lecturers have open WhatsApp group where they communicate and give announcement directly in the group.*

Based on the responses above, one can see that some students rely on social media platforms to get information while in other cases lecturers use these platforms to make announcements and give other instructions. Hence, the social media platforms are seen to be very important both to the students and lecturers.

4.3.2.3. Segment 3- Observation

During observation, the researcher noticed that the platforms are used among peers and staff members that allowed communication and connection to improve even outside the classroom. The researcher also realized that it is easier for the lecturers to be in touch with students instantly by keeping them updated about class activities. Another point observed was that WhatsApp was faster and even more effective in reaching the students than sending emails as students do not frequently check their email or go to the website but are constantly on their WhatsApp.

4.3.3. Disadvantages of social media

As participants talked about benefits, the researcher wanted to find out if they encountered some challenges or disadvantages while using social media platforms.

4.3.3.1. Segment 1- Interview

Question. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

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S1: *We have to keep track of everything in terms of news as we can get fake news easily, we need to know what have been published it is true and accurate as the news on social media go faster it is something you can't control.*

S7: *The disadvantages are that there is no face to face communication between students and lectures and it's also facilitate laziness.*

S9: *While using it for social reason it really time consuming because when we are on social media platform, we don't even realize how time is passing.*

St2: *I would say students sometimes use it in a wrong way either to mislead other students, instead of using it in a right way such getting information's and forwarding that information.*

St3: *I can say the major problem is sometimes the abuse of this platforms, where students use it for social reason rather than educational and students spend long hours for social purpose and very little hour for educational purpose or for university information.*

Looking at the responses above, despite the benefits highlighted in the previous section, there are also some disadvantage. The biggest negative is that it leads to laziness, hence drop in face to face communication. The power of the physical remains undisputable and very important in an institution of teaching and learning.

4.3.3.2. Segment 2- Focus group

The same question was asked during the focus group discussions, and the following responses were given.

Question. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

FG1: W*ith emails or WhatsApp, sometimes it's never as clear as face-to-face communication.*

FG2: *We don't usually go into more details when it comes to communicate through social media but when we meet face-to- face we can discuss everyone's responsibilities.*

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The responses above show that students are sometimes not committed when tasks are given through social media. To them, this is a lack of personal responsibility given that in a situation where group is not committed, it compromises the quality of their work.

4.3.3.3. Segment 3- Observation

During the observation, the researcher realized that using social media platform as a channel of group communication can have some challenges. This is because students are from different linguistic backgrounds and sometimes some tend to write in their home languages on the social media platforms. This may lead to communication barrier and exclusion given that not everybody can benefit from the information shared.

4.3.4. Social media platforms in teaching and learning process

Social media does not only provide students access to useful information but also connect them with learning groups. In this regard, the question below was asked to find out whether the Department is using some of the platforms in the teaching and learning process.

4.3.4.1. Segment 1- Interview
Question. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

S1: *"Yes because the department do not only communicate news, the use it also in a way of teaching and learning process because sometimes they show us how to market a service or a product as we are marketing students we need to know how to convey the message for the service for example we use blogging in the learning process to market the service or the product"*

S9: *"We do sometimes use WhatsApp for group project or sometimes we have group with the lecture where we communicate when there is anything that we need to know"*

S2: *"I won't really say we do use it for learning and teaching process because most of the teaching and learning process it is done through face to face with the lectures"*

St1: "We have not incorporated these platforms specifically for teaching and learning process but we use often for communication purpose"

ST2: "We sometimes include it in the process of teaching and learning once in a while just to show students how to market the product and the service"

Looking at the responses, there is a disagreement from the participants as some of the students think that the Department has put in place some of the platforms for the process of learning and teaching. As one of the participants states that some lecturers ask them to open blogs or go on Facebook to market either a product or a service. Some stated that they won't really say that they use it in the process of teaching and learning as it only happens occasionally. Some of the responses above show that somehow, these platforms are in the process even though it has not been included fully.

4.3.4.2. Segment 2- Focus group

The same question above was asked in the focus group discussion

FG1: "*I would rather say we use it for communication purpose and not learning purposes as most of the time we use it to get information*"

FG2: "*I can really say it is use in the teaching and learning process as sometimes we do use but it's a once off*"

The responses above demonstrate that the Department uses these platforms in some cases and when it is needed.

4.3.4.3. Segment 3- Observation

In the observation the researcher realizes that there might be a disagreement among students as these platforms are not introduced into the learning and teaching process in full as they use them only occasionally. Furthermore, these platforms are mostly used by students and the Department for communication purposes than for teaching and learning.

4.3.5. Social media platforms content used

The participants were questioned on what type of message they find in the platforms provided by the Department. The researcher wanted to know what kind of information the Department posts for students, and if it is helpful.

4.3.5.1. Segment 1- Interview
Question. What types of messages does the department post on the Social media platforms?

S1: *"It depends sometimes about news, competition, music, sport and sometimes about event that are happening at the university such as graduation"*

S3: *"They put information about certain module, progress mark, on twitter we get entertainment, sport, event and on Facebook information about SRC and other thing"*

S7: *"They usually post upcoming events planned for the year which gives abroad overview of what is planned for the year academically wise; The Social media accounts update students on social events such as market day, workshops, sport and recreational activities"*

St3: *"It really depends on what needed to be communicated to students usually we posts information such as upcoming events, timetables, upcoming holidays etc."*

St1: *"There is a lot of information that go through social media as each department make use of social media to pass information relevant to the students, such as events, graduation, bursary opportunity"*

Looking at the answers from the participants, most of information provided by the Department is news and information, and one of the participants emphasizes that some of the platforms like twitter only gives information such as events, entertainment, sports, while Facebook focuses on issues such as SRC information. However, the researcher realized that the Department keeps updates to students with information that students need

4.3.5.2. Segment 2- Focus group

QUESTION. What are the social media contents shared with students?

FG1: *"we also communicate through blackboard, some lectures post announcement on blackboard and our marks"*

FG2*: "sometimes going on Facebook page we get to know about news, competition, music, sport and sometimes about event that are happening at the university such as graduation"*

The responses above show that students rely on social media platforms provided for them which is helpful when the Department incorporates social media in their programs because whenever they need information that is related to the University or their studies, they can resort to these platforms.

4.3.5.3. Segment 3- Observation

In the observation, students use social media as a method to add to their connection and communication through multiple context such as the academics and administrative staff. This can positively impact students' ability to communicate to and being updated since the participants indicate that connections were a vital element contributing to facilitate communication and academic success.

4.3.6. Accessibility on social media platforms

The motivation behind having the question bellow is that the researcher wanted to find out if these platforms are provided by the Department of Marketing are accessible.

4.3.6.1. Segment 1-Interview

Question. How accessible are these platforms to the students?

S1: *"It is really accessible, now the technology as improved and everyone can access WhatsApp or Facebook or any other social media platform easily just by using a smartphone or we have computer lab put in place for us so it is really accessible for us"*

S3*: "They are more accessible; I get to talk whenever I want just by having internet access and the university has made it easier for us with Wi-Fi"*

S7: "Social media platform is a convenient way for us students to access information that we needed, we access that information through our lab or through our cellphones as we have Wi-Fi"

Participants claim that these platforms are accessible as the University puts in place some computer labs and Wi-Fi where students can access and communicate easily through some platforms provided by the Department of Marketing and Communication. Another student contradicted this by saying that they only access it when they have Wi-Fi or data, which means lack of data sometimes don't allow students to access these platforms.

4.3.6.2. Segment 3- Observation

The researcher realized that the University puts in place all the facilities in order to help students to access different social media platforms through the computer lab and free Wi-Fi which enable students to access these platforms whenever and wherever.

4.3.7. Communication strategies

The researcher wanted to find out if there is any strategy put in place by the Department to communicate with students through social media. This question was only addressed by staff members in the Marketing and Communication Department.

4.3.7.1. Segment 1- Interview
Question. What are the communication strategies put in place to communicate with first year students?

St1: *"I won't really say we have a specific social media communication strategy which is targeted to first year students but we do have a social media policy which is use as a guide when it comes to which content to use, languages etc. I will say one of the strategies we use is a newsflash"*

St2*: "We don't have a written social media communication strategy, but we do have a policy which serve us as a guide on how to communicate with students and what can be posted and by who"*

We came to know that the Department doesn't have a written strategy but rather a guide that they follow in order to communicate with students. Furthermore, they use some

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strategies such as the message they need to communicate and who need to be communicated to. In this regard, one of the staff mentioned that they also use newsflash as part of a strategy in order to reach to the students.

Question. How do you implement the communication strategies?

St1: "We basically work with the message that we have by using newsflash or any other form of platform that we have which is targeted to students with specific information"

St3 "We identified first the purpose of our communication through social media, we design or set up a message that we need to put out on social media, we also look at challenges that can arise while putting the messages then we go ahead of the message"

The staff's responses show that even though they do not have a written communication strategy they do have some steps they use while conveying the message as one of the staff mention they first set the purpose of conveying the message and also looked at the challenges while conveying the messages.

4.3.8. Effectiveness of social media platforms

Based on the question bellow, the researcher wanted to find out the effectiveness of these platforms therefore the researcher came up with this question bellow

Question. How effective are these social media platforms while using it in the process of communication?

4.3.8.1. Segment1- Interview

S2: *"I will say yes, we get to know what going on the campus and department, it helps to connect with other students and people and by being inform of event that I can prepare myself"*

S3: *"Yes as it helps in engaging with people and other students"*

S5: *"yes, it helps students and staffs to connect anytime and to educate ourselves like library, YouTube"*

St3: *"I will say it's effective as firstly it's a platform where we share information with students and through it we engage with students and get feedback when it needed and it*

also help when it comes to the university awareness as some students comes to know about the university through social media platforms too."

St1: "It is really effective, but they will be always a room for improvement like having a Facebook pages which is only dedicated for students and not used it for the all CPUT."

Based on the responses above, it was realized that these platforms are effective in the process of communication as the information is reaching several students and students can always rely on it whenever they need information. However, one of the staff mentioned that there is always a room for improvement because even if the information reaches quite a number through these platforms, they need to improve somehow.

4.3.8.2. Segment 2- Focus Group
Question. Are the social media platforms effective?

FG1. *"It is really effective as marketing students they show us how to market a service or a product and it is important for us to know these things"*

FG2. *"It contributes in increasing the visibility of the institution and of course improve technology ability and provide a sense of collaboration"*

The responses above show that the platforms put in place to facilitate communication among students and staff, are effectives since it does not only supplement the learning process but also helps in the awareness of the University issues.

4.3.8.3. Segment 3- Observation
While observing, the researcher realized that social media platforms provide an understanding of their lessons outside of the limits of a traditional classroom in order to supplement traditional learning techniques.

4.3.9. Challenges faced

The reason behind this question is to find out if there are challenges that the staff or students encounter while communicating with each other

Question. What are the challenges faced while communicating through social media?

4.3.9.1. Segment 1- Interview

S2: *"we need to have Wi-Fi or data in order to be connected in order to check the information posted on the social media platforms"*

S4: *"I only need to have WI fi or data in order to access those platforms"*

S6: *"when a message is sent through these platforms sometimes us students we understand and perceive it differently"*

St1: *"I would say the challenges faced while using this platforms on my side, I am the one who usually send newsflash and I usually face a problem as with newsflash it a one way communication but sometimes I find myself receiving reply from students"*

St3: *"It depending on the form of communication that is used like I said we have so many ways of communication mainly social media and so on, the challenges is to access a general effectiveness and the value of social media. And the understanding of how students perceive the message and sometimes"*

The responses show that students rely more on Wi-Fi in order to access the different platforms and they also have challenges in receiving these messages. Moreover, each staff member has her or his own experience when it comes to the challenges that they face. This is evident when one of the staff members mentions dealing with newsflash when sending messages to the students which is no-reply, but some students reply to the message meaning that they don't pay attention to all the information sent.

4.3.9.2. Segment 2- Focus group
Question. What challenges do you encounter while using social media platforms?

FG1: *"communicating with "with emails or WhatsApp, sometimes it's never as clear as face-to-face communication"*

FG2: *"I will prefer to meet face to face whenever we have a group work than doing it through any social media platforms because anything can happen, we have Wi-Fi but sometimes you might need an instant discussion and you realize that the Wi-Fi is not working and that delay all the process"*

The responses show that misinterpretation of the message can delay in having a clear understanding of the message as some of participants' state that sometimes the message is not clear via social media and also students can only access these platforms when there is Wi-Fi available for them.

4.3.9.3. Segment 3- Observation

Not having access to Wi-Fi or missing data also contributes sometimes in delaying the communication process through social media as some of the students are not staying at residence and sometimes don't have facilities to access these platforms at their places.

4.4. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher did the presentation of the data that was collected through the interviews, focus group and observation. The data was coded in themes that serve as a guide for the researcher and which assisted the researcher to comment on the different themes provided.

It was also important to let participants give their own opinion on the advantages and disadvantages of the social media platforms which would enable the researcher at the end of the study to give some recommendation. The next chapter provides discussion of the findings.

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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an extension of the previous section and it continues with the discussion of the role of social media as a communication strategy within the Department of Marketing and Communication. As a development of a story, the researcher's story is viewed as an understanding of their interpretations. Hence, the researcher reinforced her views that motivated this study and deciphered the findings in connection with lived experiences. In view of chapter two, the literature review and in chapter four, data analysis; the researcher centered on the role of their interpretations which denoted a standpoint of unrest and triggers the researcher to nurture her philosophy through interpretation. The students and staff members experience with social media platforms are discussed in line with the Adaptive structuration theory. The findings from the study are discussed under the following themes: the utilization of social media platforms, advantages and disadvantages of social media, social media platforms in the teaching and learning process, social media platforms content utilized, accessibility of social media platforms, communication strategies, effectiveness of social media platforms, and the challenges faced in using these platforms.

5.2. SUBJECTIVITY AND OBJECTIVITY

Objectivity and subjectivity are prescriptive ethics appended to the usage of research and scholarship. Objectivity is prescriptive ethics joined to claims as being autonomous of individual and practice bias whereas subjectivity is the prescriptive ethics joined to claims as being knowledgeably entrenched in a social area (Hasan, 2013). In this study, the researcher thought it necessary to consider objectivity and subjectivity although they are complexly linked. This is because the attribution of significance depended on a researcher's personal representative significance that showed an understanding the research data (Güven, 2016). Moreover, Güven (2016) suggests that researchers portray

their perceptions on the social world and exchanges, thus misrepresenting the true life of the respondents and unique point of view. It impacts objectivity, as it is seen as truthfulness hence, prompting validity and reliability of the research (Saunders et al., 2003).

In connection with the literature reviewed, this investigation demonstrated how the participants in this study have different views of social media as a communication strategy within their Department. In the previous chapter, the researcher introduced the information collected as a story of a developing structure and a comprehension of social real factors through which Denzin and Lincoln (1998) see as socially built real factors, local speculations, interpretive resources, information between subjectivity and thinking accepted substance. This therefore implies that the researcher presented these understandings and perceptions to the readers since the investigation is taking place inside the settings of human experience.

5.3. NARRATION AS A WAY OF EXPERIENCING THEIR EXPERIENCES

Cornellly and Clandini (1990) state that the development of stories of lived experience is an instinctive connection between being part of a story, narrate the story, re-narrate the story, and live the story through again. Hall (2011) highlights that stories are usually rebuilt, to uncover what is relevant in knowledge of the people narrating their stories, and what should be known about their experiences. The stories built showed facts that are a piece of the teller's reality and the teller's view on these facts though alluding to the future world in which they seek to create. Based on this, truth is a term that relates to the reliability of the overall topics uncovered by a narrative, particularly its basic theme.

In view of the above discussion, the researcher in this chapter presents and clarifies participant's views which is re-narrating their stories. The researcher did it for this study to qualify as an original act of investigation. The researcher aimed at repeating their stories to determine the importance as well as information over an interpretive description of students' as well as staff's views in the perspective under investigation.

As the researcher started working with the participants at Cape Peninsula University of Technology within the Marketing Department, he/she began to tell stories in the requested field, the researcher narrated the experiences, and modified them by re-narrating and living the experiences through again (Hall 2011). Therefore, the participants in this study also live, tell, retell, and relive their stories.

5.4. The use of social media platforms

Within a university communication structure, social media can be very useful when it comes to communicating and engaging with students. According to Baruah (2012), social media is a communication channel that contributes to the relation between an organization and its stakeholders in an online environment. In addition, he added that while using these platforms, it helps to reach their stakeholders via the social media which allows them to communicate. However, the Marketing and Communication Department has put in place different platforms which enable them to keep in touch with their students and staff. Nevertheless, not all the students in the Department make use of these platforms as indicated by the respondents that they have limited information.

Based on the results, it was realized that some of the students are knowledgeable and familiar with social media platforms mostly for social networking as indicated by Boateng and Amankwaa (2016). In view of this, Boateng and Amankwaa argue that social network such as WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are important in students' communication evident in this study. Moreover Roblyer et al. (2010) emphasize that Facebook can turn into a profitable asset to help student's educational communication and cooperation with staff in the faculty. This was evident in the data collected for this study in section 4.3.1.1 of the previous chapter. The staff highlighted that they make use of Facebook for reviews as well as to keep students updated. Barhoumi (2015) says that WhatsApp is created to encourage great connection, communication and engagement in educational and non-educational perspectives. The data collected supported this view as

these platforms facilitate the communication and engagement among the first-year students and the department.

Looking at the responses in section 4.3.2.1 and referring to the literature, social media offers to students a direct channel through which students openly evaluate and comment on their campus, departmental environment, and their classes. Zachos (2018) states that social media is a key part of any institutional strategy in order to raise brand awareness, drive student's engagement and provide channels where students go to when they require assistance, reassurance or answers. However, some platforms provided by the Department for Communication purpose as seen in section 4.3.1.1, have been put in place in order to keep students engaged with their peers and the staff in the Department as well as using them for the university awareness. However, some of the students do not really use these channels and the assignment of these platforms to one staff member has made other staff members in the department unaware and disinterested in these platforms. According to Belichenko and Matvienko (2012), communication in an organization works in combination with a general flow of information that can support people and groups to accomplish their objectives. For this reason, having one staff dealing with these platforms as it is the case, affects the flow of information since some staff members do not even know the different social media platforms used within the Department and therefore making it even more complex and difficult to accomplish their communication objectives.

5.4.1. The Advantages of social media

This theme is important to the study to understand the reason behind students utilizing social media and the reason for incorporating social media within the department's communication structure. The researcher's analysis touches on students and staff point of view on benefits of social media platforms.

Considering one of the research questions as seen in section 4.3.2.1, it is revealed that social media platforms allow the students to be updated within the department in particular and institution in general. However, it is realized that it does not only keep them updated but rather has a two way communication process as some of the participants in

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section 4.3.2.1 and 4.3.2.2.mentioned that social media platforms help them not only to communicate but they do get feedback quickly when they make use of social media platforms as a channel of communication. This ties with Keyton's (2011) argument that when feedback is not provided, the communication process is considered as a one-way communication. Therefore, it is important to have two ways in the communication as communication relies not only on the capacity of sending messages but also getting the feedback.

Farshid et Al. (2011) highlight that brands are trying to utilize social media to stay in touch with existing customers, increase their customers as well as to build and sustain the reputation. The researcher agrees that social media does not only help the students to engage among themselves but also gives the university the opportunity to be known through the department's social media platforms. The university also uses the social network platforms to recruit new students. Social media platforms have the possibility to increase the university's awareness just by sharing their experiences through some platform provided by the university.

Furthermore, social media gives a platform which facilitates collaboration among staff and students and students with their peers. This also encourages collaboration and fosters the creativity to produce shared knowledge that benefits every student (Al-Khalifa & Garcia, 2013).

5.4.2. Disadvantages of social media

Social media is being acknowledged and used widely and is likewise turning into the most significant tool among students especially in higher education (Al-Rahmi & Othman, 2013). Nevertheless, some disadvantages were highlighted by participants in this study.

The first disadvantage highlighted by many in section 4.3.3.1 that social media is time consuming as most of the students invest their time on it.   Students invest time on these social media platforms which influence their academic performance (Wang & Chen, 2011). This is because majority of the students use these platforms for social reasons rather than educational, thus, spending long hours for social purposes and very little time

on educational issues. According to Limayen and Sangari (2011), there is a poor impact and effect on students when social media is abused in order not to scholastically improve learning or its practice.

Another disadvantage of the social media platforms is that they tend to reduce a face-to-face communication just as decreasing the language skills and competency as most students intend to use shortened forms of words in order to communicate faster. This concurs with Obisi (2003) and Genc (2017) who argue that understanding the spoken or written word is not the only factor in communication, but the transmission of words, feelings, attitudes, gestures and actions are also important factors in communication and these factors such as understanding attitude, gestures and actions can only take place in a face-to-face communication. This accession is further supported in this study and it was realized that students rely more on social media communication than on a face-to-face communication, which sometimes delay the process of communication. According to Battiston, et Al. (2017), face-to-face communication is a very efficient channel of communication as it allows a rapid exchange and gives an immediate feedback.

Moreover, results from the study revealed that students are from different linguistic backgrounds and sometimes tend to write in their home languages on the social media platforms. This may result in a barrier in communication and exclusion given that not everybody can benefit from the information shared. However, an effective communication needs to be clear and should have information that can be understood by all (Pal, et.al, 2016). Consequently, there is no effective communication when the information conveyed cannot be decoded by all the students. For communication to happen, the message sent is required to be interpreted into meaningful information by the receiver so that he or she provides feedback.

5.5. Social media platforms in teaching and learning

The study is about social media as a communication strategy, and it was important for the researcher to understand how these platforms are used in teaching and learning. According to Devi, et Al. (2019), social media utilization in the teaching and learning

environment is growing and its use can support class materials, as well as influence discussions and collaborative work. This was evident in the study and both the staff and students make use of the department's social media platforms as a supplement in teaching and learning.

However, not all lecturers are incorporating social media platforms as a tool in their teaching and learning. It is important to note that not incorporating these platforms may not allow them to explore what the platforms can offer in the process of teaching and learning. According to Manca and Ranieri (2013), teachers who explore social media platforms can discover the real potential of social media which can change the pedagogical basis of their teaching experience. This is a tool that can be used to create truly adapted and flexible learning experiences for students. Manca and Ranieri (2013) further highlight the relevance of this platform in teaching and learning in the sense that it communicates promptly and openly with the students and compares notes on education technique, curriculum and teaching techniques.

Furthermore, social media helps students to understand the lesson outside of the limits of a traditional classroom setting. In order to supplement traditional learning techniques, it offers to students and lecturers a lot of opportunities to improve learning methods. The study revealed that these platforms bring students together to collaborate and work in groups. Faizi, et Al. (2013) demonstrates that students increase their knowledge while working in groups and gain better knowledge when they are progressively engaged in the process. In view of this, Bennett, et al. (2012) assert that these tools facilitate informal learning through the gain and management of information, platforms for discussion, conversation, and to perform task outside the classroom. Students can connect to a network and share content with others through learning communities and they found that these platforms help in sharing ideas, creating and transmitting content among peers and combining studies.

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5.6. Social media content use

This theme was deemed necessary to understand the information conveyed by the Marketing and Communication. According to Peruta and Shields (2017), social media is a networking site such as Facebook, Twitter, and other channels of communication that are used by large groups of people to share information. This allows present and future students to interact directly with their target university, as well as with other individuals who have similar interests in that university. Therefore, for students to interact and engage with each other, it is important to post information that are related with the student's interest (Luarn, et al., 2015). It was found in this study that the Marketing Department utilizes social media platforms to transmit relevant information to all their audience. Thus, having different audience and using the same social media platforms as Facebook, Twitter etc. to connect with all the audience may create a disinterest for some students. This is because some of information being communicated are not sometimes relevant to them. However, Peruta (2017) says that it is important for colleges and universities to provide content that appeals to each group without separating the others when having different audience such as existing and future students, parents and ex-students.

Additionally, it was noted in section 4.3.5 that when the university posts content which supports the idea that it is involved beyond its own sphere, it impacts the outside world and adds to the university profile while increasing engagement (Aman & Hussin, 2018; Dahri & Yunus, 2017). This is also supported by Luarn, et al., (2015) who contends that increased engagement is realized when the university uses social media platforms to communicate bursaries, admission, news related information and promotions. However, they also noted that contents such as academic event, administrative and staff, research, campus event, exhibits do not drive students into engagement. Consequently, as mentioned by some students in section 4.3.1, they do not engage on social media because they sometimes find out that the information may not be relevant to their academic achievements.

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Additionally, Aman and Hussin (2018) note that not only posting relevant information is important but to update the content of the page to attract the target and maintaining a constant brand image is also vital. However, they also think that a variety of different social media platforms have their own uniqueness and need to stay consistent. Considering this, Higher education institutions need to add value and quality content to make sure that they post relevant content that are interesting and sharable. If this is done, it would be possible for customers to comment and share. According to Dahri and Yunus (2017), failing to post relevant information and constantly updating information can cause a disinterest in students to connect with the university through social media platforms.

5.7 Accessibility on social media platforms

To understand the role of social media as a communication strategy in this study, there is a great need to know how accessible social media platforms are. The researcher's analysis in this section touches on students' views on the accessibility of social media platforms. The evolution of technology has allowed colleges and universities to develop their educational processes. This technology is making a quick progress and is making many things easier in the educational processes (Singson 2011). Gururaj et al. (2016) reveals that technology can benefit universities with new technology making a breakthrough in teaching and research domain. It was found that the university has put in place all the facilities such as computer labs and free Wi-Fi in order to help students in accessing different social media platforms both on campus and on student residences. Sinsong (2011) states that Wi-Fi has greatly contributed to the manner that students get in touch and access information by monitoring a group while utilizing centralized control. Wi-Fi offered the opportunity to anyone to connect to the internet and it assisted the students to get information needed. However, it was noted in section 4.3.6 that the Wi-Fi is weak, and students sometimes experience a lot of difficulties in connecting to the internet. This therefore delays the flow of information in the communication process. Nonetheless, having enough computer labs and providing a stable connection can help students to share their notes quickly and easily. Students can also work easily on their group project, communicate easily and exchange/share information among themselves

within a very short space of time. Retika, et Al. (2010) stipulate that having Wi-Fi in a university allows students to be in touch and collaborate with peers from other universities, thus, offering learning opportunities. It also helps students to explore beyond the textbook and this is a big benefit to the students as they extend beyond their classrooms. Chen, et Al. (2012) concur with this by saying that one of the key benefits of having Wi-Fi is the increase in students' engagement. As of now, technology is an indispensable part of students' lives outside the classroom.

5.8 Effectiveness of social media

Every communication becomes successful when it is effectively done. Aman and Hussin (2018) define social media as forms of media that help people to communicate, thus, social media is also seen as a tool to recruit high-potential students. As most young people make use of social media platforms every day, they receive and connect with others in order to gain and share information. However, through social media, higher education institutions would have to create platforms in order to keep a relationship with potential students. It was found in section 4.3.8.1 that these platforms facilitate the running of information among students as they connect and share the information provided by the Marketing and Communication Department. Furthermore, using these platforms have contributed to the visibility of the university in the outside world. As earlier mentioned, Aman and Hussin (2018) posit that advertising interesting courses within the institution on the social media platforms helps to increase the effectiveness of communication as well as build the brand awareness and recognition.

In addition, the researcher realized that some of the students rely on social media platforms to get information as they find these platforms reliable when they need to be updated. Dahri and Yunus (2017) state that it is not only important to keep the social media followers updated about Higher Education institutions but also to ensure that they continue to be interested and loyal by posting regularly on the platforms provided in order to keep it fresh and new.

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Furthermore, it was found in section 4.3.8.2 that social media platforms help students to understand their lessons outside of the limits of a traditional classroom in order to supplement traditional learning techniques. Lu and Churchill (2014) argue that in teaching and learning, there is a growth of 21.3% usage of social media from 2012 to 2013. This shows that the interaction in these platforms create a better learning environment and helps in increasing communication with and among students. In this regard, social media is considered as an efficient and enabling channel for conveying information. Lu and Churchill (2014) buttress that social networks are considered as the most effective in communication channels followed by emails. It is also revealed that social media is important to study related activities such as projects, group work, activities related to subjects, internship and positively influence interaction among the students.

5.8.1. Challenges faced

Apuke and Iyendo (2017) state that the platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, Skype and Twitter have evolved and most of these platforms are free which has encouraged more usage and adoption. Students can create their own page, engage with their lecturers, access university news, and access lecture notes through the internet. It was however found that there is a deficiency of students' access to these platforms as some of the students rely more on University Wi-Fi which has become a challenge for those students who do not reside at the university residence or area. According to Redondi, et al. (2016), having free Wi-Fi helps every student, no matter where they are on campus to access the internet in order to communicate with their peers or to further their studies. It is worthy of note that Wi-Fi connection gives easy access to online classroom tools. That notwithstanding, various lecturers make use of online teaching tools that support interactive learning and students' engagement and collaboration. These researchers further found that these tools help to raise valuable skills today such as communication and creativity. These tools also assist in improving student's attendance by making the class environment more fun and engaging.

Additionally, in section 4.3.9, students do not pay attention to the message sent and or perceive it differently making it challenging in the communication process. Hung and Yuen

(2010) hold that students' ability must be taken into consideration when using these platforms as students may be capable at communicating informally but may not realize what is required to critically assess, engage and understand the information.

5.9 Communication strategy

Communication through social media in universities is of vital importance as it helps current and future students to participant in the communication process as they exchange information and interact with each other. The purpose of communication strategy is to transmit information which facilitates interaction and common interpretation among different audience. Therefore, in the new technological dispensation, an increasing number of audiences are reached faster through the social media communication technique (Costea, 2012). Bordeianu (2012) defines online communication as a channel of meeting among the organization and its followers which is normally incorporated in the communication strategy of the organization.

Jakste and Kuvykaite (2012) give the importance of integration and utilization of social media within any organization's communication activities. They dispute that using social media in an appropriate way that can benefit an organization in reaching the appointed results while presenting, building brand or maintaining the two-part relations with different audiences. However, it was found that the Marketing Department has integrated these platforms but does not have a written strategy which allows them to communicate accordingly as evident in section 4.3.7.1. Although the Marketing and Communication Department does not have a written communication strategy, their communication through social media platforms depends solely on the sender as well as the content of message. Lewis and Nichols (2016) disagree by saying that every organization needs to plan the implementation of social media as set up by the purpose of using the platforms, define the target audience, select the channels and look at the negative aspects and the lack of information control.

Additionally, during the observation of the platforms, the researcher found that the Department of Marketing and Communication is trying to be constant in all platforms tos

keep their messages clear. This is in view of Chu and Choi (2011) who hold that information needs to be constant over all platforms in order to prevent mistakes and differences. It points toward paying attention to the communication strategy and the platforms utilized such as Facebook, Twitter, or other official sites such that communication corresponds so that it becomes clear to the audience.

5.10. CONCLUSION

This chapter was the discussion of data collected from the interviews, focus group discussion and observation. As the data was coded into themes in the previous chapter, the researcher has discussed each theme with the support of scholarly works. Participants gave their viewpoints as to how social media can benefit the department and the university. The next chapter provides the conclusions and the recommendations informed by the findings from this chapter. The conclusion and recommendation are organized in a way that attempts to answer the research question.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes the study on social media as a communication strategy within the university, with a specific focus on first year students and staff in the Department of Marketing and Communication. This summary is based on communication strategies used by the Department to communicate with first year students. The focus is on the use of the university's social media platforms by students and the benefits attached to utilizing social media in general and the department. It also addresses the difficulties faced while utilizing social media within the University and the Department.

Overall, this study revealed that social media is a great tool to use as a communication strategy when communicating and engaging with students as a two-way process. Nevertheless, it intended to reduce a face to face communication as students rely more on social media than communicating face to face with their peers or staff in the department. Learners can engage in a communication process with their peers and staff through social media platforms. As social media is essential to the communication procedure, this study posed various questions about students' and staff's views on the outcome of social media in their communication process.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This section summarizes the study presented in the previous five chapters and suggests recommendations on using social media as a communication strategy within the Department of Marketing and Communication in Cape Peninsula University of Technology. The study explored different views concerning the use of social media within the department. It looked at the advantages and the disadvantages of using social media platforms within the Department for teaching and learning. Furthermore, it considered the social media content used, accessibility of social media platforms, communication

strategy, effectiveness of social media and difficulties confronted while using these platforms.

The research was carried out using a qualitative case study approach. The researcher utilizes different techniques to collect and analyze the data such as interviews (semi-structured), focus group and observations. The data was analyzed through content analysis that led to developed themes.

6.3. RELATING THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Social media is an important tool for all organizations because it gives an opportunity for organizations to communicate, listen and learn from their stakeholders. This indicated that it is also important in institutions of higher learning to incorporate social media as a channel which enables them keep touch with all their stakeholders. This means that Universities need to strategize and plan on how to utilize these platforms to reach all their stakeholders. To this effect, the question posed in this research is: 'what is the role of social media as a communication strategy in the Marketing and Communication Department? Considering this, the study investigated the students and staff experiences on their use of social media as interacting channel. The findings revealed that the Department provides different platforms which facilitate communication among students and staff even though they encounter some challenges while using these platforms.

From the findings derived, the researcher came up with some recommendations about the usage of social media as a communication strategy within the Department that might assist in improving their communication through social media.

6.3.1. Research question 1: What are the communication strategies used by the marketing and communication department to communicate with first year students?

The purpose of communication strategy is to transmit information which facilitates the exchange and common understanding among all audience types. Based on this, an

increasing number of audiences are reached faster through communication techniques (Costea, 2014). Bordeianu (2012) notes that online communication is a meeting point between an organization and its online readers included in the communication strategy of the organization.

It was revealed in this study that the Department does not have a written communication strategy on the use of social media. However, they only rely on the social media policy used as a guideline when communicating with students and staffs. That notwithstanding, communication through social media platforms depends solely on the sender as well as the content of the message. This is in contrast to Lewis and Nichols (2016) who posit that every organization needs to plan the implementation of social media that sets up the purpose of using the platforms, define the target audience, select the channels and look at the negative aspects as well as the lack of information control.

There is evidence from the participants that lack of a strategy negatively affects students and staff. This might have been the case because there were no strategies put in place to create an awareness in students and staff as well as to get them engage with social media platforms provided.

6.3.2. Research question 2: What are the social media platforms used in the marketing and communication Department?

Social media can be very useful when communicating and engaging with students. According to Baruah (2012), social media is a communication channel that contributes in maintaining the engagement and communication between an organization and their stakeholders in an online environment. Roblyer et al. (2010) observe that in Universities, students use Facebook and other form of technologies which serve as a support in teaching and learning than traditional one. Moreover, an investigation by Junco et al. (2011) reveal that Twitter has significantly ameliorated students' connection and their grade point. Furthermore, Yang and Chang (2011) hold that on interactive blogs, students are more interested on peer exchanges and academic achievement. This study also

reveals that the department made use of different platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and it is revealed that they use Facebook for reviews and preview as well as keeping students updated about the Department and University information. In view of this, some of students rely more on Facebook to get information. Roblyer et al. (2010) agree that Facebook can turn into a profitable asset that can assist students' educational communication and cooperation with staff in the faculty.

The data also reveals that WhatsApp is used as a form of communication in order to facilitate a quick communication and engagement between lecturers and students. This is supported by Barhoumi (2015) who argues that WhatsApp is created to encourage great connection, communication and engagement in educational and non-educational perspectives.

Furthermore, the study also finds that social media platforms provided by the Department is under the supervision of one staff which has made other staff members unaware and disinterested in these platforms. Belichenko and Matvienko (2012) disagree with this stating that communication in an organization works in combination with a general flow of information that can support people and groups to accomplish their objectives.

6.3.3. Research question 3: How do first-year marketing students use the university's social media platforms?

Social media platforms practice helps an organization to reach their stakeholders thus allowing them to communicate and engage with them. Baruah (2012) states that social media helps in joining people together by breaking the communication gap. It also helps the people to connect with each other whenever they want. It is revealed in the study that students use these platforms as a tool to facilitate connection with their peers and staff. The participants make use of social media platforms to be in touch with other students, planning meetings among themselves and making sure that all individuals know what is expected from them. In view of this, some lecturers make use of social media platforms to organize group projects without having a face- to- face group meeting. Chhabra and Sharma (2013) state that these tools are important because they connect peers among

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themselves and with staff in learning process as platforms assist in students' performance, group work and communication skills.

 Moreover, it was noted that the Department makes use of social media platforms to supplement their learning process which enables the students to understand what they are studying as marketing students. It is also found that the platforms used among peers and lecturers allow communication and connection to improve even outside of the classroom. The Department uses social media to keep students updated with additional activities such as news and university events. Lee and Bonk (2016) agree that these tools can assist interaction and contribute to student-lecturer relationship. Based on this, interaction is achieved through reading and commenting on different posts which also facilitate students' engagement in these social media platforms.

Therefore, students use social media as a method to add to their connection and communication through multiple context such as academics and supplementary issues. This plays an important role in student's ability to communicate and be updated since connections are of vital importance to their academic success.

6.3.4. Research question 4: What are advantages and disadvantages of using social media in an institution of higher learning?

Higher Education has seen the importance of Web 2.0 technologies in improved student interaction, their experiences, academic achievement, and in developments and changes to remain current within the educational area (Mao, 2014). However, social media creates a platform which facilitates collaboration among staff and students as well as students with their peers. It is also known to encourage collaboration and foster creativity to produce shared knowledge that benefits every student (Al-Khalifa & Garcia, 2013). Aman and Hussin (2018) concur that social media is a form of media that facilitates communication among people. This study therefore reveals that most participants agree that social media platforms gives to students the opportunity to be updated within the Department and institution in general. However, it is also realized that it does not only keep them updated but engaged with their peers and the staff.

Nevertheless, some disadvantages of using social media are identified in the study. Some of the participants indicate that majority of the students use these platforms for social reasons rather than educational purposes, thus, spending longer hours on social issues and very few hours on education. This concurs with a Junco (2012) who posits that students spent most of their time on Facebook not for college purpose which has a negative impact on their academic performance. Seeing the disadvantages of social media, the participants understood that these platforms ought to be utilized to enhance or to meet distinctive adapting needs instead of just submitting assignments, communicating and engaging.

Another disadvantage is that social media platforms tend to reduce the face to face communication among participants as they rely more on communicating online. In this regard, Battiston, et al. (2017) posit that face-to-face exchange is a very efficient channel of communication because it allows a rapid exchange and gives an immediate feedback. In view of this, it is important for the staff to also consider face to face communication as this form of communication can facilitate a rapid exchange and immediate feedback from students.

Finally, students tend to communicate in their home languages which become challenging since most students come from different linguistic backgrounds. This contradicts Pal, et al. (2016) who argued that an effective communication needs to be clear and should have information that can be understood by all. Based on this, it is important for staff to put some guidelines when they need to communicate with student via social media.

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6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings above, it is noted that the Department has not put social media guidelines to achieve their goals when communicating with students. Thus, the researcher recommends that the Department should create guidelines on social media that attract students' view.

Moreover, they need to plan and organize social media platforms in order to get good results and positive feedback from students.

The Department should as well update their information more often on all social media platforms since some of these platforms are not used to update information more often such as YouTube.

Students should be encouraged to create their own pages on the internet, engage with their lecturers, access university news, and access lecture notes from these social media platforms. For this to succeed, it is important for the university to make the platforms accessible to all the students.

The researcher recommends that the Department should differentiate target groups and select appropriate channels to help them in achieving the objectives of all communications. This would go a long way to help in transmitting the essential thought in the message to the target audience.

The Department should also put strategies in place for each staff to use the social media platforms with the guideline provided rather than going personal without following a proper procedure and not differentiating their target groups.

Finally, it is important to train staff members who can be involved in the communication processes via social media platforms.

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6.5. CONCLUSION

The researcher believes that the above recommendations can lead to an improvement in the way the Marketing and Communication Department communicates with students through social media platforms. By so doing, the department would be able to strategize its communication via social media and enhance and attract students to engage and participate in the communication process with the institution. Strategizing the use of these platforms would also give an opportunity to the University to be known outside. Therefore, social media is known to play a crucial role in the University's brand awareness thereby giving the opportunity to the University to sell their services.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Student's interview questions

Student 1

1. What are the social media platforms use by the Marketing and Communication department?

The ones that I know is Facebook, WhatsApp, twitter, YouTube

2. How and why do 1st year students make use of these social media platforms?

It depends most of the time I use it in order to be updated for instance to check if there is a newsflash regarding holidays or we have to subscribe to something.

3. How accessible are these platforms to the students?

It is really accessible, now the technology as improved and everyone can access WhatsApp or Facebook or any other social media platform easily just by using a smartphone or we have computer lab put in place for us so it is really accessible for us

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

Yes because the department do not only communicate news, the use it also in a way of teaching and learning process because sometimes they show us how to market a service or a product as we are marketing students we need to know how to convey the message for the service for example we use blogging in the learning process to market the service or the product

5. What types of content does the department post on the Social media platforms to communicate with 1st year students?

It depends sometimes about news, competition, music, sport and sometimes about event that are happening at the university such as graduation

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

It helps being up to date regarding everyday news happening at the university since as students read that much but with social media the information are out there and it is easy for us to see it everywhere and term of costing it doesn't cost much.

7. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

We have to keep track of everything in terms of news as we can get fake news easily, we need to know what have been published it is true and accurate as the news on social media go faster it is something you can't control.

Student 2

1. What are the social media platforms use by the Marketing and Communication department?

Facebook and WhatsApp those are the one I know so far

2. How and why do 1st year students make use of these social media platforms?

I used to go through the Facebook page, to check if there is any announcement, but not really because I don't use Facebook anymore like I used to, yeah even certain lecture where we have to add our self to a group in order to post our marketing blog. That are the only time that I go back and use Facebook to submit.

3. How accessible are these platforms to the students?

It is easy for us to access as we have computer lab and also we have Wi-Fi even with our cellphone we can access easily the social media platforms

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

I won't really say we do use it for learning and teaching process because most of the teaching and learning process it is done through face to face with the lectures

5. What types of content does the department post on the Social media platforms to communicate with 1st year students?

They put submission date, and event, competition or any kind of news for our best interest

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

The one that I can list is we get to know what going on the campus and department, it help to connect with other students and people and by being inform of event that I can prepare myself

7. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

The disadvantages is we need to have Wi-Fi or data in order to be connected in order to check the information posted on the social media platforms

Student 3

1. What are the social media platforms use by the Marketing and Communication department?

Blackboard, and WhatsApp, twitter, Facebook?

2. How and why do 1st year students make use of these social media platforms?

I check if there is any post maybe about something because recently we had a post about our exams that it has been reschedule and also maybe event that is going to happen yeah some changes.

3. How accessible are these platforms to the students?

They are more accessible; I get to talk whenever I want just by having internet access and the university has made it easier for us with Wi-Fi

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

No they are not but they can use it for teaching and learning process because most of the things we do it online in our days, I know some of the lectures does use it sometimes and other don't. For example they send us class activities, inform us about exam

5. What types of content does the department post on the Social media platforms to communicate with 1st year students?

They put information about certain module, progress mark, on twitter we get entertainment, sport, event and on Facebook information about SRC and other thing

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

The benefits that I can say is when you ask questions on social media platforms you get feedback quickly and also it help in engaging with people and other students

7. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

In the process of learning and teaching we rely more on social media, nowadays people can be lazy, we can have lectures who rely more on social media they just post everything there and us as students we just go there and get the information and there is no face to face communication

Student 4

1. What are the social media platforms use by the Marketing and Communication department?

Facebook, I've seen something on Instagram and I am not sure about twitter

2. How and why do 1st year students make use of these social media platforms?

I am not really on social media anymore, sometimes I do but unless it is related to my academic like directly it is when you will see me go on social media

3. How accessible are these platforms to the students?

Sometimes I don't get access to the Wi-Fi, or I don't have data, it is accessible only when I have access to Wi-Fi and when I have data

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning?   Explain

We don't really use it for teaching and learning process

5. What types of content does the department post on the Social media platforms to communicate with 1st year students?

The content that they usually put is submission date, events

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

I get to know what is happening in the department, campus. I get to connect with people

7. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

I only need to have WI fi or data in order to access those platforms

Student 5

1. What are the social media platforms use by the Marketing and Communication department?

It's Instagram and Facebook, those are the one I am familiar with

2. How and why do 1st year students make use of these social media platforms?

I am make use of it in case things changes such timetable, since we're writing exams now the date have been moved so also found out about it through social media page

3. How accessible are these platforms to the students?

They are more accessible because I can talk whenever I want if I have access to the internet

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

No, they don't because not all students have access to the internet while they are off campus.

5. What types of content does the department post on the Social media platforms to communicate with 1st year students?

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They usually post daily news about what is happening on the university and notes, slide I mean study material

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

It helps students and staffs to connect anytime and to educate ourselves like library, YouTube, it also help in increasing the visibility of the institution and of course improve technology ability and provide a sense of collaboration

7. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

If social media is use for personal gain is very disadvantages because social media can keep a person busy for hours. Students can miss classes or worse they are wasting the time of other students who want to use the PC to their schoolwork, while they are monopolizing the computer to be on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram

Student 6

1. What are the social media platforms use by the Marketing and Communication department?

Ok I know, there is email, we have Facebook and there is an Instagram pages as well about CPUT lifestyle

2. How and why do 1st year students make use of these social media platforms?

I haven't really used any social media platforms here at the campus

3. How accessible are these platforms to the students?

They are really accessible because even if you don't have data, we have free Facebook for example and the other ones we can access to that here at the university as we Wi-Fi

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

I can really say it is use in the teaching and learning process as sometimes we do use but it's a once off

5. What types of content does the department post on the Social media platforms to communicate with 1st year students?

They post things that we need to know for instance information about different application that are open

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

It benefits us a lot because students are always on social media and it is easy to communicate and it is quick

7. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

With social media you don't really know if the information is accurate because anyone can create a page

Student 7

1. What are the social media platforms use by the Marketing and Communication department?

They use Facebook and it is only Facebook that I know of

2. How and why do 1st year students make use of these social media platforms?

It depends on what I am looking for and interest of, for instance if I want to purchase something like books in the library or either going to the website or see what is available for them.

3. How accessible are these platforms to the students?

Social media platform is a convenient way for us students to access information that we needed, we access that information through our lab or through our cellphones as we have Wi-Fi

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

Yes, the department use the social media for teaching and learning for example via the internet we can learn our lesson through blackboard or YouTube

5. What types of content does the department post on the Social media platforms to communicate with 1st year students?

They usually post upcoming events planned for the year which gives abroad overview of what is planned for the year academically wise; The Social media accounts update students on social events such as market day, workshops, sport and recreational activities

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

As marketer you need to be able to keep up with the latest trends. Technology has made it easier for marketers to quickly identify what consumers think about certain products and also you have an opportunity to see how other company advertise themselves on social media and see their review through the comments posted on their respective pages.

7. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

The disadvantages are that there is no face to face communication between students and lectures and it's also facilitate laziness

Student 8

1. What are the social media platforms use by the Marketing and Communication department?

Let say Facebook and twitter because I haven't really used the social media platforms

2. How and why do 1st year students make use of these social media platforms?

I really don't use the department social media platforms, the only social media platform that I use for academic purpose is WhatsApp, I communicate through it when we have group project

3. How accessible are these platforms to the students?

The university have provided for us computer lab and Wi-Fi, I will say it is accessible

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

I won't say they do because most of the time our lesson is usually made through face to face with our lectures

5. What types of content does the department post on the Social media platforms to communicate with 1st year students?

Mostly they post content such as upcoming event, or if there is change on the timetable when we have exam so mainly I will they post information that we need.

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

I would say social media offer two-way communication as there is always interaction while communicating through it and you also get feedback whenever you ask a question

7. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

I would say social media decrease face to face communication because we students we are relying more on social media communication instead of face to face communication

Student 9

1. What are the social media platforms use by the Marketing and Communication department?

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp

2. How and why do 1st year students make use of these social media platforms?

I use it to communicate and to access basic information as quick as possible.

3. How accessible are these platforms to the students?

By the computer lab it is not accessible because of the notices on the PC that refrain students to use the computer to log in their personal social media account. On the phone

you can only have access when you have data or when you are on a spot that have a WIFI facility

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

We do sometimes use WhatsApp for group project or sometimes we have group with the lecture where we communicate when there is anything that we need to know

5. What types of content does the department post on the Social media platforms to communicate with 1st year students?

It really a lot of information that they usually put according to what we need know as students, so I would say all the information that will benefits us, whenever there is any change of program or opportunities such bursary I got to know it through the social media platforms provided for us

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

Social media platforms have the potential to increase our university awareness just by sharing our experience through some platform provided by the university

7. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

While using it for social reason it really time consuming because when we are on social media platform, we don't even realize how time is passing

Student 10

1. What are the social media platforms use by the Marketing and Communication department?

They communicate through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, email

2. How and why do 1st year students make use of these social media platforms?

I use these social media platforms to inform others about important matter like timetable, come up event, news and sharing notes among ourselves, communicate among ourselves and with the staff.

3. How accessible are these platforms to the students?

These platforms are made accessible to us, we can access to it through their laptops or telephones

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

I would rather we use it for communication purpose and not learning purposes as most of the time we use it to get information

5. What types of content does the department post on the Social media platforms to communicate with 1st year students?

Sometimes events such as graduation, while browsing it platforms we find content such as sport competition, sometimes bursary opportunity so it really a lot of information that we find on these platforms

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

The kind of interaction that take place in on these platforms, we share our interest, and there is much more interaction if I have to say

7. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

For me I would say the disadvantage is to rely on social media when it comes to communication and as technology is improving we as students start relying more on it and we do not see any more the importance of face to face communication

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Appendix B: Staff's interviews

Staff 1

1. What are the communication strategies put in place to communicate with first year students?

I won't really say we have a specific social media communication strategy which is targeted to first year students but we do have a social media policy which is use as a guide when it comes to which content to use, languages etc. I will say one of the strategies we use is a newsflash

2. How do you implement the communication strategies?

We basically work with the message that we have by using newsflash or any other form of platform that we have which is targeted to students with specific information

3. What are the challenges faced in communicating with the students?

I would say the challenges faced while using this platforms on my side, I am the one who usually send newsflash and I usually face a problem as with newsflash it a one way communication but sometimes I find myself receiving reply from students

4. What information do you convey through the social media platforms?

There is a lot of information that go through social media as each department make use of social media to pass information relevant to the students, such as events, graduation, bursary opportunity

5. How effective are these social media platforms while using it in the process of communication?

It is really effective, but they will be always a room for improvement like having a Facebook pages which is only dedicated for students and not used it for the all CPUT.

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

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Through these platforms we have lectures that can connect with their students and incorporate social media into their lesson and making them interesting and engaging. And I think using social media when it comes to interaction is benefits since it something that students are familiar with

7. What are the disadvantages of using social media within the institution?

When we have Social media, we have people who are connected through computer and cellphone which decrease face to face engagement so people are relaying on computer and that could hurt a person ability to have a face to face communication. It's kind of facilitating laziness in a way and it sometimes cause distraction

Staff 2

1. What are the communication strategies put in place to communicate with first year students?

We don't have a written social media communication strategy, but we do have a policy which serve us as a guide on how to communicate with students and what can be posted and by who

2. How do you implement the communication strategies?

We just use which is already there and we post, or we have an address which is call all students and once we send the message it goes to all the students

3. What are the challenges faced in communicating with the students?

The challenges that I will point out is we do not have social media platforms which are targeted specifically to students, we sometimes post information which are targeted to staff and I would say it can be a reason why some of the students don't make use of this platforms.

4. What information do you convey through the social media platforms?

We mostly post events in order to keep students updated about what have been happening in the department or university

5. How effective are these social media platforms while using it in the process of communication?

Using this platforms, it is effective as it allow us to reach students, and I will give an example of newsflash as a form of communication, we usually send information as newsflash and through it the information at least reach a number of students and staffs.

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

I would say students have the ability to access these platforms wherever they are through their cellphone and using social media platform as the a form of communication we know we can reach them wherever they are.

7. What are the disadvantages of using social media within the institution?

I would say students sometimes use it in a wrong way either to mislead other students, instead of using it in a right way such getting information's and forwarding that information

Staff 3

1. What are the communication strategies put in place to communicate with first year students?

Talking about having a communication strategy, social media, we do not have a written strategy, but we do use some platforms which we use following of course some policies such as one of the example I can give is we need to communicate in a language where all the students will get information considering international students in the university as well

2. How do you implement the communication strategies?

We identified first the purpose of our communication through social media, we design or set up a message that we need to put out on social media, we also look at challenges that can arise while putting the messages then we go ahead of the message

3. What are the challenges faced in communicating with the students?

It is depending on the form of communication that is used like I said we have so many ways of communication mainly social media and so on, the challenges is to access a general effectiveness and the value of social media. And the understanding of how students perceive the message and sometimes

4. What information do you convey through the social media platforms?

It really depends on what needed to be communicated to students usually we posts information such as upcoming events, timetables, upcoming holidays etc.

5. How effective are these social media platforms while using it in the process of communication?

I will say it is effective as firstly it's a platform where we share information with students and through it we engage with students and get feedback when it needed and it also help when it comes to the university awareness as some students comes to know about the university through social media platforms too.

6. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

For me I think collaboration and communication is very important between students and staff and I think having social media as a channel can contribute to that aspect, I think it does encourage collaboration and foster the creativity to produce shared knowledge that benefit every students

7. What are the disadvantages of using social media within the institution?

I can say the major problem is sometimes the abuse of this platforms, where students use it for social reason rather than educational and students spend long hours for social purpose and very little hour for educational purpose or for university information

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Appendix C. Focus group

Focus group one

1. How and why do 1st year students utilize social media platforms?

I personally use social media to keep in touch with my colleagues or sometimes to be in touch with other people

On my side I only use it when there is a need of me using social media, if it has to do with academic purpose then I use social media

I will say that I use for academic purpose for instance WhatsApp, I communicate through it when we have group project

We usually create a WhatsApp group where we send information regarding assignments

And on Facebook we usually browse there just to be informed of what have been going on the campus

2. List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

These platforms help us to connect with each other as students and staffs and you get a quick feedback whenever you need something

Yeah if I missed class, I just send a message in our WhatsApp group and I ask what did I miss in class and I get a reply spontaneously

I will also add on that it gives us the opportunity to connect with each other to meet new people, other students and we can connect wherever we are

Not only that it keeps us up to date regarding every news happening at the university, exam timetable and so on

And it gives us a platform where we get to engage among ourselves as students.

3. What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

I will say firstly it reduce face to face communication as we start relying more on social media

And the message cannot be understood while sending through social media

Yeah, I agree with their point for example with emails or WhatsApp, sometimes it's never as clear as face-to-face communication

Yes, with face to face you can make your point understood as you will take time to explain and make yourself understood which is not the case with social media

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

I would rather say we use it for communication purpose and not learning purposes as most of the time we use it to get information

I know we don't usually use it for teaching and learning but sometimes we have some of lectures who try to incorporate it in the learning process as we need also to know how to market in the social media platforms

Yeah, I agree even though they do not incorporate it fully I will say somehow we do use it for learning purpose

5. What types of messages does the department post on the Social media platforms?

We also communicate through blackboard, some lectures post announcement on blackboard and our marks

We have timetables, events, graduation and so on

Yeah, it's basically the same thing, announcement and everything that will be on our interest as students

6. How effective are these social media platforms while using it in the process of communication?

It's really effective as marketing students they show us how to market a service or a product and it is important for us to know these things

It's effective as it doesn't just give us the opportunity to connect, it gives the opportunity to university to be known

Another point I will mention is, its effective whenever you want a quick feedback with social media platforms you get feedback quickly

7. What are the challenges faced while communicating through social media?

Communicating with "with emails or WhatsApp, sometimes it's never as clear as face-to-face communication

Yeah as she mentioned it's really challenging because the way I will understand the message it might not be the same way the other students will understand the message sent

Yes, as we sometimes find ourselves in group and some of the group members English is not their 1st language and sometimes it difficult for people to understand the message

As they mentioned on barriers me I will say more on delaying the work, we may find ourselves communicating about groups work and we find some of the members not replying due of not having data and that also delay communication and it becoming challenging

Focus group 2

1. How and why do 1st year students utilize social media platforms?

We use social media platforms to be in touch with other students, planning meetings among ourselves and making sure all the individuals knows what is expecting from them, their task when it comes to group's works

Adding to that we usually have WhatsApp group where we send information regarding assignments or when we must meet in order to discuss about the assignment and tasks

Yes, we had a group project, and we didn't have time to meet at all and we were like let each group member send his or her part of work as we couldn't meet but having a WhatsApp group we managed to get our group project done

It also helps us to be in touch with our lectures. As we also communicate through blackboard, some lectures post announcement on blackboard and our marks

2.   List the benefits of using social media within the institution?

It allowed communication and connection to improve even outside of the classroom as we can still communicate even if we are not in our classroom, we can still work as group even if we are not able to communicate face to face

It keeps us connected with each other as some of our lecturers have open WhatsApp group where they communicate and give announcement directly in the group.

Adding to that communication and connections are easier via twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp and other platforms we know of, example WhatsApp help us as students to keep one another updated with announcement, group project, and anything that has to do with class information.

Another point is it helps students and staffs to connect anytime and to educate ourselves like library, YouTube, it also help in increasing the visibility of the institution and of course improve technology ability and provide a sense of collaboration

On a learning part it has made it easier for us as marketing students to have an opportunity to see how other company advertise themselves on social media

3.   What are the disadvantages of using Social media within the institution?

We don't usually go into more details when it comes to communicate through social media but when we meet face-to- face we can discuss everyone's responsibilities.

Yes, with social media communication our understanding of the message can be different

And it really reduces face to face communication, prefer now to communicate more on social media then face to face communication

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I will say we rely more on social media, nowadays students are becoming lazy, and we have lectures who rely more on social media they just post everything there

On that point If social media is use for personal gain is very disadvantages because social media can keep a person busy for hours and not concentrate on important matter

Another thing is with social media you don't really know if the information is accurate because anyone can create a page

4. Does the department use the social medial for teaching and learning? Explain

I will say yes, it is use in the teaching and learning process as sometimes we do use even if it once off

Yes, we sometimes use blogging, we sometimes finds our lesson on the blackboard or on YouTube

Me I will say no because most of the teaching and learning process that we have in our department it is done through face to face with the lectures

I think I will also go in the same angle with her and say no we mostly use it for communication purpose rather than learning purposes as most of the time we use it to get information

On my side I think it both as some lectures does use them when we need to learn how to market online and others, they don't incorporate that in the process.

5. What types of messages does the department post on the Social media platforms?

They usually post every information that is in connection with us as students, news, graduation, timetable, bursary opportunities

Yeah sometimes going on Facebook page we get to know about news, competition, music, sport and sometimes about event that are happening at the university such as graduation

And On twitter and Instagram we get entertainment, sport, event and on Facebook information about SRC and other thing such as bursaries applications

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It basically the same things as others have mentioned event, graduation, sport, and so on

6.   How effective are these social media platforms while using it in the process of communication?

It is effective as it contributes in keeping us connected to each other

I agree with him it is effective it gives use the opportunity to learn more on how to market the services or product for instance

Yes, social media platforms have contributed to our academic accomplishment in different ways as we also could supplement what we've been studying in our classes

To complete that we use sometimes YouTube where we go through some videos just to understand better what we have been studying. As in our days we find almost everything on YouTube even some marketing lesson

7.   What are the challenges faced while communicating through social media?

With social media we don't usually go into more details when it comes to communicate but when we meet face-to- face we can discuss each individuals' responsibilities and we give more details on the responsibilities

Sometimes with social media, the message can be delay as not everyone is on their phone or have access to their email or internet wherever they are, at the time that you are sending the message and you have to wait for people to respond back when you need clarification.

Another challenge I will mention is I will prefer to meet face to face whenever we have a group work than doing it through any social media platforms because anything can happen, we have Wi-Fi but sometimes you might need an instant discussion and you realize that the Wi-Fi is not working and that delay all the process

Yes, we sometimes don't have data when someone send a message and we miss to receive the message that was urgent.

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Yes, for some students who don't stay at residence it's really a challenge for us because not all the time we may find ourselves with data

Appendix D. Participants consent letter

CONSENT LETTER

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study entitled: Social Media as a Communication Strategy in a Selected University in Cape Town

The study aims to identify and explore the role of social media as a communication strategy within the Department of Marketing and Communication at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in Cape Town.

Hence, the researcher undertakes to assure you of the following:

☐   Participant is free to withdraw at any time whatsoever if the need should so arise as Participation in this study is voluntary

☐   To present the information and transcripts used in this research in order to preserve the dignity of the participant

☐   No manipulation or retention of information is involved in this study.

☐   To protect your rights and your well-being by ensuring that no harm comes to you as a result of your participation in this research.

☐   To keep data confidential and maintain your confidentiality.

☐   To make the final version of this research publication available in the library.

The findings from this study will go a long way to assist universities developing or improving their social media as a communication strategy within the universities. I acknowledge your sacrifice in volunteering to add to the body of academic knowledge and your perseverance in carrying out the research task to its completion.

Yours sincerely

Aline Mwilambwe Kasongo

Master student

Participant's signature of agreement: _____

Date: _____

PLEASE PRINT NAME: _____

Appendix E. Research permission letter

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Marketing and Communication
Bellville Campus
PO Box 1906 Bellville 7535
Telephone: (021) 959-6609
Email: kochs@cput.ac.za

15 April 2019

I, Dr Garth van Gensen, in my capacity as Director of Marketing and Communication at CPUT give consent in principle to allow Aline Kasongo Mwilambwe, a student at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), to collect data in this department as part of her Master of Technology Research. The student has explained to me the nature of her research and the nature of the data to be collected.

This consent in no way commits any individual staff member to participate in the research, and it is expected that the student will get explicit consent from any participants. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at some future time.

In addition, the institution's name may or may not be used as indicated below. (Tick as appropriate).

	Thesis	Conference paper	Journal article	Research poster
Yes	✓			
No				

Kind regards

Dr Garth A van Gensen
Director: Marketing and Communication

16 April 2019

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Appendix F. Ethical Clearance certificate

**P.O. Box 1906 ☐ Bellville 7535 South Africa ☐Tel: +27 21 4603291 ☐ Email: fbmsethics@cput.ac.za
Symphony Road Bellville 7535**

Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee	**Faculty:** **BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES**

s

At a meeting of the Faculty's Research Ethics Committee on **30 April 2019**, Ethics

Approval was granted to **Aline Mwilambwe (210148977)** for research activities of **M**

Tech: Business Administration at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of dissertation/thesis/project:	SOCIAL MEDIA AS A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN A SELECTED UNIVERSITY IN CAPE TOWN Lead Researcher/Supervisor: Dr. J A Abongdia

Comments:

Decision: Approved

  _____ **Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee**	**20 May 2019** _____ **Date**

Clearance Certificate No | FOBREC654

Appendix G: Turnitin Report

Draft Thesis Aline

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Appendix H: Editing Certificate

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23rd April 2020.

CONFIRMATION OF EDITING

This is to confirm that I Dr. Henry Akum Njom edited for language use, this thesis entitled "**Social media as a communication strategy in a selected university in Cape Town**" by **Aline Mwilambwe Kasongo** from Cape Peninsula University of Technology. This editing involved issues such as spelling, punctuation, sentence and paragraph structures as well as language usage.

Regards

Dr. HA Njum

Cell no: 071 096 4382