

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

**The Use of Social Media on Corporate Reputation: A Case Study of the
Durban University of Technology (DUT)**

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The Use of Social Media on Corporate Reputation: A Case Study of the Durban University of Technology (DUT)

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The Use of Social Media on Corporate Reputation: A Case Study of the Durban University of Technology (DUT)

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This dissertation is submitted in fulfilment of the master's degree in the Department of Public Relations Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Durban University of Technology, South Africa

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Lerato Relebohile Maboe, do hereby affirm that unless otherwise specified, this dissertation is the product of my own work and it has not been submitted to any other tertiary institution for a degree award or other purposes and all the authors whose work contributed to this study have been accordingly referenced.

I hereby give consent for this dissertation to be made available for inter-library loan, photocopying, and made available to outside interested organisations and students.

13/04/2023

Lerato R Maboe

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mom, Ntombikayise Maboee, for always supporting, motivating and carrying me throughout my studies. Thank you for everything, Mother, I know that your prayers have kept me going. I would also like to dedicate this to my brothers, for instilling their words of wisdom that gave me strength every time I felt like giving up, thank you.

A special dedication to my late brother, Tlotliso Maboee, whom I will always love, continue resting in peace Mohlakoana.

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ABSTRACT

Corporates invest heavily in enhancing their corporate reputation through several platforms (Li and Bernoff 2015: 56) such as social media, television advertisements and print media, which are often used to promote the corporate image (McIntyre 2014: 5). According to Barker (2014: 184), the importance of social media in organisations is to create and maintain a positive desired image, brand and reputation because of the possibility of building an interactive relationship with an unlimited number of stakeholders, business partners and employees. It is therefore evident that social media is growing daily, and more people are becoming a part of it. Siapera (2013: 255) adds that the importance of social media in the organisation includes the sharing of ideas and building relationships with stakeholders and audiences through social media platforms and increasing the organisation's visibility.

The aim of this study was to assess how the Durban University of Technology (DUT) uses social media platforms in building and maintaining a positive corporate reputation, and how they engage actively with their target audience. A mixed research methodology was adopted to achieve the set objectives. The sample population consisted of 197 participants, which included academic and administrative staff as well as students at DUT. The staff were assessed through interview questions and the students were assessed via survey questionnaires. Data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. The findings revealed that social media plays an important role for organisations as a vital tool to build and maintain corporate reputation online, as well as communicating effectively and actively with various target audiences. Social media is considered by organisations, both public and private, as a strategic tool for competitive advantages (Predmore 2014: 115). Social media is generally used by various types of organisations for many different business purposes, for example to influence the industry, engage with their various customers, and manage brand image among stakeholders in a cost-effective way (Predmore 2014: 115). Many organisations use social media as a strategic tool for communication and marketing purposes (Predmore 2014: 116), and for sharing newsworthy information to their target audience and stakeholders (Dreher 2014: 345).

The study recommended that organisations should prioritise investing in social media platforms. Another recommendation was that organisations must communicate effectively and actively with their audiences online.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|---|
| DUT | Durban University of Technology |
| FREC | Faculty Research Ethics Committee |
| ORM | Online Reputation Management |
| SPSS | Statistical Package for the Social Sciences |
| UGC | User Generated Content |

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the influence of social media on corporate reputation management. The problem statement, aim and objectives, rationale for the study, scope of the study, and the theoretical background as well as a brief research design are covered in this chapter. Chapter 2 will elaborate further on the influence of social media on corporate reputation.

1.2. Background to the study

Corporate reputation is explained as a systematic process of creating, building, maintaining and managing a positive image and brand for an organisation by managing its behaviour and all internal and external communication (Johannes 2013: 3). In addition, corporate reputation is the immediate impression that people hold of an organisation. Two stereotypical factors have a significant influence on corporate reputation, namely the organisation's market sector and country of origin (Davies 2015: 1). Reputation can be important for an organisation, particularly for service and business management. In this context, some argue that there is a link between an organisation's values and how it is viewed externally (Davies 2015: 2).

A study by Dowling (2016: 18) shows the importance of having external stakeholders who hold positive views about the organisation and those held by the organisation's internal stakeholders in increasing a positive reputation, growth as well as the identification of an organisation. Organisations closely guard their corporate reputation in order to avoid reputational risk (Schultz and Werner 2003: 3); to remain financially viable (Wang 2013: 2); and to create a positive identity (Adeosun 2013: 4). Studies by Vollenbroek, Vries and Constantinides (2015: 40) also suggest that when corporate reputation is not well managed, the reputation of the organisation may be tarnished. Many academic scholars also explain

that a poor corporate reputation not only results in the poor reputational image of an organisation but may also result in a lack of short-term sustainability and a shortage of customers. Thus, in sustaining and maintaining corporate reputation, a number of strategies are utilised by corporates. These include social media, television adverts and print media (McIntyre 2014: 5). Corporates invest heavily in enhancing their corporate reputation via these platforms (Li and Bernoff 2015: 56).

Szamrowski and Pawlewicz (2015: 161) add that social media for organisations can be used as a great tool to create the desired image and reputation because of the possibility of building interactive relationships with an unlimited number of recipients, who may be not only be customers but also external stakeholders. The exponential growth of social media in the recent years has contributed to changing the communication environment in organisations in which organisations use to communicate with their internal and external stakeholders. This generates a number of potential threats to the reputation, brand and image of the organisation. Organisations should use social media not only as an additional communication marketing channel but also in a broader context as a tool to build and maintain its corporate reputation (Etter, 2013: 606).

Hence, this study aimed to assess how social media platforms, specifically Facebook and Twitter, influence the corporate reputation of the Durban University of Technology (DUT). To achieve this aim, a mixed method research approach was employed whereby questionnaires were administered to 197 stakeholders at the DUT. The data collected for this study was analysed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. The findings from the study may form recommendations to be presented on how DUT's corporate image could be promoted through the use of social media platforms.

1.3. Problem statement

Corporates invest heavily in maintaining a positive reputation for their organisations (Li and Bernoff 2015: 56). This is considered highly important as a positive reputation result in a

good organisational image, brand and sustainability (Utz, Schultz, Glocka 2013: 40). Matesic *et al.* (2014) and Rindova, Williamson and Petkova (2014: 610) state that corporate reputation can be easily tarnished if not properly managed. Organisations must be trustworthy and offer value to promote good customer relations and provide good communications with external stakeholders. Several methods have been developed to manage corporate reputation in organisations. One such method is the use of social media platforms. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, have often been used by organisations to manage and improve their corporate reputation (Li and Bernoff 2015: 56). However, social media platforms could also be used to tarnish the reputation of the organisation, for example in cases where social media users send negative comments about the organisation. According to Scott (2011: 115), such negative comments could adversely influence the organisation's corporate reputation.

Johannes (2013: 3) states that numerous studies have been conducted globally on the influence of social media on corporate reputation. However, only a few studies have been directed in the higher education sector within the South African context. This therefore necessitates assessing the influence of social media on the corporate reputation of higher education institutions in South Africa. This study focused on how DUT uses social media platforms to build and maintain a positive corporate reputation.

1.4. Aim and objectives

Aim of the study

This study aims to assess the influence of social media on corporate reputation at DUT.

Objectives

- To determine the extent to which DUT uses social media platforms to manage their corporate reputation;
- To assess ways in which social media can be used to build a positive corporate reputation at DUT; and
- To identify which social media platforms are more effective in maintaining the corporate reputation of DUT.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does DUT use social media platforms to manage its corporate reputation?
2. In which ways can social media be used to build a positive corporate reputation at DUT?
3. Which social media platforms are more effective in maintaining the corporate reputation of DUT?

1.5. Rationale

Previous researchers have confirmed that many organisations have not established the relationship and influence of social media on corporate reputation (Vollenbroek, Vries and Constantinides 2015: 40). Social media usage has been increasing rapidly amongst corporates and across the different spectrums of society. Several corporate business entities, irrespective of size, location or ideology, are embracing social media platforms as a tool to enhance their reputation (Dowling 2016: 20). This study aims to increase the understanding of the influence of social media on corporate reputation within an organisation as a means of maintaining a positive reputation. This study hopes to add to the body of existing literature and provide recommendations to organisations and other stakeholders on how to improve their corporate reputation through the use of social media platforms.

1.6. Scope of the study

The scope of this study is confined to a single higher education institution (The Durban University of Technology) which uses social media to build its reputation online. The study assesses the influence and the relationship of social media on corporate reputation in organisations.

1.7. Delimitations

According to Ploy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014:7), delimitations are the considerations that the researcher is set to work within. This study focuses on Twitter and Facebook as the most used social media platforms and will therefore be restricted to the influences of these social media platforms, in particular, on the corporate reputation of DUT.

1.8. Limitations

Ploy-Cilliers and Bezuidenhout (2014: 6) describe limitations as constraints that lie outside of the researcher's control. Potential constraints to this study are not having sufficient time to collect the data due to the COVID-19 pandemic constraints, as well as budgetary constraints, whereby the researcher had to work on her own without a research assistant to assist in data collection.

1.9. Research methodology

This study employed a mixed methods research approach to explore the influence of social media on the corporate reputation of DUT. The target population for the study comprised stakeholders at DUT, including staff and students. The non-probability sampling technique was adopted in selecting the respondents for the study. The convenience and purposive sampling techniques were the two types of non-probability sampling techniques employed in this study. A total of 197 participants consented to take part in the study and participation in this study was voluntary.

A structured research questionnaire consisting of 35 questions was used to collect data from the participants at DUT. A pilot study was conducted with 10 questions given to participants in ensuring the validity of this approach. The pilot testing questionnaire was distributed to DUT students and administrative staff members, and all completed questionnaires were dropped off in a box to ensure participants' confidentiality and anonymity.

A thematic analysis was used to conduct the qualitative data analysis, while the quantitative data was analysed using path analysis. Valenzuela (2017: 1) explains that path analysis is a statistical technique for testing and examining relationships amongst a set of observed variables. SPSS version 25.0 was used to analyse the data collected for this study.

1.10. Outline of the dissertation

The findings generated from the research study are presented in five chapters. An overview of each chapter is provided below:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter includes the introduction and the background to this study. The problem statement, aim and objectives, rationale for the study, scope of the study, delimitations and limitations, theoretical background and a brief research design are covered in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Existing literature relevant to the theoretical background of the study will be reviewed in this chapter, with emphasis on the influence of social media on corporate reputation. This chapter will also comprise the theoretical frameworks and theories that are significant for the influence of social media and the relationship it has with corporate reputation. Furthermore, the literature review discusses how higher education institutions maintain their image and brand on social media.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter will describe the research design, research approach, target population, sampling strategy, research measurements, questionnaire construction, pilot study, data collection, data analysis, validity, reliability and trustworthiness, and ethical consideration used in this study. The chapter will also present the design of the study.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

Here, the research findings and results using various statistical techniques will be presented, discussed and interpreted.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The final chapter will present the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study. Areas that call for further investigation into the influence of social media platforms on the corporate reputation of higher Institutions will also be highlighted.

1.11. Conclusion

This chapter presented an introduction and background to the study and discussed the research problem. The aim, objectives, and the rationale that motivated this study were also given. The framework of the study chapters were also presented. The next chapter presents a review of relevant existing literature and theories discussing the influence of social media on corporate reputation.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter introduced and gave the background to the study, as well as emphasising the significance of the study. This chapter will provide a review of the literature pertaining to the influence of social media on corporate reputation using research from other academic scholars who have conducted similar studies. The relationship and the influence of social media on corporate reputation will also be investigated in this chapter.

2.2. Definition of social media

Social media was derived from a social software movement and is a collection of services, practices and websites that support participation and the sharing of information (Sloan and Quan-Haase, 2017:16). According to Kaplan and Haenlain (2012: 59), social media is defined as different groups of applications based on the ideology of the Web 2.0 that enable social media users to create and exchange content created online. Howison, Finger and Hauschka (2014: 74), on the other hand, state that social media became visible through the developments of Web 2.0 and is conceptualised as a second stage of internet development. According to Otieno and Matoke (2014:962), social media is a collection of web-based services that allow organisations and individuals to engage with user-generated content in a manner that is easily accessible, to collaborate, interact and connect with each other on online platforms. Sloan and Quan-Haase (2017:16) describe social media as websites which allow users to create profiles, allow visibility and relationships between users, and allow for information sharing amongst people. Social media uses mobile technology and scalable web to turn communication into an interactive dialogue (McIntyre 2014:6). In addition, Boyd (2015:13) states that social media has become an integral part of every life, with large societal implications.

Veerasamy and Govender (2017:195) write that social media refers to practices and actions between users who share and collect information and opinions on online social media platforms. This is also known as conversational and informal media. Conversational and informal media use a web-based application to build, maintain and provide content on social media platforms in the form of pictures, words and videos. Therefore, social media platforms are about the sharing of information, experiences, opinions and views. New web technologies used by social media users have made it easy for users to create and distribute their own content in the manner they want. Manning (2014:1158) states that social media is a new form of media that includes interactive participation between people. The developments of these media forms are divided into two different ages, i.e. the interactive age and the broadcasting age. In the broadcasting age, social media was exclusively centralised, where one media entity, such as television, radio or print media, distributes messages to many people. The interactive age is where interaction on a large scale becomes easier for individuals using online media platforms for communication.

2.3. Evolution of social media

Social media's origins are linked with the beginning of the internet. Kietzmann and Hermkens (2015:241) suggest that social media may have been influenced by the 1840's introduction of the telegraph in the United States, which connected the country. Morsy (2017:28) writes that it is increasingly difficult and challenging to ignore the historical evolution of Web 2.0 and its importance after discussing the important key elements that define the term 'social media'. The evolution of Web 2.0 is based on studies that investigate the history and the evolution of the Web 2.0 concept. McIntyre (2014:5) states that social media is rapidly evolving and is having a significant impact on millions of people's behaviours around the world.

Part of the evolution of social media is that social media usage in organisations is increasing dramatically and rapidly at all levels of society.

The evolution of social media has brought many new opportunities to the way in which individuals and organisations communicate. Social media allows an active relationship between people, organisations, business and their customers.

2.4. The historical evolution of the Web 2.0 concept

While there are disputed claims as to who coined the term 'social media', the term seems to have appeared in the early 1990s in reference to the developing web-based communication tools that enable online interaction between people. In addition, Mata and Quesada (2014: 57) concede that the concept of Web 2.0 was first coined in the year 1999, and it was later used in the first Web 2.0 conference held in 2004 by Dale Dougherty of O'Reilly Media, who described the evolution of Web 2.0 as "the business revolution in the computer industry" and termed it the second generation of developed technology and web design.

2.4.1. Definition of Web 2.0

A number of studies that were done before the Web 2.0 concept could be more precisely defined (Mata and Quesada, 2014:75). Web 2.0 is defined as the collective name given to the new generation of World Wide Web technologies with certain foundations and elements that focus on the ability of people to collaborate and share information on the World Wide Web. It is also defined as a dynamic web that is more organised with an emphasis on a web-based community of users (Morsy, 2017:17). Web 2.0 is a second-generation application with collective internet applications that are part of the term 'social media'. The Web 2.0 application allows social media users to share information on social media to create informational content (Schulze-Horn 2015:2). Furthermore, Schulze-Horn (2015:2) concedes that with the arrival of Web 2.0, social media platforms have had a large number of users and are popular with the public. Many organisations have adapted and improved

their marketing strategy towards being active on social media platforms and engaging with their audiences. Web 2.0 has allowed customers and social media users to actively engage in what companies are doing.

2.5. Importance of social media

Social media will continue to have a major impact on businesses and people's daily lives. Many business organisations around the world now have the ability of reaching out and communicating on a personal level with their target audiences on social media platforms on a daily basis. Social media plays a huge role for businesses by making it easier for them to engage in customer service, sales, marketing and other business activities.

2.5.1. Importance of social media in the organisation

The use of social media in organisations has become a necessity and an opportunity for growth. Barker (2014:184) highlights the importance of social media in the organisation to create, build and maintain a positive desired image, brand and reputation because of the possibility of building an interactive relationship with an unlimited number of stakeholders, business partners and employees. Social media is growing daily, and more people are becoming a part of it. Siapera (2013:255) points out the importance of social media in organisations in the sharing of ideas and building relationships with their stakeholders and audiences, which also increases the organisation's visibility.

Many organisations take advantage of using social media platforms as these have a large influence, and most of their targeted audiences use similar social media platforms to those used by organisations in promoting and advertising their services. For organisations, social media connects them with customers, generates business and makes communication easy. Veerasamy and Govender (2013:94) highlight that social media in organisations has become a way in which marketers communicate their brands to their audiences, from mass messages on online platforms to intimate conversations online. As marketing changes into social media,

marketers who use social media as a marketing tool know that social media is meant to be a social experience and not a marketing experience. Academic scholars agree that social media has a large of influence when advertising and is the most powerful tool for marketing in the modern day (Fuchs 2017:112).

Social media in organisations is constantly and rapidly changing in this technologically driven era. The introduction of the internet and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube have created new ways to connect and communicate. Organisations today have little or no choice but to adapt to the new forms of communication. With the increasingly popularity of social online communities it is clear that companies should take cautionary measures in protecting their reputations and brands. Reputation management and social media are key tools that organisations need to have. Social media provides several dynamic platforms that many organisations have used to increase visibility, spread awareness, and generate additional revenue both from their internal and external stakeholders.

Organisations are also able to maintain customer relationships and target potential customers with how they engage with their audience on social media platforms that are used by the organisation. Managing social media to maintain a positive corporate reputation is a process that involves planning for monitoring the social media platforms that the organisation uses, sharing strategic social media content and engaging with customers who talk about the organisation on social media platforms.

Fuchs (2017:112) provides the following characteristics of social media: it is the meeting point of today's internet savvy for different audiences and it is also easily accessible. Many organisations use social media to promote their products or services as it opens up possibilities and opportunities for direct access with the organisation's external stakeholders without having any third-party intervention. It also costs less when compared to the costs incurred by print, television, or other traditional forms of media, and it helps in search engine optimisation and increasing the rankings of any organisations' websites.

2.6. Purposes of using social media

Social media is considered by organisations, both public and private, as a strategic tool for competitive advantage (Predmore 2014: 115). Moreover, social media is generally used by various types of organisations for many different business purposes, such as influencing the industry; engaging with different customers in various places; and managing communication with other stakeholders in a cost-effective way (Predmore 2014: 115). Many organisations use social media as a strategic tool for their communication purposes and marketing (Predmore 2014: 116), as well as for sharing newsworthy information and knowledge to their target audiences and their stakeholders (Dreher 2014: 345). Organisations not only find customers when using social media as a strategic tool, but customers and stakeholders find the organisation as well (Predmore, 2014: 115).

Many organisations use social media to inform their external stakeholders about the organisation and the services that they offer (Predmore 2014:115). In addition, Masekoameng (2018: 26) states that many organisations use social media to promote press releases, communicating public news and public service announcements and for managing news online. Social media platforms in many organisations are mainly used for internal communication and information transfer between organisations and employees (Masekoameng 2018: 29). There are various factors that organisations must consider when using social media for business purposes, such as the advantages and disadvantages of opening an account, the type of devices (mobile or computers) to be used, as well as measures such as retweets and likes (Predmore 2014: 116). It is only after considering these factors that the organisation opens an account and gets stakeholders engaged.

Organisations have become more effective and efficient regarding the people who are responsible for the brand reputation of their organisations relating to what they do or say online via social media usage (Dreher 2014: 344). The usage of social media by employees is an important benefit for an organisation as they can carry themselves with the characters of these organisations. However, it can be said that employees can also shape the reputation of organisations by displaying good character to other social media users (Dreher 2014:

345). Employees become brand ambassadors and powerful advocates of the organisation that they work for to promote and maintain the existing brand and reputation. Brand and reputation do not only require employees to use social media to become brand ambassadors and advocates, but also require the implementation of policies and guidelines to manage social media as a strategic tool (Dreher 2014: 345).

Other purposes of using social media in the organisation are to communicate with stakeholders and customers on grounds such as lodging complaints. It is the ability to communicate in a two-way mode that allows social media to be effectively used by social media users, especially when people are interacting with each other online and sharing information and opinions (Stamati, Papadopoulos and Anagnostopoulos 2015: 12). The following section describes the benefits of social media usage for the organisation.

2.6.1. Benefits of using social media in the organisation

Edosomwan (2016: 8) writes that the benefits of using social media in organisations are very simple. When organisations engage in social media platforms with their customers or stakeholders about the products or services that they offer, it strengthens and builds the reputation and the existing brand that the organisation has. Social media platforms are known as powerful and informative tools which communicate brand attributes and value as they facilitate an open form of communication. Watson and Seymour (2016: 9) highlight that the organisation recreates its existing brand with their potential employees, customers and current stakeholders if their brand is built and managed well. As a result, when an organisation is actively engaged with their customers and stakeholders, social media then benefits the organisation by building and creating a strong desired reputation. Through the use of social media platforms, the organisation can repeatedly reinforce its brand's name on online platforms. Stakeholders and customers experience brand privilege when the organisation interacts with them whilst using their services (Carragher *et al.* 2017: 45). The usage of social media platforms in organisations has become one of the easiest ways in improving productivity.

A study conducted by Clow (2014: 3) indicates that 81% of all organisations have created more publicity through the use of their social media activities, in which 61% of them have noted that there has been an increase in their customer traffic online, and new business partnership increased by 56%, with 45% of organisations reporting decreases in their marketing expenses. Another study by Harris (2014: 1) identifies the effect of social media in marketing in different types of organisations depending on how they use their social media for their organisation. Organisations have 20% knowledge and understanding of engaging with their customers using Web 2.0 as a marketing tool for their organisations in improving their chances of customers recommending their organisations in up to 95% of cases. On the other hand, 87% of the cases showed that there had been an improvement for organisations in their marketing investments, and customer acquisition rates improved in 95% of the cases. Many organisations use social media to promote their services. Social media marketing for organisations is another way to create, build and maintain long-lasting relationships with their consumers. Social media marketing and the internet have now replaced traditional marketing in many organisations. Organisations now have various tools of marketing that they use in reaching their targeted stakeholders. Marketing in most organisations no longer limits the organisations to products and services, as it influences social change through the usage of social media in engaging with their customers. It is clear for organisations that engaging actively with external stakeholders on social media now requires both thinking and acting differently.

2.6.2. Advantages and disadvantages of social media in the organisation

Social media is a rapidly growing way in which organisations can communicate with their targeted external stakeholders. Many organisations use social media to promote their product and services. There are numerous tools on social media platforms that organisations can use to engage with their customers online (Nadaraja 2013: 2). Below are the advantages and disadvantages of using social media an organisation.

2.6.2.1. Advantages

- **Cost related** - According to Nadaraja (2013: 3), the main advantage of using social media in an organisation is that it is free to access, post information, promote the organisation and create the profile and website of the organisation. Most organisations use social media to interact with and reach their target market to benefit their organisation.
- **Social interaction** - Social media has created and increased a notable new form of social interaction on online platforms. Social media users spend most of their time on online platforms that are involved in the communication activities of an organisation. Social media usage benefits the organisation by increasing the organisation's image, brand and corporate reputation (Hafele 2011: 51).
- **Interactivity** - Social media users can participate in changing the content and forming a mediated environment in real time. Nadaraja (2013: 4) highlights that interactivity in the organisation is when social media platforms give greater and better access to information, as well as supporting increased social media engagement. Interactivity enables consumers to create and participate in their own created content to engage and to have two-way communication with their target market (Hill and Moran, 2011: 815).
- **Target market** - Social media allows organisations and marketers to reach their target audience and consumers based on their interest. Nadaraja (2013: 5) highlights that the usage of social media by organisations enables word-of-mouth to promote the organisation's products and services beyond what advertising alone does.
- **Customer service** - Customer service is another key area for social media. Nadaraja (2013: 5) explains that some social media platforms can avoid the complexity of the organisation's website. Therefore, it is necessary to have a friendly and easy-to-use social media website for customer service.

2.6.2.2. Disadvantages

- **Time intensive** - An interactive and successful social media platform requires commitment. Marketing strategies change every day on social media, with focus being placed on creating a long-term relationship that can later turn into sales for the organisation (Nadaraja 2013: 5).
- **Trademark and copyright issues** - Hawkins and Steinman (2010: 9) outline that it is important for organisations to protect their trademark and copyrights when using social media to engage with their customers in promoting their products and services.
- **Trust, privacy and security issues** - Using social media platforms to promote the organisation's products and services can also involve privacy, trust and security issues. Companies need to be aware of this issue as social media platforms can be hacked (Nadaraja 2013: 6).
- **User-generated content (UGC)** - Social media users spend much time online sharing information, opinions and thoughts with each other via the use of social media platforms. UGC allows social media users to write their comments in various ways, both negatively and positively, with negative comments impacting the organisation's image.
- **Negative feedback** - Social media changes customers into online advertisers and marketers. Consumers can create a positive or negative image, identity and brand for the organisation, its product and its services depending on how the organisation has portrayed itself online and on the quality of products or services that are presented to customers (Nadaraja, 2013: 7).

2.6.3. Influence of social media

Peng *et al.* (2016: 269) state that social influence in general signifies the instance when people's behaviour transforms because they are encouraged by how other people live their

lives. The power of social influence in the world relies on the relationship of people relative to timing, various social media networks and the attributes of the individuals. Social networks are important in sharing newsworthy information and for marketing purposes, particularly when social media has interesting content on how they make use of other strategies, such as endorsement systems and commerce (Lu, Zhou and Wu 2016: 143).

Abrahamse and Steg (2013: 1774) state that the effectiveness of social media leaders can be accredited to the “liking” norm. When people “like” someone on social media, it is more likely that they will establish significant relations with that person.

2.6.3.1. Influence of social media on the organisation

Social media’s influence on the organisation is determined not only by the organisation’s ability and perceptions of corporate reputation, but also by the number of different people that they reach and engage with on the organisation’s social media platforms (Leung and Bai 2013: 58). In the marketing area, social media is the new buzz, which includes organisations’ brands and businesses, and which helps to create and build the desired reputation for the organisation. Organisations use social media platforms to increase the organisation’s performance in various ways, such as achieving the organisation’s objectives as well as increasing the annual sales of the organisation (Siddiqui and Singh 2016:72). Social media is used as a communication platform that enables two-way communication between the organisation and its customers. According to Avesh (2014: 71), organisations, businesses and brands can be promoted through various social media platforms by communicating with their customers. Many organisations promote their services by doing online advertisements through social media platforms in order to attract more customers or users. Siddiqui and Singh (2016: 74) state that if organisations have any new services or have established a brand, their social media platforms are used to promote and advertise the developed brand.

2.6.3.2. Social media usage in the organisation

Social media usage has been increasing rapidly amongst organisations and across different spectrums of society. Several of these organisations/ business entities, irrespective of size, location or ideology, are embracing social media platforms as a tool to enhance their reputation (Dowling 2016: 20).

According to Parveen (2016: 54), the usage of social media in the organisation allows organisations to be more active and effective when responding to their targeted markets and changes in their organisational communication. Furthermore, Parveen (2014:255) states that organisations make use of social media because it assists most businesses to maintain and build an unforgettable brand image in the eye of their customers.

Organisations use social media platforms as a communication tool between their customers and stakeholders, which provides the benefit of a communication platform that enables two-way communication between an organisation and its customers (Siddiqui and Singh 2016: 72).

Using social media in an organisation helps to create, build and maintain relationships and loyalty with customers. Cross (2013:21) highlights that the usage of social media in an organisation helps to promote services and shows how beneficial social media can be. Veerasamy and Govender (2017:193) add that marketers use social media platforms to resolve issues arising from their customers and, by interacting with customers in this way, can raise the organisation's customer satisfaction to greater heights. Ioanas and Stoica (2014:295) explain that the most significant role of social media in the organisation is that marketers and consumers have changed the way in which they communicate on online platforms. With the help of social media, many organisations can create their marketing strategy to build, maintain and promote their brand.

2.7. Types of social media platforms

Social media is the collective term for internet-based networks used for sharing newsworthy information and knowledge in the world amongst various social media users with a common interest (Mushwana and Bezuidenhout 2014: 63). According to Mollet and Brumley (2017:14), social media tools are platforms that help an organisation to distribute their content to their audiences and are different from each other in terms of the content shared. Siddiqui and Singh (2016:71) explain that social media refers to widely accessible electronic tools that enable social media users to access and share information or build relationships. These platforms are inexpensive, easy to use and exist as different types that are used by various people in the world (Masekoameng, 2018: 30). Such platforms include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat and YouTube. This study will focus on Facebook and Twitter as they are the most used social media platforms by the organisation's Corporate Affairs unit.



Figure 2.1: Types of social media platforms (Source: Mollet and Brumley (2017:14))

2.7.1. Facebook

Facebook is the most popular social media platform that enables users to create and register account profiles, upload photos and videos online, send messages and be in contact with their family, friends and colleagues. Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg, Andrew McCollum, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovits and Chris Hughes, and was launched in 2004. Facebook currently has over one billion active users worldwide. Since Facebook was launched almost two decades ago, the social networking site has become one of the most

current and popular research spaces (Coles 2014:30). Furthermore, Safko (2013:451) indicates that it is easy for organisations to set up a Facebook page and interact with social media users that connect to each other.

2.7.2. Twitter

Twitter is a micro-blogging service which allows all registered users to write short messages called tweets. Twitter users can write tweets, follow other users and are able to tweet using multiple online devices. Twitter was generated and later created in 2006 by Jack Dorsey and was launched in that same year. Unlike Facebook where individuals have friends to engage and share different information, with Twitter, one must get connected to relevant news on what they find most interesting (Coles 2014:30). Through the usage of Twitter, organisations now engage and share their newsworthy information as well as information about their services, especially when it is about unwanted press that needs to be addressed immediately. Twitter is a very common tool to use and has become well used by many organisations.

2.7.3. Instagram

Instagram was launched in 2010 by Krieger and Systrom as an iPhone application whereby users would share pictures and videos (Instagram 2015b). Instagram benefits its users by allowing them to post multiple pictures at once and posting Instagram stories and reels having different picture and video filters. This enables the immediate sharing of pictures and videos across multiple media platforms and improves the speed and ease of the video and picture uploading process (Instagram 2015a).

In addition, Folger (2017: 33) writes that Instagram is a photo sharing electronic service that allows users to take pictures, videos and start to distribute them via Instagram itself, and via other social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Since Instagram was launched in 2010, it now holds more than 1.21 billion active users, comprising over 28% of the world's internet users.

2.7.4. LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social networking site that was designed for organisations, businesses and individuals to build professional connections. LinkedIn is an invaluable tool for recruitment and job searching purposes as it enables users to enhance their professional reputation and increase the visibility of their brands online. According to Gray (2020: 42), LinkedIn is a social networking platform created mostly for professionals. It was launched by Reid Hoffman with co-founders Allen Blue and Konstantin Guericke in 2003. It currently has about 50 million clients from more than 200 nations. LinkedIn highlights what most organisations do not utilise. For example, organisations can encourage LinkedIn users to give recommendations on other user's profile, clients or merchants to give them a "proposal" of their profile (Coles 2020: 43).

2.7.5. YouTube

According to Gray (2014: 18), YouTube was created by Jawed Karim, Stev Chen and Chad Hurley. Hurley and Chen developed the idea for YouTube in 2005 right after they experienced some difficulties in sharing videos that they had shot with the public. Weaver (2013:46) reports that YouTube is one of the world's largest online video communities owned by Google and is one of the most frequently searched and used websites in the world.

On the other hand, Gray (2014: 20) highlights that YouTube is a rich social media platform of sharing information and insights regarding markets and consumption. YouTube is one of the most frequently used websites amongst marketers as it makes it easy for marketers to get to significant markets by using videos. YouTube is advantageous for interacting with clients and getting them engaged with the product and marketing. Apart from accessing YouTube on the website, videos can also be streamed or posted from a cellular phone. While Twitter has followers and Facebook has fans, a principal objective of YouTube is to attain subscribers. Nations (2016: 18) points out that the most successful social media marketing strategies revolve around YouTube. Although it consumes a lot of time and is costly,

YouTube can effortlessly become the cornerstone of a greater social media campaign because of its social make-up.

Veerasamy and Govender (2017: 192) expound that social media in organisations is now a popular way of engaging with customers as 92% of marketers are now using social media:- 84% use Twitter, 71% use LinkedIn, 68% use blogs and 56% use YouTube to promote their products and services online. The number of consumers engaging on social media platforms is increasing daily for most organisations. Studies show that external stakeholders who engage with the organisation's social media platforms share a better relationship with that organisation. This benefits the organisation as followers get to engage with the organisation on social media daily. Therefore, followers experience higher levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty than non-followers.

2.8. Social media platforms used by DUT

Social media are defined as web-based online services that enable the organisation to interact, connect, collaborate and engage with UGC (User Generated Content) that is easily accessible (Otieno and Matoke, 2014: 962). DUT uses different social media platforms when communicating with its external and internal stakeholders on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

2.9. Definition of Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation is an important asset in any organisation as it provides a sustainable competitive advantage for the organisation in the market. Corporate reputation represents the brand and image of the organisation. Munyoro and Magada (2016: 2) explain that corporate reputation in every organisation around the world has become a key business driver. Corporate reputation is an intangible asset of immense value that is developed and

maintained over the years. Many organisations have increasingly viewed corporate reputation as an important asset. However, much academic literature states that there is no clear and widely accepted definition as to what is meant by corporate reputation (Dowling, 2016: 6).

Feldman, Bahamonde, and Bellid (2014:12) describe corporate reputation as a set of strategies that many organisations develop and employ to cope with their internal and external stakeholder expectations and manage the interpretations that those stakeholders make. Furthermore, Munyoro and Magada (2016: 4) affirm that corporate reputation is a systematic approach in which the organisation fosters and sustains a good name and enables beneficial feedback from its stakeholders, which will allow it to achieve their financial objectives. Corporate reputation is about working together with organisations and their stakeholders in ensuring that they are doing everything possible to attain their desired reputation.

Corporate reputation reflects how organisations are regarded by their internal and external stakeholders and how it affects the way in which stakeholders perform and behave towards the organisation. Stakeholder perceptions of organisations are described in different terms, the most popular being brand, reputation and image (Boyd, Bergh and Ketchen 2014: 588). Corporate reputation is explained as a systematic process of developing, creating, building and maintaining a positive identity, corporate image and brand of the organisation by managing their behaviour, and all the internal and external communication (Johannes 2013:3). Johannes (2013: 3) defines corporate reputation as the perceptual representation of the organisation's past actions and its prospects. Corporate reputation is an immediate impression held of an organisation.

Two stereotypical factors have a substantial influence on corporate reputation, namely the organisation's country of origin and the market sector of the organisation (Davies 2015: 1). Reputation can be important to the management of the organisation, in particular its service and business. In this context, many argue a link between the organisation's values and how the organisation is viewed externally (Davies 2015:2).

2.10. Importance of corporate reputation in the organisation

The corporate reputation of an organisation is an overall estimate which is held by the organisation's internal and external stakeholders based on the organisation's past actions and the probability of its prospects and behaviour. While corporate reputation is vitally important in the organisation, many organisations do not give a second thought to having a positive corporate reputation. Even if the organisation is good at taking care of their existing external stakeholders, an organisation may not notice the possibility of more business if their corporate reputation is well managed. Although corporate reputation is an intangible concept, Moonsamy (2016: 26) states that a good corporate reputation in the organisation increases corporate worth and provides the organisation with a sustainable competitive advantage. An organisation can achieve its targeted objectives more easily if its corporate reputation is managed positively. If an organisation does a good job in managing and maintaining its corporate reputation and how they are perceived, external stakeholders will prefer to deal with them instead of other organisations. A good corporate reputation in an organisation will cause both customers and stakeholders to be more trusting and loyal of the services that the organisation offers.

Moonsamy (2016: 27) states that corporate reputation in the organisation is important for:

- Maintaining and building a favourable reputation in the workplace;
- Enhancing the organisation's existing brand reputation;
- Establishing procedures, policies, acceptable practices, systems and standards that will avoid anything that can tarnish the organisation's reputation;
- Establishing guidelines for dealing with situations where the organisation's reputation has been destroyed; and
- Preparing and equipping the management team that is responsible for managing the organisation's reputation.

2.11. The role of reputation in strategic decision-making

Important strategic decision-making involves building and maintaining a positive and strong brand, which will in turn create a desirable external brand and image for the organisation (Zapata, 2014: 3). Reputation has important equity as it enables the organisation's brand to have a competitive advantage that creates a convenient relationship with its competitors. Zapata (2014: 4) notes that reputation equity protects the organisation's brand from competitors' threats.

Aaker (2015: 60) illustrates that the corporate reputation strategy is systematically planned and is an implemented process of building, creating and maintaining a positive reputation for the organisation. Papulova and Gazova (2015: 572) state that the most important role of reputation in the strategic decision-making process is the strategic analysis implemented by each organisation. It often brings important information about evaluation and development of the environmental ins and outs of an organisation, and reveals possible opportunities and threats that need to be considered in the strategic decision-making process of the organisation.

2.12 Determining the value of corporate reputation

The value of corporate reputation in an organisation is easily visible and is seen in the organisation's profits and the increase in sales (Conradie and Van Niekerk 2015: 111). Various studies conducted in recent years have confirmed that the value of a good corporate reputation is indisputable, and organisations are forced to set themselves apart from their competitors by creating and maintaining a long-term, sustainable, competitive advantage for their reputation. According to Vos (2015: 26), such a sustainable, competitive advantage is mainly created from the organisation's intangible competencies. A good and well-maintained corporate reputation is an irreplaceable and differentiating resource (Casado, Peláez, and Cardona 2014: 50). When an organisation knows the value of its corporate reputation, this

further enables the organisation to attract potential customers and stakeholders and increases the organisation's financial values, which will be an advantage for long-term sustainability.

2.13 Activities that build corporate reputation

Petkova, Rindova and Gupta (2014: 615) explain that reputation takes years to build and only seconds to destroy. Organisations must strive to build and maintain a strong corporate reputation. Even though all the employees in the organisation are expected to maintain and manage the organisations reputation, it is the ultimate responsibility of the public relations department of the organisation to develop and build the organisation's desired corporate reputation. Kaul and Desai (2015: 256) state that organisations need to enhance their skills so that they can understand what the customers and stakeholders want.

2.14 Public relations and corporate reputation

Jangyul and Heewon (2015: 112) reveal that corporate reputation is positively affected by the organisation's public relations activities. Therefore, corporate reputation management is an important part of the public relations strategies within an organisation. The goal of public relations in organisations is to communicate the existing brand of an organisation to its stakeholders and the external public. Munyoro and Magada (2016: 7) add that corporate reputation is one of the biggest dependent variables of public relation's effectiveness in the organisation. Creating, building and maintaining a strong corporate reputation for an organisation is the most important role for public relations. Mlkacovaa and Gavlakovan (2014: 836) point out that public relations and a well-managed corporate reputation positively contribute in achieving the organisation's goals and objectives.

2.15 Building and maintaining a strong corporate reputation

A strong corporate reputation is built and maintained gradually through acquiring reliable procedures and long-term standard practices by the organisation. The building and maintaining of corporate reputation in any organisation is not the sole responsibility of the public relations department, but is the responsibility of the senior executives of the organisation. Additionally, the enhancement of building and maintaining a strong corporate reputation of the organisation is every internal stakeholder's and employee's responsibility (Kaul and Desai 2015: 256). In order for organisations to build and maintain a strong corporate reputation, they have to understand who their stakeholders are and how their stakeholders perceive them (Grutzmacher 2011: 26). Organisations that build and maintain a strong corporate reputation can easily influence stakeholders' decision-making processes favourably (Raithel and Schwaiger 2015: 947). For organisations to maintain and build a strong corporate reputation, they need to align their corporate identity and corporate image.

Another way that organisations can maintain a strong corporate reputation with their customers and stakeholders is to make sure that they always update available data on their social media platforms and evaluate the performance of the organisation constantly. It is essential for the organisation to have an effective communication strategy with their existing customers.

Fourie (2014: 155) affirms that the importance of creating, building and maintaining a strong corporate reputation brings the following advantages to the organisation:

- Attracting new customers, suppliers and new investors for the organisation;
- Creating long term sustainability for the organisation;
- Increasing demand and identification;
- Creating positive identity for the organisation; and
- Remaining financially viable;

2.15.1 Obstacles to maintaining corporate reputation through social media in the organisation

When reviewing other studies, it was important to examine social media in more detail to shed light on all aspects of using social media within an organisation (Scott ,2011: 115). Several articles have been written that focus on the obstacles to adopting social media in the organisation. There are risks when using social media in maintaining the corporate reputation of an organisation. According to Scott (2011: 115), about 50% of supervisory directors have mentioned that corporate reputation is in danger when managed on social media, which could arise when social media users send negative comments about the organisation. Such negative comments can adversely influence the organisation's corporate reputation due to the choice of words and negative feedback from customers. Rindova, Williamson and Petkova (2014: 610) confirm that when corporate reputation is managed through social media, it can be easily tarnished.

2.15.2 Influence and benefits of corporate reputation for the organisation

Almeida and Coelho (2017: 1) state that corporate reputation is a perception that is built up over the years, and is based on the organisation's corporate brand, image and identity, business performance, and how corporate actions are aligned with what concerns the internal and external stakeholders. Corporate reputation has been considered as the most significant resource that an organisation can have to influence the generation of profit, the potential to generate sustainable competitive advantage and to improve the essential value of the organisation.

Benefits of a good reputation can be summarised as follows:

- The organisation's external stakeholders will become brand-ambassadors and will market the organisation's products or services to their contacts on behalf of the organisation.
- Enables a company to differentiate its products in a highly competitive market;

- A good reputation helps the organisation to access new business opportunities, retain existing customers, attract new investors, gain favourable media coverage and acts as a barrier against competitors; and
- Increases financial performance and higher satisfaction and loyalty amongst consumers. A good corporate reputation increases customer satisfaction and supports the establishment of consumer relationships. The following section discusses the concept of corporate reputation in the higher education context.

2.16 Corporate reputation in University

Corporate reputation in university an evaluation of whether an organisation is noticeably good or bad. Corporate reputation can also be defined as collective assessments of an organisation's ability to provide valued outcomes to their internal and external stakeholders (Heffernan, Wilkins and Butt, 2018: 230).

The corporate reputation of higher education institutions that is developed and maintained upon strong brands has now become a significant influence in determining institutional positioning and competitiveness. Reputation in every organisation is essential, and organisations must ensure that they always create and maintain their desired reputation. Corporate reputation in higher education institutions is extremely valuable and confers substantial benefits to the organisation.

The environment in which universities operate has become highly competitive (Harsono 2014: 5) and the education sector has adopted marketing concepts to adapt to this situation (Costa, Pelissari and Gonzalez 2018: 117). According to Iddrisu and Akolaa (2017: 78), higher education institutions are now viewed as corporate organisations and thus institutions of higher learning must communicate their messages with their customers and stakeholders consistently and continually in order to create and maintain a positive image, identity and reputation amongst students. Corporate reputation in universities is essential in this day and

age, where customers are sophisticated and know what they want with increased expectations (Iddrisu and Akolaa 2017: 74).

Williams and Omar (2013: 238) state that corporate reputation in higher education institutions is linked to the idea of “brand promise”. Brand promise is the actualisation of the communicated message to stakeholders about the institution. Finch, McDonald and Staple (2013: 35) highlight that corporate reputation in higher education institutions has its roots in an area where organisations develop brand strategies to compete for customers who have a wide range of options to choose from.

2.17 Branding in higher institutions

Cullinan (2017: 30) describes higher education as having multiple stakeholders with unique motivations and allegiances that inevitably makes corporate branding and the management of a brand portfolio a very difficult activity both to initiate and to maintain.

There is no doubt amongst academics that higher education institutions now behave more like corporate brands. Branding as the differentiation and communication as the competitive advantage are the key considerations in higher education institutions around the world (Dholakia and Acciardo 2014: 144). Many higher education institutions also behave as corporate brands in which they represent a growing sense of identity and embody a detailed and measurable community (Drori, Delmestri and Oberg 2013: 134).

Instead of higher education institutions being organisations that provide higher education, the buildings of the university logos and the portfolio of products and services that they offer make it a complex, professionalised and politicised organisation with a multitude of corporate brand management challenges. Higher education institutions have therefore increasingly had to implement marketing principles due to the projected shrinking of the institution-going population and the decline of state funding globally, and are under pressure to be externally accountable (Aula and Mantere 2015: 170). This means that branding in higher education

institutions has become a kind of life-line to these institutions across the world as the need to differentiate and compete has risen.

The concept of branding in higher education institutions displays a balancing act around other commercial challenges that demonstrate how these entities behave as corporate brands. Higher education institutions have increasingly decided whether they move into a cost-leadership position as a strategy to compete in the marketplace, or whether they should establish their corporate brands on the grounds of quality and pursue premium fees for their reputation (Hansen and Ferlie 2016: 14).

2.17.1 Brand Reputation Management in higher education institutions

Woyo, Halimani and Gwavuya (2014: 2) describe branding in higher education institutions as a long-term process with the aim of increasing the institution's corporate image, brand knowledge, long-term sustainability, and having more sales over time. A positively built and strong brand symbolises the promises by the higher education institution on the type of services they will deliver, as well as the type of experiences that will be delivered by the institution when customers use their services (Woyo, Halimani and Gwavuya 2014: 3). Duesterhaus and Duesterhaus (2014: 169) add that when a brand is managed properly, the branding of the higher education institution positively affects the value of perceptions of their current and prospective customers. It must be noted that a strong brand is the key to getting more customers in the competitive environment in which universities are operating.

Although brand reputation management in higher education institutions is not extensively researched, it is usually used as a tool for creating brand value and has a strong and positive influence on the equity of the organisation (Rutter, Roperand Lettice 2016: 2). Moreover, the management of brand reputation is used as a tool for delivering good quality services to their desired stakeholders.

2.17.2 The importance and application of the branding concept in higher education institutions

Woyo, Halimani and Gwavuya (2014: 2) elaborate that the concept of branding in higher education institutions is not new as it has been used for many years all around the world. The importance and application of the branding concept in higher education institutions is creating a positive brand, image and reliability of the brand name in delivering good quality services to customers. In addition, Woyo, Halimani and Gwavuya (2014: 3) show that branding in higher institutions has gained popularity over the years.

On the other hand, Wilkins *et al.* (2015: 18) point out that there has been increasing competition amongst higher education institutions towards the goal of creating, growing and sustaining the institution's brand.

Higher education institutions have started marketing activities to position themselves in the market, whilst analysing the universities' strength and weaknesses, and identifying their selling points (Stephenson and Yerger 2014: 243). Many institutions have turned their focus to brand value development in getting positions in the market sector.

2.18 The Durban University of Technology (DUT)

The Durban University of Technology (DUT) is a result of the merger in April 2002 of two prestigious Technikons, ML Sultan and Technikon Natal. It was named the Durban Institute of Technology and later became the Durban University of Technology in line with the rest of the universities of technology. DUT has approximately 33 000 students and is located in Durban and Pietermaritzburg. The DUT prioritises the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring its academic staff possess the highest qualifications possible. The university is one of the 5 technical institutions on the African continent to offer doctoral degrees.

2.19 The Durban University of Technology's brand and logo

The brand of the Durban University of Technology (DUT) is more than just a catchy pay-off line or logo. It is a promise, and an expression of the organisation's commitment to its stakeholders and is about the institution's reputation, which is based upon one's experience with the institution. The corporate brand must meet the expectations of customers constantly so that every encounter with the institution's brand is of a positive experience (Khan 2013: 3).

Khan (2013: 3) writes that the DUT logo is intentionally a new platform on which the DUT team can collectively re-position how they present the institution to their respective targeted external stakeholders. The DUT logo has been designed to work in tandem with the institution's modular design system, based on the square, with the idea of representing a unified and single-minded visual voice across a wide range of uses and formats whilst retaining impact.

2.20 Division of Corporate Affairs

The Division of Corporate Affairs at the Durban University of Technology is divided into various sub-divisions and has developed the brand identity manual, principles and strategies to ensure that the DUT brand is communicated regularly and consistently to its stakeholders and its targeted customers. The Division of Corporate Affairs ensures that the reputation and identity of the institution is well managed.

2.20.1 Advertising, corporate branding and marketing

DUT (2020) reveals the importance of ensuring that every marketing strategy counts, with the increasing pressure of the budget on advertising, corporate branding and marketing. Because of this, the institution has shifted its focus on recruiting students with quality. The institution needs to preserve and continue maintaining a reliable, consistent presence in the

marketplace through their ongoing advertising in South Africa's leading print media, particularly in career-focused educational platforms.

Mikacovaa and Gavlakovaa (2014: 834) affirm that marketing in the organisation is differentiated as a planning process, developing and executing the conception of promotion, pricing and the distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that will satisfy the organisational objectives. According to DUT (2020), the way the institution communicates and plans their marketing strategy requires innovation, dynamism and creativity. Marketing is a strategic function that every organisation must use to promote their brand and a way to communicate with their internal and external stakeholders. In DUT, marketing is undertaken to enable the implementation of its strategic plan in improving its effectiveness and ensuring sustainability in changing the world. The DUT's marketing function is strategic and successful only if it is a combined and integrated institution-wide activity. How strategies are implemented should be driven from a corporate functional unit, without any regard for divisional boundaries. The implementation of strategies is a managerial process that involves planning, control and analysis.

The marketing unit at DUT assists the institution to attain, manage and exceed its competitive advantage in recruiting qualifying students, fundraising, visibility and building a long-lasting relationship to maintain a reputable brand. Effective marketing in the institution therefore depends on thorough advanced planning. The institution has positioned itself as "the University of Technology that makes knowledge useful" (DUT 2020).

2.19.2. Communications

The main function of the Communications Department in the institution is to ensure that there is active, effective and focused communication, both inside and outside the institution, as well as ensuring that mechanisms are in place so that internal and external communication is effective.

The Communications Department strives to:

- Create clear communication and understanding;
- Convince;
- Advise;
- Influence stakeholders' attitudes; and
- Bring about action.

Their communication approach is twofold: internal and external communication.

2.19.2.1. Internal Communication in higher education institution

Employees and students in the institution who are informed about the institution are now automatically ambassadors and marketers for the institution. This can only be achieved when there is two-way communication between the employees, students and the management, to ensure that each one of them knows that they are part of the institution's decision-making process. Additionally, employees, students and the management must ensure they understand the mission and vision the institution has, and that they are informed about their future and the future of the institution. This ensures that the conveyed messages will be consistent and in accordance with the goals and mission of DUT (DUT, 2020).

2.19.2.2. External Communication in higher education institutions

DUT's external communication aims to ensure that all the external stakeholders are informed about activities that are happening within the institution. As an institution of higher education and learning, DUT's business is the production and distribution of knowledge through teaching, learning and applied research.

2.19.3. Design studios

The projects vary from day-to-day, from corporate stationery to the once-off origination of design material in agreement and accordance with the client's requirements. The most important aspect of the university is to act as a 'watchdog' with regard to corporate image, identity and corporate branding (DUT, 2020). The university strives at all times to ensure that staff and students alike project a positive and professional image.

2.19.4. Public relations and protocol

According to Mikacovaa and Gavlakovaa (2014: 834), public relations in organisations is usually associated with communication activities that are designed to preserve and craft the organisation's corporate brand, corporate image and the relationship they have with their public. The role of public relations in the organisation has expanded as shown in the blurring of boundaries between communications activities, marketing, advertising and public relations. The public relations and protocol divisions of the higher education institution are responsible for monitoring and managing special events and the protocol of formal ceremonies for the institution. This division ensures that all events in which the institution engages, both on and off campus, are successfully planned and portray the stated mission quality of excellence with reference to the organisation's public relations activities. The public relations and protocol division is responsible for and co-ordinates all the organisational aspects of budgeting for all ceremonial functions that happen within the institution, with a particular emphasis on conferences, workshops, graduation ceremonies and inaugural lectures hosted by the institution (DUT, 2020).

2.19.5. Student Recruitment

DUT (2020) highlights that the main function of the Student Recruitment division in the institution is to inform prospective students of the study opportunities that are available at the institution and the career choices that are associated with the selected programmes. The institution then provides all reliable and relevant information regarding the entrance requirements and duration of the programme to students.

2.21 DUT's corporate reputation

The Corporate Affairs unit of DUT makes concerted efforts to promote the image of DUT (DUT Strategic Plan 2019: 3). This is done through a variety of platforms and measures. Some of these measures are inclusive of the university's performance over the years and must also have evidence against which to judge its performance against the strategic aims and objectives set out in the plan of the institution. Performance measures and indicators are identified by the various constituencies, which will be used to manage, track and maintain the organisational performance (DUT Strategic Plan 2019: 12). Through such platforms and measures, DUT is able to communicate and promote their brand and image to all stakeholders, inclusive of students, parents/guardians, investors, community, staff members and other stakeholders (DUT Strategic Plan 2019: 5).

2.22 DUT's social media

Khan (2018: 9) concedes that the DUT's social media accounts are logged into at least once a day to monitor, manage and respond to posts, comments and mentions that are in line with and relevant to the institution. Being present and responsive on social media platforms will gain the institution credibility and value amongst its customers. Establishing social media platforms, and then deserting or not checking them regularly to monitor the audience, would reflect poorly on the institution. The institution recognises the importance of having and using social media platforms and the benefits of communicating through the usage of social media platforms with internal and external stakeholders. Social media in the institution is a powerful vehicle through which the institution communicates relevant and newsworthy information to their social media audience (Khan 2018: 6). Social media platforms are easy to use and are free of charge, but a successful social media strategy requires research, clearly outlined goals and objectives, smart tactics, and dedicated effort. The institution's Corporate Affairs Communications Division is open and accessible to assist staff members and students with social media-related interactions that are relevant to the institution, including assistance with

the account set-up, best-practice guidance and support in attending to enquiries (Khan, 2018: 5).

2.21.1. The management of social media platforms at DUT

Khan (2018: 5) explains that the Corporate Affairs Division of the institution is the first place of referral for all enquiries related to any social media accounts that have to do with the DUT. The staff in the institution are strongly advised to communicate questions to this department as the first step, which will then channel the request to the appropriate department or unit division and will monitor that the matter receives the required attention.

2.23 Components of Corporate Reputation

Many academic scholars have shifted focused on the components of corporate reputation and the following are regarded as the key components of corporate reputation: corporate image, corporate brand, corporate identity, corporate legitimation and reputation management (Kaul and Desai 2015: 252).

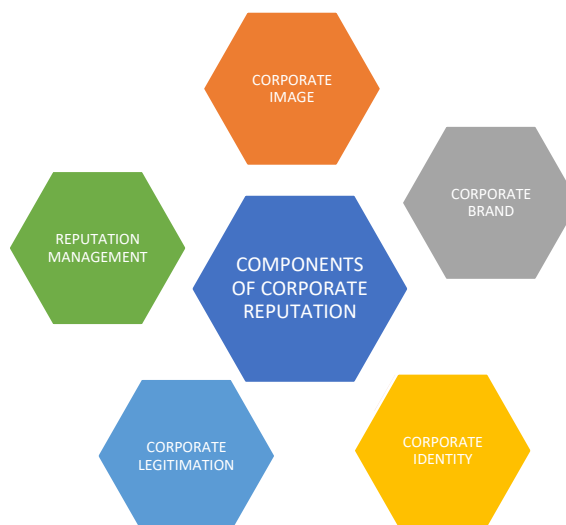


Figure 2.2: Components of corporate reputation (Source: Kaul and Desai, 2015: 255).

2.23.1 Corporate image

Many business organisations have realised that they cannot disengage themselves from their internal and external stakeholders (Harrison, Freeman and Sa de Abreu 2015: 858). Over the past few years, the management of corporate image in the organisation has become an important strategy that many organisations use to build and protect their reputation. Siqueira *et al.* (2015: 31) define corporate image as the sum of experiences that is held by a particular group towards a corporation. Corporate image is central to the stakeholder's overall impression of the company. Munyoro and Magada (2016: 6) point out that corporate image tends to be flexible, superficial and frequently changing. The process of image building in an organisation demands a developed formal communications strategy such as having a name, an attractive logo, a brand, good corporate advertising and public relations (Munyoro and Magada, 2016: 6). According to Ihaddad (2015: 137), corporate image is not just an image of the organisation as it is also able to convey emotional value. It highlights the organisation's mission and vision to stakeholders and consumers. The important elements of a positive corporate image are its unique logo which is a reflection of the organisation's image; the slogan which defines the organisation's business; and the brand identity which supports the values of the organisation (Stocchi, Driesener and Nnycz, 2015: 317).

2.23.2 Corporate brand

Corporate brand is outlined as the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of the organisation's unique business model and includes image building as well as developing business strategies (Munyoro and Magada, 2016: 6). Corporate brands therefore carry the expectations of what the organisation will deliver in terms of the customer's experience (Lussier, 2014: 2). The following are some of the corporate brands that every organisation should have to build and maintain for a successful corporate reputation.

2.22.2.1. Logos

Logos for any business or organisation help customers to identify and recognise the organisation in their simplest form with the use of a mark. The organisation's logo is not just the organisation's brand, image or identity of the products or services which they offer (Ming, Machado and Iglesias 2015: 2). The logo identity and brands in the organisation all have different roles to play in the organisation, which together form a perceived image for the product or services that the organisation offers to its customers (Thawani, Singh and Thakur 2015: 2). The organisation's logo may consist of a symbol, a mark or signature. A logo does not need to sell the business or an organisation. It is available to the business or organisation for corporate identity purposes. The logo used by the business or an organisation does not only describe what an organisation does, but rather identifies the organisation in a memorable and recognisable way for consumers (De Oliveira, Silveira and Luce 2015: 256).

2.22.2.2. Slogans

Nielsen (2012: 3) describes slogans as catchy and memorable phrases or a series of words which are used to help customers remember the organisation's brand, product or services. When customers need products or services that are being offered by a variety of organisations or businesses, the slogan that comes to the customer's mind first helps the customers to choose the product or services suited for their needs. Slogans must be eye catching, memorable, and must be able to give customers an idea of what the organisation does. Although slogans contain a few words and letters, they can take hours to compose as each word must be clearly understood. In most cases, many organisations make their slogans match their organisation's logo.

2.22.2.3. URLs

Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) are tools that are utilised to shrink web links into smaller sizes (Stocchi, Driesener and Nnycz 2015: 301). Having a URL with brands assists the organisations to build and maintain trust and familiarity with brands. A custom link helps organisations to build a brand which becomes a specific topic (Ming, Machado, and Iglesias

2015: 1). Some URL services let set up a custom short URL, and some are expensive and only function with their own developed applications.

2.23.3 Corporate identity

Ming, Machado and Iglesias (2015: 2) comment that corporate identity refers to visual aspects which form part of the organisation's overall identity, image, brand, developing parts of brands and corporate image. Corporate identity designs are based on visual devices that are used within an organisation. Corporate identity is made up of important guidelines which are managed based on how the organisation's identity will be used through a variety of layouts, fonts, mediums and colours (Conrad, Thompson and Books 2016: 29). These guidelines ensure that the identity of the organisation is clearly kept and is linked to the brand to be recognised. Corporate identity is how the organisation views itself. Image then becomes the way in which it is viewed by others external stakeholders. Corporate identity is widely recognised as an active strategic instrument and as a means of achieving a competitive advantage. Corporate identity comprises the firm's defining aspects and attributes, such as its products, people and services (Barnett and Leih, 2016: 16). Many authors have interpreted corporate identity as a strategic manifestation of corporate-level vision and mission, underpinned by the strategic goals of the organisation, its principles and values (Munyoro and Magada, 2016: 7).

2.23.4 Corporate legitimacy

Kaul and Desai (2015: 253) report that an organisation needs to obtain and maintain legitimacy as this increases the organisation's chances of securing from its environment the resources that it needs to survive; which includes a positive relationship with internal and external stakeholders. Corporate legitimacy refers to the general perception or assumptions that the activities of an organisation are necessary, suitable or appropriate within the organisation's socially constructed system of values, beliefs, norms and definitions (Munyoro and Magada 2016: 8). In other words, the organisation is considered to be appropriate and legitimate within a particular constituency, and if it complies with the society's norms and

values. Legitimation therefore involves granting authorities and giving organisational entities the power to define the similarity between the organisation and the accepted values, norms and expectations of the society (Krentler (2015: 53).

2.23.5 Reputation Management

Mariconda 2014: 30 explains that reputation management in an organisation entails everything that the organisation does or does not do in order to communicate its plans of action that may affect both their internal and external stakeholders. Dowling (2016: 6) concedes that reputation management of the brand plays a significant role in attaining brand loyalty from customers and increasing the profit margins for the organisation.

Reputation management in an organisation refers to collective representations of multiple images of the organisation built up over time and are based on the organisation's performance, leadership qualities, identity programmes and how the public perceives its behaviour. According to Feldman *et al.* (2014), reputation management involves the identification of areas of reputational risks; the identification of relevant stakeholders of the organisation in line with identified reputational risks; and the establishments of systems that evaluate the relative positions of each group of critical stakeholders. It then becomes possible to prioritise weak reputational areas and develop action plans to deal with them and schedule continuous re-evaluation.

2.23 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.23.1. Reputation Management History

Reputation management over the years has evolved with regard to the time it took to become an intangible and strategic corporate asset. Reputation management in organisations has been recognised as a success factor in promoting and managing organisation services, and is used by most organisations on a daily basis (Dowling 2016: 8). Williams and Krentler

(2015: 56) add that the management of reputation must be distinguished from corporate image in maintaining the internal and external image and brand of the organisation.

This distinction and other definitions of other theories are relevant in order to examine the impact of managing the reputation of an organisation. Reputation management is correlated with the corporate image of an organisation, and it is interpreted as an organisation's aims and objectives that create a sense of belonging amongst the organisation's internal and external stakeholders (George 2018: 77).

Reputation management influences the internal and external stakeholders' decision-making processes (Mariconda, 2014: 33) and enables a closer relationship between organisations and their stakeholders. Reputation management is viewed as the foundation of the organisation's reputation and the way in which the organisation can build its reputation online.

Elixir (2015: 1) highlights that there are three steps to having positive online reputation management for organisations:

- Tracking and monitoring what is being said on online social media platforms,
- Analysing how the visible information on social media affects the organisation's brand and reputation, and
- Influencing the results obtained online by participating in the conversations and eliminating negative voices.

2.24. Corporate Reputation

2.24.1. Definition of Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation is made up of three elements identified as the 'reputational radar', namely brand reputation; how the public observes the organisation's brand; and organisational reputation, i.e. what the public thinks about the organisation as opposed to

the brand. Cannon and Tracey (2014: 88) define corporate reputation as a chain that comes from the corporate image, identity and brand. Corporate reputation is recognised as an intangible key asset for an organisation, and it has been suggested that corporate reputation in organisations reflects the trustworthiness, reliability and credibility it has amongst its stakeholders (Almeida 2017: 3).

Almeida (2017: 3) adds that corporate reputation is a perception built up over years by the organisation based on its projected corporate image, corporate identity, organisation's performance and how corporate actions align with the internal and external stakeholders.

Ochis (2017: 5) defines corporate reputation as an intangible asset of immense value that is built over the years. It is difficult to understand the exact impact of reputation in an organisation. However, it has been shown that a good online reputation lends numerous advantages to the organisation. Additionally, Pachori (2015: 11) states that corporate reputation reflects how the organisation is regarded by its external and internal stakeholders and it affects the way various stakeholders behave towards the organisation. Corporate reputation influences the perception of stakeholders of the organisation's prospects. Stakeholder perceptions of the organisation are defined by different terms across disciplines, the most popular constructs being brand and image (Boyd, Bergh and Ketchen 2015: 15).

2.25. Online Reputation Management (ORM)

2.25.1. Online reputation

Jones (2016: 33) reports that online reputation is the managed reputation which involves the corporate reputation created on online social media platforms. Weber (2018: 17) posits that online reputation is not only formed on social media, but is also created by various individuals by creating, sharing and collaborating on online content through search engines. Heever (2018:49) adds that online reputation is a perceptual brand and identity formed through the

collective perceptions of social media users and it represents the organisation's prospects and past actions which are all visible on the organisation's social media platforms.

Kanika (2016: 45) summaries the notion of online reputation and covers a wide range of aspects of the organisation's presence on online platforms. Online reputation is consequently directly influenced by the organisation's actions on the internet. Online reputation comprises the organisation's interaction with its potential and actual target audience. Portmann (2015: 90) presents three essential points that describe the circumstances underlying the necessity to actively seek to manage the organisation's corporate reputation, image and brand on the Internet, namely:

- There is a constant increase on the social media usage and the perception of the advantages of social media in the decision-making process;
- A high degree of secondary transparency and perceptions of social media as a sort of business activities; and
- The need for the organisation not to lose their brand online.

Online Reputation Management (ORM) is defined as the process of influencing the public perception of an organisation by sharing information with them on the internet (ten Dolle 2014:16).

The rise of internet usage and social media inspired the development of online reputation as it makes it easy for the organisation to share information with large audiences on the internet. Over the years, reputation management changed from being an internally controlled form of one-way communication to being an externally controlled channel of communication between organisations and their stakeholders.

According to Dijkmans (2015: 59), online reputation management involves interacting with the targeted audience on online platforms, monitoring the positive and negative content online, creating shareable content. ORM is a process of managing people's perceptions on the internet, and it is also regarded as a systematic process of monitoring corporate

reputation on online platforms and potentially influencing the organisation's reputation in a positive view (Sasko 2014: 33).

The aim of ORM in organisations is to actively prevent the negativity that could tarnish the image of an organisation online. In addition, Portmann and Heever (2018: 66) illustrate that ORM is a process of management of organisation's and people's reputation represented by created content on all social media platforms. Vartiak (2015: 32) describes ORM as an intangible asset in an organisation and includes official communication channels, including all social media platforms owned and managed by organisations. Lastly, Heever (2018: 60) adds that online reputation management is communicating with the audience, monitoring and rectifying negative comments on the organisation's platforms.

Floreddu (2014: 8) suggests that "successful online reputation management in organisations requires integration of a positive corporate communication function with strong coordination and alignment of the organisations management function. Managing reputation especially in the era of technology is crucial, as any positive or negative comment about the organisation can reach million users, it may have a substantial influence on the organisation's perception".

2.25.2. Overview of ORM

Managing the online reputation of the organisation is engaging in proactive communication with external and internal stakeholders, which shows that the communicated message is reflected in the brand of the organisation (Lipski and Bunting 2016: 66). ORM is defined as monitoring and managing the negative and positive comments about the organisation on the internet and knowing how to communicate effectively and positively with social media users.

Green (2017: 20) states that online reputation management is about maintaining and building a strong and positive reputation, image or brand for an organisation.

The management of their online reputation by organisations means managing and handling the information available on the organisation's online platforms. Negative opinions about the organisation immensely affect the organisation's brand, image and reputation and is

observed through the ORM tools and strategies. Positive online reviews are taken in the form of feedback and are published on the social media platforms of the organisation (Tober 2017: 33).

Pollack (2015: 3) explains that ORM is a systematic process of corporate reputation monitoring and managing users' perception on the internet, and potentially influencing the organisation's reputation in a positive direction.

The goal of ORM is therefore to actively prevent damage to the identity and image of an organisation on the internet environment (Sasko 2016: 9). Laurencik (2016: 16) observes that ORM is not a one-time activity that is done from time to time, but is a continuous and never-ending process that may not produce the desired results at once.

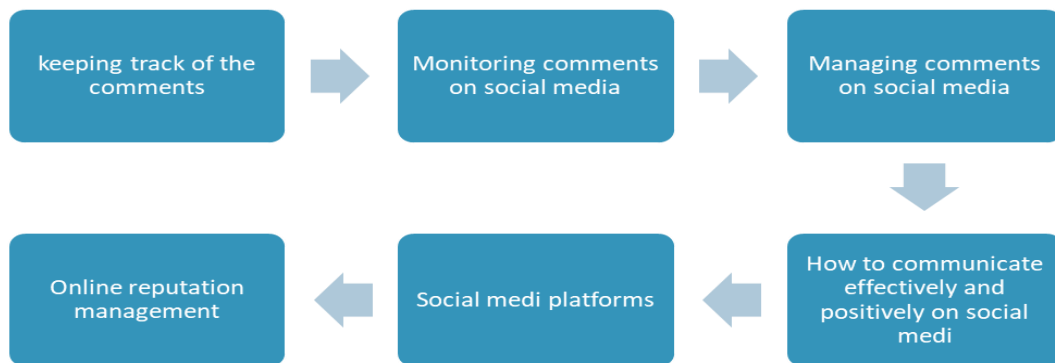


Figure 2.3: Overview of online reputation management on social media (Source: Green, 2017: 23)

2.25.3. Online Reputation Management ORM process

The process of ORM is to engage with the target audience, which involves reaching out to the audience and communicating effectively with them. As there are various social media platforms, Jones (2018: 88) states that managing online reputation is impossible and suggests that organisations should monitor their internet activities, participate in it to maintain the reputation and brand of the organisation.

Lipski and Bunting (2016: 67) add that ORM is the process of establishing one's digital presence, maintaining it for a long time, and preventing any further damages to one's reputation. In today's world when a simple tweet can go viral and tarnish the organisation's reputation completely, it is important to take preventive measures so that people perceive the organisation as a reputed company. The ORM process is designed in a way that helps to build and maintain a strong and positive brand image by understanding the organisation's target audience and using them to create a strong first impression (Floreddu 2014: 9).



Figure 2.4: Online Reputation Management process (Source: Floreddu (2014:12))

2.26. Social Media

2.26.1. Discussion on social media and reputation management

Social media is a very effective tool of communication for organisations to use to create and build a desired image, brand and to maintain a positive corporate reputation. Managing one's reputation on social media allows organisations to engage consistently with social media users (Szwajca 2017: 163). Social media is essential to reputation management as organisations are able to become renowned through the usage of social media platforms

(Toplu, Yaslioglu and Erden 2014: 30). Reputation management on social media should begin with content creation and sharing. Social media benefits reputation management for organisations as it enables consistent and effective communication and engagement with several internal and external stakeholders at once (Ngai, Tao and Moon 2015: 35).

Parveen, Jaafar and Ainin (2015: 78) outline that as an organisation begins to use social media for reputation management, it must start by getting familiar with the social media platforms and their target audience; preparing social media policy for its organisation; analysing social media trends that are aligned with the organisation; and gathering other useful information that may be relevant for the organisation. Reputation management on social media is divided into three schemes, namely the traditional input-process-output scheme as explained below (Ott and Theunissen, 2015: 102).

Parveen, Jaafar and Ainin (2015: 67) further explain that the traditional input-process-output scheme is how organisations manage their reputation on social media, whereby the input covers the content for social media creation, sharing as well as user-generated content. The process is the engagement on social media and created electronic word-of-mouth communication on social media platforms, and the output covers various positive outcomes that the organisation would experience by managing its reputation on social media.

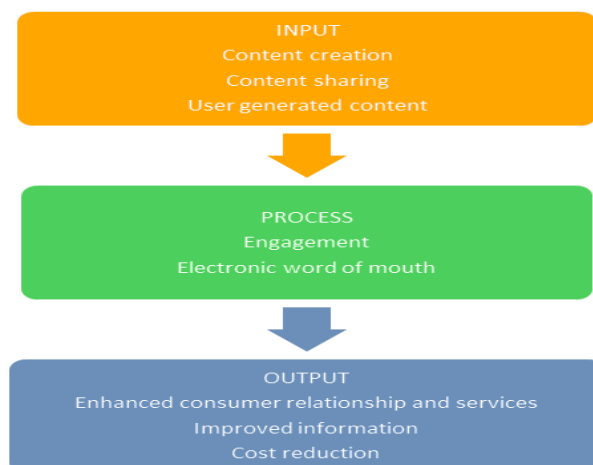


Figure 2.5: Scheme of organisation's reputation management on social media (Source: Ott and Theunissen, 2015: 105)

2.26.2. Different types of social media and their impact on reputation in organisations

Social media is the collective term for internet-based networks used for sharing newsworthy information and knowledge around the world among various social media users with a common interest (Mushwana and Bezuidenhout 2014: 63). In addition, Siddiqui and Singh (2016:71) explain that social media platforms refer to widely accessible electronic tools that enable social media users to access, share information or build relationships. These platforms are inexpensive and easy to use. Such platforms include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, and are used by various people and organisations around the world for business purposes (Masekoameng 2018: 30).

Organisations use social media to improve their performance in various ways, such as to achieve the organisation's aims and objectives. The benefit of social media for the reputation of an organisation is to provide a communication platform that facilitates two-way communication between an organisation and its stakeholders. The impact of social media on reputation is to create, build and maintain a positive and strong reputation for an organisation. Masekoameng (2018: 30) further elaborates that if organisations have a reputable social media, it is easy to attract different audiences and other relevant stakeholders that may have interest in the organisation. If an organisation has established a positive reputation on social media, it may help the organisation to develop and maintain the existing reputation, image and brand on online social media platforms.

2.26.3 Measuring online reputation on social media

Reputation is built on evaluations that are made by stakeholders who concentrate on certain criteria in the company. These criteria make up the dimensions of a good reputation (Aula & Mantere, 2022, 36). When analysing or measuring the organisations reputation one must keep in mind that reputation is a multidimensional phenomenon and evaluations on the organisations reputation are made based on these dimensions. The basic points to remember are that reputation has different definitions depending on the positions and

industries of the people making those definitions; to make sure that the right issues are dealt with at the right time, which requires understanding the anatomy of reputation; and that right managerial actions are taken to ensure that the preferred features become stronger and the bad features improve.

2.26.4 The importance of online reputation management on social media for organisations.

Online reputation management has become an essential aspect for organisations to monitor and identify brands' digital reputations. According to George (2018: 79) online reputation management entails a mix of marketing, public relations strategies to promote and protect an online reputation of the organisation. Online reputation management is essential as it allows organisations to monitor their online reputation regularly. Since online content posted by organisations continuously shifts, how the internal and external stakeholders perceive the brand, image and reputation of the organisation can also change completely. Organisations need to identify what is being said about them on online platforms and how they can improve if the external stakeholders perceive them negatively (Elixir, 2015: 7).



Figure 2.6 The importance of online reputation management on social media. (Source: Aula and Mantere, 2022, 36)

2.28. Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the literature on the influence of social media on corporate reputation at DUT. The influence of social media has dramatically increased in many organisations and how they use social media in creating, building and maintaining a strong corporate reputation for their organisations is important. The following chapter presents the research methodology that was adopted in collecting primary data in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Research methodology is a set of systematic techniques used by the researcher to determine how to conduct the study (Igwenagu 2016: 5). The previous chapter presented the literature review and the theoretical framework in assessing the influence of social media on corporate reputation. This chapter concentrates on the research methodology and design that was utilised in this study. The research design is presented first to provide a total methodological structure for the study.

3.2. Research design

According to Creswell (2015: 44), research design is a detailed outline of forms of inquiry within quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches that gives the researcher guidance on specific measures in research design. Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 95) expound research design as a plan or a blueprint for the measurement, collection and analysis of data in order to provide answers to research questions. According to Wilson (2014: 67), the research design is a plan that is used to guide arrangements for data collection and data analysis because it guides the researcher on how the research will be carried out in a manner that will answer all the research questions. In addition, Creswell and Clark (2014: 53) explain that the research design is a process for evaluating, gathering, reporting and understanding the information in research studies. Creswell (2014: 250) adds that the main function of the research design is to allow the researcher to plan an appropriate research process that will maximise the validity of the eventual results.

There are two types of research design used for data collection, namely quantitative and qualitative. Maree (2016: 36) defines quantitative research as a type of research method which aims to test theories, forecast results, show relationships between variables and

determine facts. On the other hand, qualitative research is explained as a research approach which is intended to develop theories and provide understanding of theories (Maree 2016: 38).

This study will however, use a mixed methods approach as questionnaires and interviews will be used in obtaining relevant information. Creswell (2014: 32) defines a mixed methods approach as the combination of the qualitative and quantitative approaches in a study to obtaining information.

3.2.1. Mixed methods research design

According to Creswell (2014: 32), mixed methods research is an approach to investigation that involves the collection of both quantitative and qualitative research methods, and integrating the two forms of data for use in one single study. Furthermore, Creswell (2015: 2) posits that the primary notion of this research method is that the researcher will use both quantitative data and qualitative data. Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 106) supports that the main aim of the mixed methods research approach is to answer the research questions that cannot be answered by either a quantitative or qualitative research approach alone.

The mixed methods research approach is centred around collecting data, evaluating data, combining and analysing both quantitative and qualitative data in the course of a single study (Sekaran and Bougie 2016: 106). Sekaran and Bougie (2016: 106) state that qualitative research methods are usually used to understand the nature of a research problem. On the other hand, Leedy and Ormrod (2012: 29) define quantitative research as a correlation between two or more phenomena which involves designs that are either experimental or descriptive.

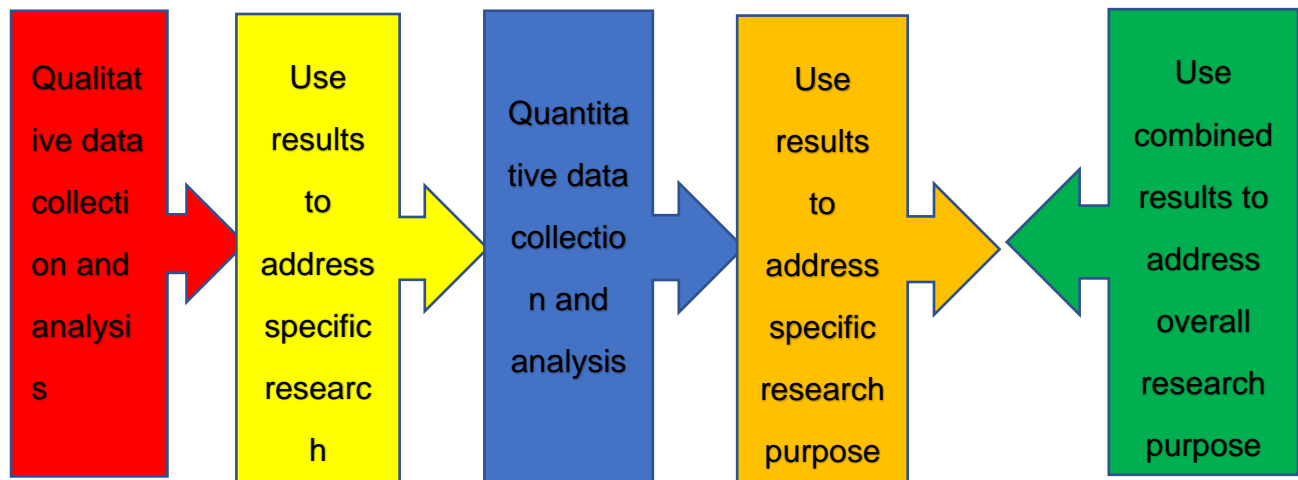


Figure 3.1: Additional coverage of mixed research methods (Source: Morgan, 2014: 11).

The study began with the collection of qualitative data, which better qualified the development of the research instruments and involvements for the quantitative data collection as shown in Figure 3.1. The quantitative phase of this study is divided into two phases: the pre-testing phase of the instrument on a smaller scale and the final data collection with a larger sample.

3.2.1. Qualitative research design

Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2016: 2) explain that qualitative research is a combination of rational and explorative research that involves the gathering of information, analysing and interpreting data through the discernment of what is stated by the selected individuals, i.e. people's own written or spoken words and observable behaviour. Furthermore, Yin (2014: 19) highlights that qualitative research is more appealing because it allows the researchers to have better opportunities in selecting preferred areas of interest in conducting their study, as other research approaches limit the researcher in the collection of data. The common thread in literature is that qualitative research can be defined as an essential descriptive design used in investigations amongst individuals or groups of people who are selected to participate for the study.

3.2.2. Quantitative research design

Quantitative research design is a type of research approach which aims to determine facts, test theories, show relationships between variables and forecast results (Merwe, 2016: 36). In addition, Leedy and Ormrod (2010: 135) define quantitative research as a relationship between two or more phenomena which involves designs that are either descriptive or experimental. The quantitative research method was used to ascertain how DUT uses its social media platforms in communicating with its stakeholders and managing its corporate reputation on online platforms.

According to Trochim (2012: 211), quantitative research refers to a form of research design which seeks quantifiable and structured responses to a questionnaire. In addition, quantitative research is distinguished by the deductive approaches to the research process aimed at lending reliability and credibility to the existing theories (Flick, 2018: 122). The qualitative research approach involves quantifying variables and testing the relationships between variables in order to reveal casual relationships, correlations or patterns. In achieving the objectives of this study, a quantitative design was employed because it permits the researcher to utilise numbers when interpreting data and data can be gathered using a questionnaire.

3.3. Target population

The target population refers to the entire groups of events, people, or things of interest that the researcher desires to explore. Target population does not only refer to people but also to organisations, firms and products (Sekaran and Bougie 2013: 240). According to Wegner (2016: 5), the target population is a set of collected elements from which the sample is selected. It is not practical or possible to investigate the entire population. The target population of this study includes the employees of the Corporate Affairs unit, lecturers and students within the Public Relations and Marketing Department from DUT. Thus, the sample size of this study will comprise selected individuals from the Corporate Affairs unit

representing advertising, corporate branding and marketing, lecturers from the Public Relations and Marketing Department as well as BTech students from the Public Relations and Marketing Department.

These participants have been chosen as they are either involved in working at DUT or have some insight into the field of corporate reputation.

3.4. Sampling strategy

Clow and James (2014: 225) write that a sampling strategy refers to the approach taken to answer research questions of a study, which involves describing the target population and sample population, identifying the sample frame and sampling technique and deciding on the sample size. The components of the sampling strategy employed in this study are discussed in the sections below.

3.4.1. Sampling technique

Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2014: 174) state that the elementary notion of sampling is to make conclusions about the whole population by picking some of the elements of the population. There are two domains of sampling, namely the probability and non-probability sampling. Cooper and Schindler (2014: 450) describe the probability sampling method as a selective method wherein every member or element of a population has an equal chance of being selected. On the contrary, in non-probability sampling, members or elements of a population do not have an equal chance of being selected, and such selection is based on the researchers' discretion. This study thus will adopt the non-probability sampling method, as the participants will be selected based on the researcher's discretion (Creswell 2018: 23). Examples of probability sampling are inclusive of stratified sampling method, cluster sampling and simple random sampling (Nishishiba, Jones and Kraner 2014: 79). Non-probability sampling consists of accidental or convenience, quota, purposive, volunteer and expert sampling methods (Aaker 2015: 349). Bryman and Bell (2015: 179) further explain

that the probability sampling methods can be generalised to the target population whereas non-probability sampling methods for collecting data can only be generalised to members, elements, individuals or institutions where the sample was studied. The target population of a quantitative study usually requires the need to select the sample from a large population group.

The non-probability sampling method chosen for the qualitative study is the purposive sampling. The purposive sampling is undertaken with the purpose in mind (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010: 213). Sampling refers to sampling without using random selection methods (Jones 2015: 17). A mixed method research approach was adopted for this study as this enabled the use of both quantitative and qualitative data to answer particular questions or sets of questions (Hesse-Biber 2016: 3).

The quantitative research method allowed for the distribution of self-administered questionnaires to participants whereas the qualitative research method allowed the researcher to conduct interviews with participants. All research participants answered identical questions on the questionnaires. The aim of a mixed methods research in combining qualitative and quantitative research components is to develop, expand and strengthen a study's conclusions and consequently contribute to the published literature (Bryman 2012: 628). The rationale regarding the use of questionnaires and conducting interviews for the research study was that it was a cost-effective manner in which to collect data from a large number of respondents of Durban University of Technology students and staff.

3.4.2. Sample selection

A total of 180 questionnaires was distributed to DUT students. The participants included 90 from Public Relations, 42 from Marketing, 29 from Journalism and 19 from the Visual Communication Design. Seventeen constructed interview questions were emailed to internal stakeholders in different departments and in the Corporate Affairs unit. The research instrument comprised of 22 items with nominal and ordinal level of measurement. A total of

197 participants consented to take part in the study and participation in this study was voluntary, where 17 of them were emailed interviews.

3.5. Research measurement

The research measurement is an act of determining the quantity, capability, magnitudes, or level of something (Johnson and Christensen, 2014: 132). Furthermore, Bryman and Bell (2015: 154) explain that the research measurement sanctions are used by researchers to identify differences between individuals based on the questioned characteristics.

A measuring instrument provides a reliable tool for evaluating dissimilarities. For this study, the researcher constructed a structured closed-ended questionnaire as a measuring instrument tool because it was easy to use for the collection of data. Furthermore, a questionnaire was chosen for its simplicity in providing respondents with the list of possible answers to choose from. The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions using a 5-point Likert scale. Sekaran and Bougie (2013: 211) define the Likert scale as the psychometric scale that is commonly used in research that entails the use of questionnaires. The researcher used the Likert scale since one of the advantages of using the Likert scale is that it is an easy method for the participants to understand and is a universal method of collecting data. Furthermore, when using a Likert scale method for quantitative data, it is easy to draw results, conclusions, graphs, and reports from the responses provided by the participants. Section A of the questionnaire consisted of biographical information, whereas Section B contained questions related to the objectives of the study.

King and Horrocks (2015: 1) outline that interviews are the most common method that carries out the survey. More so, interviews were structured as a means of obtaining more insight into the influence of social media on the corporate reputation at the DUT. The interview questions were sent out via the use of emails due to COVID-19 and followed a structured-interview approach using emails.

3.6. Questionnaire construction

Questionnaires are systematic segments that follow the procedures used in collecting data, administration of questions and rationality of the sampling strategy. Construction of questionnaires needs informative resources, time and specific skills. Questionnaires comprise of an introduction to the interview, the participant-selection process, the demographic and background about what the interview will be about (Czjar and Blair 2014: 177).

3.6.1. Advantages of a questionnaire

The advantages of questionnaires are that they reduce the errors that are made by the interviewer while recording the participant's responses and also reduces the changeability of the participant's responses receiving the same questions. This in turn makes it easy to analyse the collected data and interpret the results. According to Coles, Duval and Shaw (2013: 60), questionnaires are highly flexible instruments that are efficient and easy to use when collecting data from a large number of participants. Czjar and Blair (2014: 57) add that having a questionnaire allows for anonymity for the researcher as there will be no personal interaction between the selected participants and the researcher. The aforementioned advantages motivated the use of a questionnaire in this study. The disadvantages of using a questionnaire are presented in the paragraph below.

3.6.2. Disadvantages of questionnaires

Edward (2013: 805) argues that while many advantages are present for using the questionnaire as a research instrument, the designing of a research questionnaire is a time-consuming exercise. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012: 152) note that the distribution of research questionnaires is costly and it gives only one chance to collect data for the study. The following paragraph provides details regarding the pilot study that was conducted at DUT.

3.7. Pilot study

Pilot testing is the standard practice of examining a questionnaire on a small number of respondents to ensure that it is understood and performs as required (Perneger *et al.* 2014: 147).

The purpose of pilot testing is to guarantee that the questionnaire meets the objectives of the study as far as the data that will be collected (Aaker *et al.* 2013: 263). Prior to conducting interviews, the researcher also conducted pilot interviews. During this process, the aim was to verify if 'questions' being investigated were potentially adequately captured through the initial set of interview questions (Aaker *et al.* 2013: 266). The pilot study was utilised to determine if the items in the questionnaire were generating the information that was desired by the researcher.

The information from the pilot study could be used to refine the questions in the questionnaire. A pilot study assists the researcher to observe if the questions were easily understood, clear and contained unambiguous language for respondents. The pilot study findings allowed the researcher to modify, develop and refine the final questionnaire and improve the quality of the research instruments.

3.8. Data collection

Weimer (2012: 168) defines data collection as a means of collecting information and measuring it on targeted variables in a recognised systematic plan, which allows participants to answer questions appropriately and assess the outcomes. On the other hand, Roger (2014:100) points out that there are two types of data collection methods, namely quantitative data and qualitative data. Data that uses words and description is referred to as qualitative data, while quantitative data is data that is expressed with numbers and can be put in categories. The disadvantage of using qualitative data is that it is based on observation and subjectivity, hence it is difficult to use when making comparisons. Qualitative data collection

methods include the use of questionnaires which can be either personally administered, administered online, sent via the post office or via emails. Quantitative data collection includes the use of observations and unstructured interviews.

A request letter was sent out to the participating organisation, which explained the nature of the present study. An agreement made between the participating institution and the researcher which allowed the researcher to collect data for this study. The questionnaires were discrete and were sent together with the letter of information and a consent letter. The guidelines aimed to be simple and clear in the questionnaire, to made it easy for participants to understand and answer questions. The questionnaire was put together, primarily, with the use of closed-ended questions and a Likert scale in order to improve the understanding of the participants and to allow the use of statistical analytical tools. The researcher used the email method of data collection by sending emails to proposed participants. The email addresses were provided by the Information and Communications Technology Department of the institution. The participants were given two weeks to complete the given questionnaire and return it to the researcher. Reminder emails were sent towards the deadline date.

3.9. Data analysis

Data analysis is used to describe determined patterns, develop explanations, facts and hypotheses testing (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012: 151). The researcher used quantitative data analysis. When using a quantitative data analysis, the researcher is required to turn raw numbers into a meaningful data by applying rational thinking (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2012: 154). There are multiple facets and approaches of data analysis, however, for this study the data collected was analysed using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet as well as the latest version of SPSS. Excel allowed the researcher to manage and analyse data. Data that was gathered was illustrated in charts, graphs and tables. On the other hand, when using qualitative data analysis, the interviews were analysed through thematic analysis. Creswell (2015: 43) defines thematic analysis as a “method for identifying and

analysing data". Thematic analysis is designed to categorise and explain data in rich detail (Creswell 2015: 44).

3.10. Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

Reliability is the degree to which results are repeatable and consistent (Bezzina and Saunders 2014:31). Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2014: 405) write that reliability in research focuses on estimating the levels to which evaluation is planned and ensuring there is no unbalanced inaccuracy. Reliable tools can be used with assurance that situational and temporary dynamics are not intrusive (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler 2014: 406).

Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2014: 409), further note that reliable devices exist and work well under different situations in dissimilar times. In addition, Laura and Bernaur (2014: 122) state that reliability refers to the extent to which the measurement process is free from random errors, and the extent to which obtained scores may be generalised into different measuring situations. In this study, reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient.

Quinlan (2011:75) explains validity as the analysis of the degree to which a study is solid, honest, logical, meaningful, practical, sound and beneficial. A study should contribute to knowledge to ensure validity. In ensuring reliability and validity of the quantitative tool (questionnaire), a pilot test was conducted, whilst questionnaires were also aligned to the aim and objectives of this study. For the qualitative aspect, validity and reliability of the interview was ensured through a pilot test. The evidence collected for the purpose of the study must be valid (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler,2014: 405). The criterion for trustworthiness is credibility. According to Korstjens and Moser (2017: 274) trustworthiness is the confidence that can be placed on the truth of the research findings. The findings of the research establish credibility whether the research findings represent plausible and credible information drawn from the respondent's original data and are in a correct interpretation of

the participant's original views. In this study a semi-structured interview was used to ensure credibility.

3.11. Ethical consideration

The purpose of research ethics is to avoid harm to research participants; obtain informed consent from all research participants; and respect the right to privacy of all individuals involved in the research process (Gray 2014: 85).

Participants were informed about this study and provided their written consent for inclusion into the study. Participants were informed that participation in the study was not obligatory, but voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were taken into consideration by the researcher to ensure that the study was ethically acceptable (Adams and Lawrence 2014: 5).

The researcher adhered to and followed all ethics guidelines outlined by the academic institution. The DUT's Faculty of Management Sciences, Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) provided the researcher with ethical clearance for this research study (listed as Appendix D). In addition, gatekeeper's permission was received.

3.12 Delimitation and limitation

According to Ploy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014: 7), delimitations are the parameters that the researcher has set to work within. The study focused on two social media platforms, namely Facebook and Twitter, and how these influence the corporate reputation at the DUT.

3.13 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research methodology, research design, population size, as well as the sampling techniques used in this study. This chapter further outlined the measuring instrument design, data collection methods, data analysis methods and validity and reliability. The study employed the online survey strategy that was conducted by means of self-administered questionnaire with prearranged response choices. The findings of this study and the analysis of the results will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE PRIMARY DATA

4.1. Introduction

The research methodology in the previous chapter presented the methods that were employed in collecting data for the study. This chapter provides the results and discusses the findings acquired from the responses to the questionnaire used in this study. The distributed questionnaire was the primary measuring tool used in collecting data and was distributed to 180 DUT students, while 17 interview questions were emailed to DUT staff members to assess the influence of social media on corporate reputation. The collected data from the responses was analysed using SPSS version 25.0. The results are presented as descriptive statistics in the form of cross-tabulations, graphs and other relevant figures for the quantitative data that was gathered by the researcher. Inferential techniques include the use of correlations and chi-square test values, which are interpreted using p-values. The traditional approach to reporting results requires statements of the statistical significance. A p-value was generated from a test statistic. The significant result is indicated with "p < 0.05". In addition, this chapter commences with discussions of the interview data and how it was reported and analysed. Interview data themes are conceptualised grounded on the research aim and objectives and themes with sub-themes are part of the chapter. The section that follows reports on the interview data analysis.

4.2. The sample

Overall, 180 questionnaires were distributed to DUT students, following COVID-19 protocols, and 17 interview questions were emailed to DUT staff members. All questionnaires were returned to the researcher, which gave a 100% response rate.

4.2.1. The research instrument

The research instrument was made up of 22 items, with the level of measurement at a nominal or an ordinal level. The questionnaire was divided into 4 questions which measured different themes as illustrated below:

- Question 1: Biographical data
- Question 2: Value of social media in an organisation
- Question 3: Effectiveness of social media
- Question 4: Social media and corporate reputation in organisation

4.3. Reliability Statistics

Reliability statistics are computed by having numerous measurements on the same subjects. A reliability coefficient of 0.60 or higher is considered as “acceptable” for a newly developed construct. The table below (Table 4.1) reflects the Cronbach’s alpha score for all the items that created the questionnaire.

Table 4.1: The Cronbach’s alpha score for all the items that created the questionnaire

Overall

| Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|-----------------|------------------|
| 8 | .601 |

Table 4.1 shows that the reliability score exceeds the recommended Cronbach’s alpha value. This indicates a degree of acceptable, consistent scoring for these sections of the research.

4.4. Section A: Biographical data

This section reports and summarises the biographical data of participants. The main focus of this section is on the age, gender, level of education, department, and length of study of the participants. The statistical information is presented in numbered figures and on frequency tables. The initial analysis is shown in a numbered table and the same results are also illustrated in a numbered figure. The table below (Table 4.2) shows the overall gender distribution of participants by age.

Table 4.2 Gender distribution by age

| Age group (years) | | Gender | | Total |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|-------|
| | | Male | Female | |
| 18 – 19 | Count | 11 | 14 | 25 |
| | % within Age group | 44% | 56% | 100% |
| | % within Gender | 13.8% | 14% | 13.9% |
| | % of Total | 6.1% | 7.8% | 13.9% |
| 20 – 29 | Count | 51 | 72 | 123 |
| | % within Age group | 41.5% | 58.5% | 100% |
| | % within Gender | 63.8% | 72% | 68.3% |
| | % of Total | 28.3% | 40% | 68.3% |
| 30 – 39 | Count | 18 | 14 | 32 |
| | % within Age group | 56.3% | 43.8% | 100% |
| | % within Gender | 22.5% | 14% | 17.8% |
| | % of Total | 10% | 7.8% | 17.8% |
| Total | Count | 80 | 100 | 180 |
| | % within Age group | 44.4% | 55.6% | 100% |
| | % within Gender | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| | % of Total | 44.4% | 55.6% | 100% |

Table 4.2 shows that the overall ratio of males to females is approximately 4:5 (44.4%: 55.6%) ($p = 0.136$). Within the category of 18 to 19 years, 13.8% were males. Within the category of males (only), 44% were between the ages of 18 to 19 years.

The category of males between the ages of 18 to 19 years formed 6.1% of the total sample. Within the category of females, 14% were between the ages of 18 to 19 years. The category of females between the ages of 18 to 19 years formed 7.8% of the total sample. Within the category of 20 to 29 years, 63.8% were males. Within the category of males, 41.5% were between the ages of 20 to 29 years. This category of males between the ages of 20 to 29 years formed 28.3% of the total sample. Within the category, 72% were females. Within the category of females, 58.5% were between the ages of 20 to 29 years. The category of females between the ages of 20 to 29 years formed 40.0% of the total sample.

Within the age category of 30 to 39 years, 56.3% were males and 43.8% were females. Within the category of males (only), 22.5% were between the ages of 30 to 39 years. This category of males between the ages of 30 to 39 years formed 10.0% of the total sample.

Within the category of females, 14% were between the ages of 30 to 39 years. This category of females between the ages of 30 to 39 years formed 7.8% of the total sample.

The category of males and females between the ages of 30 to 39 formed 17.8% of the whole sample. The age distributions are not similar as there are more participants older than 39 years ($p < 0.001$).

4.4.1. Race of participants

The figure below indicates the racial composition of the sample population.

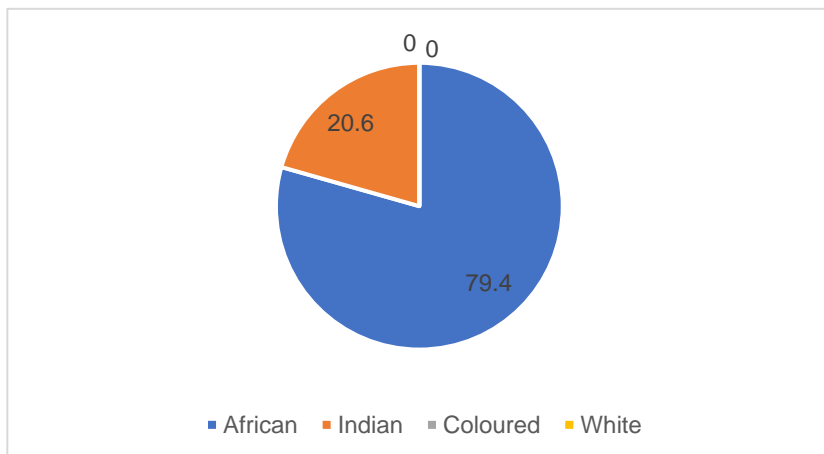


Figure 4.1 Race of participants

Figure 4.1 highlights that the majority of participants were Africans (79.4%), whilst Indians made up 20.6% of the sample. The coloured and white participants made up 0% of the sample. These results are representative of the large-scale racial make-up of DUT.

4.4.2. Educational Level

The figure below indicates the level of education of the participants.

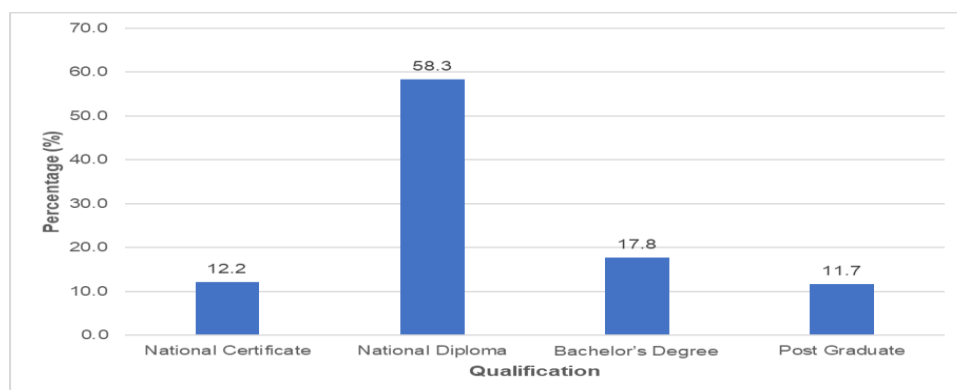


Figure 4.2 Level of education of the participants.

According to Figure 4.2, approximately 88.3% of the sample comprised undergraduate students ($p < 0.001$), with 11.7% of the participants having a postgraduate degree. The largest group of people were those with a national diploma and this formed 58.3% of the total sample, followed by bachelor's degree level with 17.8%, and national certificate level with 12.2%. The lowest category was postgraduate level with 11.7%.

This indicates that a fair fraction of the participants had an education qualification. Therefore, it can be assumed that the participants and their responses are adequate.

4.4.3. Department to which participants are registered

The following figure indicates the departments in which the participants are registered.

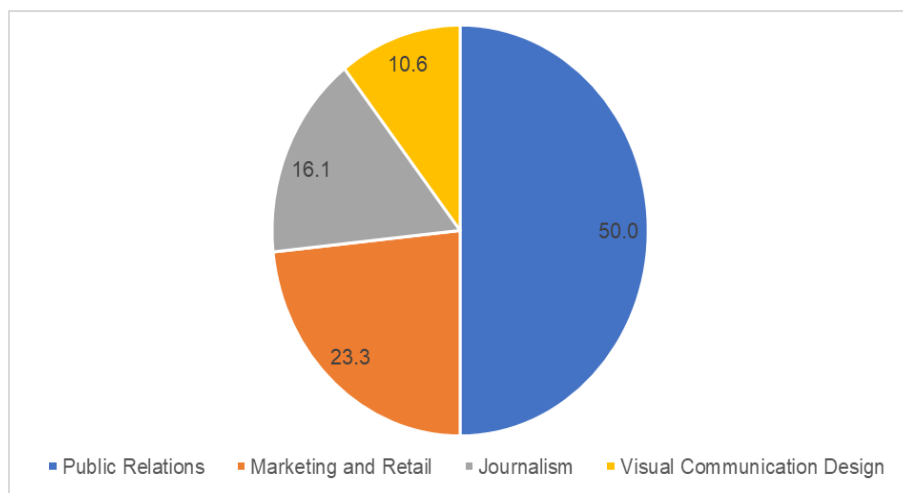


Figure 4.3 The departments in which the participants belonged to.

The results graphed in Figure 4.3 show that half (50%) of the participants were from the Public Relations Departments, with a little less than a quarter (23.3%) belonging to Marketing and Retail Department, followed by 16.1% of the Journalism Department. The smallest grouping was from the Visual Communication Design Department with (10.6%).

4.4.4. Years registered at the institution

The following figure reports on the number of years that participants have been studying at the institution.

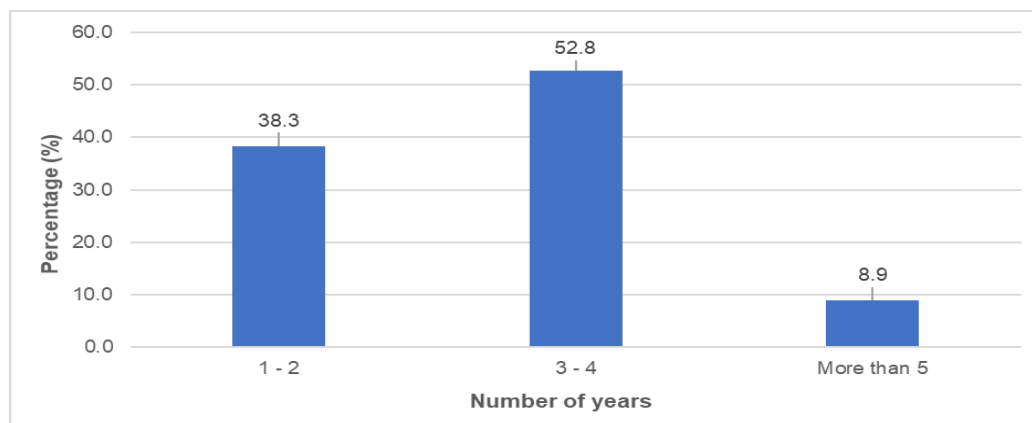


Figure 4.4 The number of years that the participants have been studying at the institution.

Figure 4.4 above provides the number of years that participants have been studying at DUT. More than 91% of the participants were at the university for less than 5 years ($p < 0.001$). These would be predominantly undergraduate participants. In the sample of 180 students, 52.8% have been in the institution for a period of 3 - 4 years, 38.3% have been in the institution for 1- 2 years, and 8.9% of students have been in the institution for more than 5 years.

4.5. Data analysis

The following section analyses the participants' scoring patterns on variables per section. The levels of disagreement (negative statements) are first presented to show a single category of "Disagree". A similar process was followed and monitored for the levels of agreement (positive statements). This was acceptable due to the acceptable reliability levels.

The results obtained in this study are first reported using summarised percentages for the variables that create each section. Results are then further outlined according to the importance of the statements.

4.5.1. The value of social media

This section deals the value of social media and its influence on corporate reputation at the Durban University of Technology. Khan (2018: 3) states that social media is a broad term that is used to describe a host of web-based technologies and developments that modern Internet users typically use to consume and generate content. Students will stipulate the influence of social media at DUT using various social media platforms that the institution engages with them on most often. In addition, Mollet and Brumley (2017:14) highlight that social media tools are platforms that help an organisation to distribute their content to their audiences and these platforms are different from each other in terms of the distribution of content. Furthermore, Chan (2017: 1) adds that social media is a powerful tool for organisations as it reaches a large group of social media users in different places. Audience engagement is limitless and businesses can interact with many social media users.

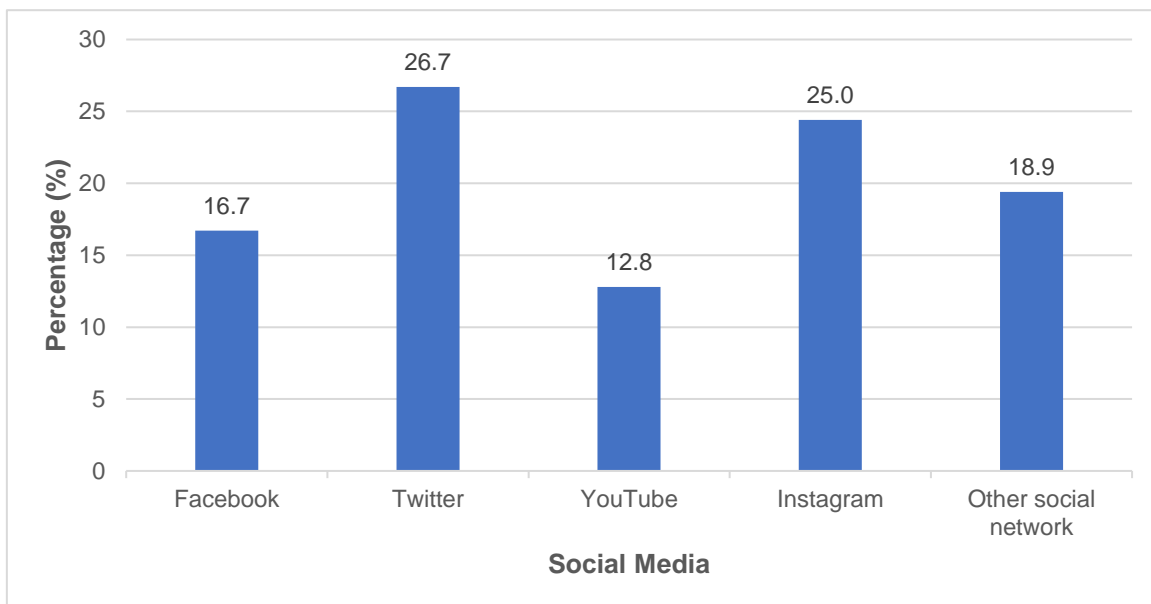


Figure 4.5 Social media platforms actively used at DUT.

Figure 4.5 highlights that there was a high usage of social media platforms by participants with Twitter being the highest used of all platforms at 26.7%, followed by Instagram with 24.4%. In addition, Facebook (16.7%) and YouTube (12.8%) were the least used social media platforms by the participants. This indicates that Instagram and Twitter are the most influential social media platforms by the participants at the DUT. According to Parveen (2016: 54), the usage of social media in an organisation encourages organisations to change their organisational communication and be more effective and active when responding to their targeted market. Many organisations make use of social media to increase their performance in many ways, such as, to achieve the objectives of the organisation and increase of sales in the organisation.

Barker (2014:184) states the importance of having social media in organisations is to create and maintain a positive desired image, brand and reputation, because of the possibility of building an interactive relationship with an unlimited number of external stakeholders, business partners and employees. Social media is growing daily and more people are becoming a part of it. Social media for organisations has become a necessity and opportunity for growth.

Table 4.3 Summary of the scoring patterns of the participants on the importance of social media in organisations

| | | Strongly Disagree | | Disagree | | Neutral | | Agree | | Strongly Agree | | Chi Square p-value |
|---|------|-------------------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|----------------|---------|--------------------|
| | | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | |
| Social media platforms are important for organisations. | Q2.3 | 5 | 2.8 % | 3 | 1.7% | 19 | 10.6 % | 126 | 70.0 % | 27 | 15.0% | < 0.001 |
| Social media is the best communication platform in the organisation. | Q2.4 | 47 | 26.1 % | 49 | 27.2 % | 24 | 13.3 % | 41 | 22.8 % | 19 | 10.6% | < 0.001 |
| Every organisation must have active social media platforms. | Q2.5 | 0 | 0.0 % | 10 | 5.6% | 19 | 10.6 % | 94 | 52.2 % | 57 | 31.7% | < 0.001 |

The following patterns were observed in Figure 4.6 and Table 4.3: there is a significantly higher level of agreement (Agree+ Strongly Agree), 70.0% agree and 15.0% strongly that social media platforms are important for organisations. Although 22.8% of the participants agree and 10.6% strongly agree that social media platforms are the best communication tool that organisations can use as a form of communication with their audiences, 26.1% of the participants disagree. Lastly 52.2% agree and 31.7% strongly agree that every organisation must have active social media platforms. Some statements show significantly higher levels of agreement, whilst other levels of agreement are lower but still greater than the levels of disagreement (p <0.001).

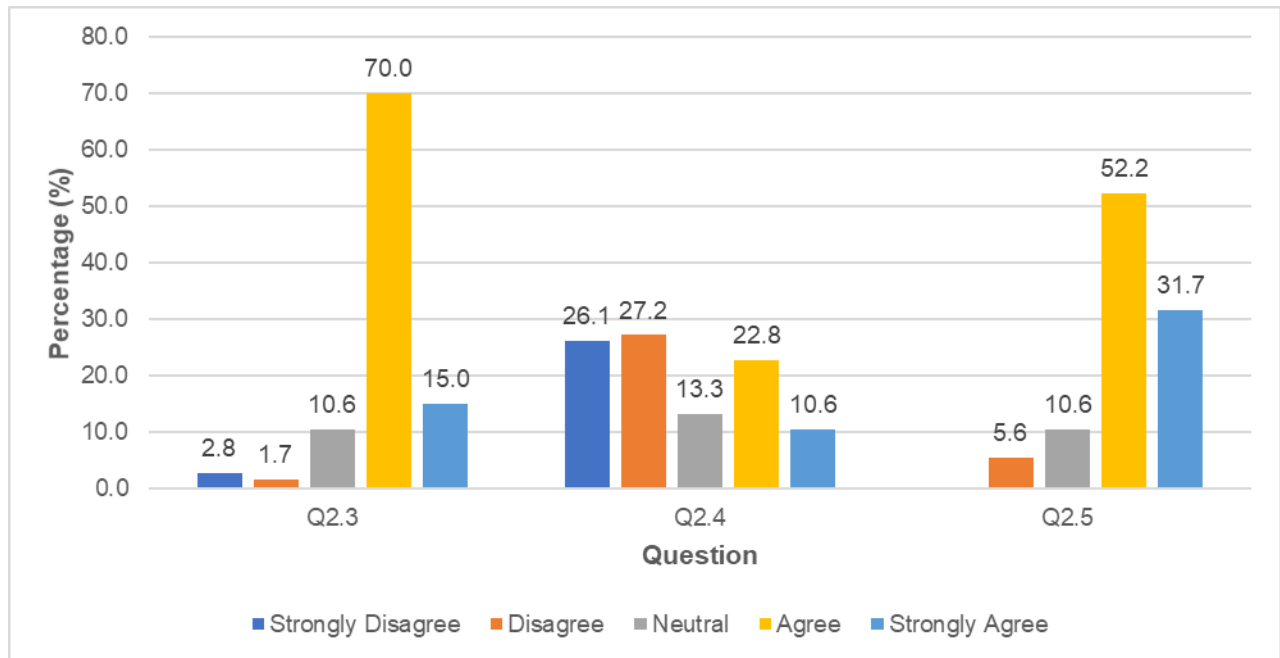


Figure 4.6 The value and importance of social media in organisations

The significance of organisations having social media is tested and shown in Table 4.3. The main role of social media in organisations is to improve brand awareness. Social media allows organisations to build, maintain and promote their brand on an online platform. In addition, social media in organisations can be used as a communication tool where informative content can be shared with the organisation's target audience. Using social media for an organisation to improve brand, image and maintain the built reputation is one of the most proficient means of using social media for the organisation. Siapera (2013:255) points out that the importance of social media in the organisation includes sharing of ideas and building relationships with their stakeholders and audience through social media platforms and increasing the organisations visibility.

The overall level of agreement that social media platforms are important for organisations and that every organisation must have active social media platform is high. These relate to participants seeing the value or the need for social media in organisations. However, more participants disagreed with the statement that organisations should use social media as a communication tool to communicate with their audience and other external stakeholders.

To determine whether the scoring patterns per statements were significantly different per option, a chi-square goodness-of-fit test was done. The null hypothesis stated that similar numbers of the participants scored across each option for each statement (one statement at a time). The alternate hypothesis stated that there is a significant difference between the levels of agreement and disagreement. The results are detailed in Table 4.3. The highlighted significant values (p-values) are less than 0.05 (the level of significance), and imply that the distributions were not similar, i.e. the differences between the way the participants scored (agree, neutral, disagree) were significant. Barker (2014:184) supports that one of the values of social media in organisations is that it enables open communication, which helps organisations to understand their stakeholders' needs and communicate effectively and proactively. In addition, Dacosta (2016:33) states that social media allows organisations to build brand awareness and retain existing external stakeholders.

4.6. Effectiveness/ usage of social media to maintain corporate reputation

This section discusses the usage of social media in the organisation to maintain corporate reputation. One of the objectives of this research was to identify the effectiveness of social media in maintaining corporate reputation and its usage.

Table 4.4 Interpretation of the scoring pattern of the results attained

| | | Strongly Disagree | | Disagree | | Neutral | | Agree | | Strongly Agree | | Chi Square p-value |
|--|------|-------------------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|
| | | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | |
| Social media is the best communication platform for interacting with stakeholders. | Q3.1 | 1 | 0.6% | 30 | 16.7 % | 38 | 21.1 % | 90 | 50.0 % | 21 | 11.7 % | < 0.001 |
| I monitor what social media users post on the social media platforms of the organisation. | Q3.2 | 76 | 42.2 % | 104 | 57.8 % | 0 | 0.0 % | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0 % | 0.037 |
| DUT communicates effectively and provides responses to social media users regarding the organisation. | Q3.3 | 79 | 43.9 % | 58 | 32.2 % | 22 | 12.2 % | 21 | 11.7 % | 0 | 0.0 % | < 0.001 |

There is a very different scoring pattern from the participants in this study. Table 4.4 details the scoring pattern of the results attained from participants. Table 4.4 shows that there are high scores in agreement to the statements in this section. Disagreements and neutral measures are very low and the difference between the participants who agreed and those who disagreed is significant. The highest agreement value is 50%, to the statement “Social media is the best communication platform for interacting with stakeholders.” The participants provided the highest level of disagreement value of 43% on the statement “DUT

communicates effectively and provides responses to social media users regarding the organisation”.

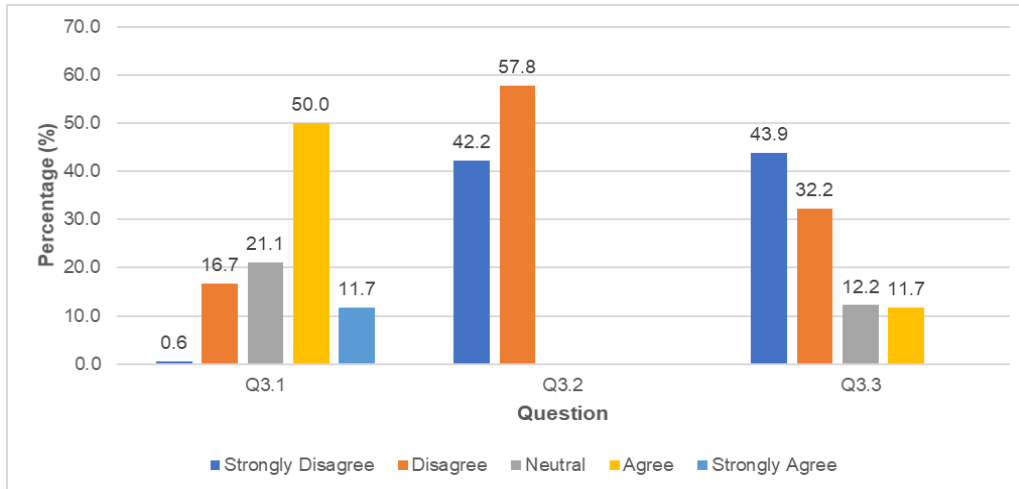


Figure 4.7 Effectiveness of social media

The results in Figure 4.7 show different scoring patterns with high levels of scoring for both agreement and disagreement to the statement concerning the effectiveness of social media in organisations. A higher level stated that social media is the best communication tool when interacting with stakeholders. The highest level of agreement was 61.7% to the statement “social media is the best communication platform for interacting with stakeholders.” This was followed by “I communicate effectively and provide responses to social media users regarding the organisation” which had a 55.6% level of agreement. The statement “I monitor what social media users post on social media platforms of the organisation” had 100% disagreement. One of the study objectives was to identify which social media platforms are effective in maintaining the corporate reputation at the Durban University of Technology.

Abrahamse and Steg (2013: 1774) state that the effectiveness of social media leaders can be accredited to the so-called ‘liking’ norm. When people like someone on social media, it is more likely that they will establish significant relations with that person. Munyoro and Magada (2016: 7) add that the effectiveness of social media requires the organisation to post content

that is relevant to their organisation, and also to interact with their audience on the relevant content that is aligning with their organisation's brand. On the other hand, Dootson, Beatson and Drenan (2016: 30) highlight that social media does have a powerful amplifying effect. The downside is that if social media is not carefully managed by qualified personnel, the time invested will not yield a significant return on investment. The internet and social media have allowed organisations to build and maintain a strong and positive corporate reputation on online platforms.

4.7. Social media and corporate reputation in organisations

Table 4.5 and Figure 4.8 show that the highest level of agreement was 82.2% with the statement "It is easy to maintain the corporate reputation of organisation on social media". This was followed by the high level of agreement of 76.7% with the statement "It is important for social media platforms of the organisations to be managed by professionals". Social media platforms in organisations have created a challenging environment, as social media was made for individuals and not for organisations to create or build their reputation online. Social media platforms enable organisations to create and maintain their desired corporate reputation online and engage with their targeted audiences online.

Table 4.5: The content used on social media for a positive corporate reputation

| | | Strongly Disagree | | Disagree | | Neutral | | Agree | | Strongly Agree | | Chi Square p-value |
|---|------|-------------------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|-------|---------|----------------|---------|--------------------|
| | | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | Count | Row N % | |
| It's important for social media platforms of the organisation to be managed by professionals. | Q4.1 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 42 | 23.3 % | 90 | 50.0 % | 48 | 26.7 % | < 0.001 |
| Organisations face challenges on social media. | Q4.2 | 70 | 38.9 % | 70 | 38.9 % | 40 | 22.2 % | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 0.007 |
| It's easy to maintain the reputation of the organisation on social media if it's maintained by a professional. | Q4.3 | 0 | 0.0% | 0 | 0.0% | 32 | 17.8 % | 86 | 47.8 % | 62 | 34.4 % | < 0.001 |
| A strong corporate reputation in the organisation benefits the organisation. | Q4.4 | 0 | 0.0% | 39 | 21.7 % | 29 | 16.1 % | 75 | 41.7 % | 37 | 20.6 % | < 0.001 |
| Social media platforms have positive effect in the organisation. | Q4.5 | 23 | 12.8 % | 20 | 11.1 % | 64 | 35.6 % | 51 | 28.3 % | 22 | 12.2 % | < 0.001 |
| The organisation has a specific content that they post on their social media platforms. | Q4.6 | 22 | 12.2 % | 27 | 15.0 % | 19 | 10.6 % | 56 | 31.1 % | 56 | 31.1 % | < 0.001 |
| The organisation responds to every individual that ask something regarding the organisation asked by social media users. | Q4.7 | 56 | 31.1 % | 77 | 42.8 % | 26 | 14.4 % | 21 | 11.7 % | 0 | 0.0% | < 0.001 |

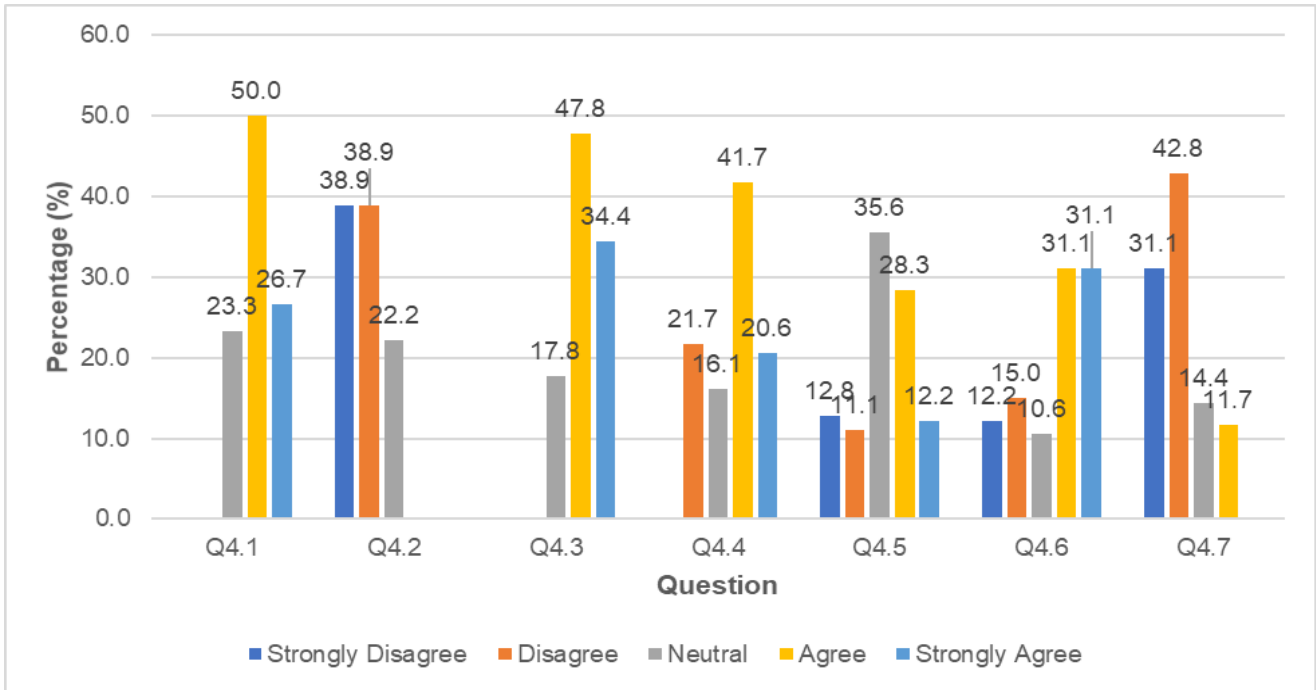


Figure 4.8 Social media and corporate reputation in organisation.

Social media has become a communication model for both internal and external stakeholders in maintaining their brand and promoting their products and services. There was a high level of disagreement (77.8%) to the statement “Organisations face challenges on social media”. Organisations do not face challenges on social media as they only engage on the relevant content and information that is in line with their brand. A higher level of disagreement of 73.9% to the statement “the organisation responds to every individual that asks something regarding the organisation”, indicates that the organisation does not respond to every question asked by social media users. Social media in corporate reputation is used to create and maintain the desired image and to build a positive corporate reputation for the organisation. The advantages of social media in the context of creating, building and maintaining corporate reputation online is that they can engage with their external stakeholders and target audience.

4.8. Hypothesis testing

The conventional method of reporting results requires a statement of statistical reference. A p-value is produced from a test statistic. A substantial outcome is specified with " $p < 0.05$ ". These values are identified with the asterisk symbol (*). A second Chi square test was carried out to identify if a substantial statistical relationship between the variables (rows vs columns) existed. The null hypothesis indicates that there is no association between the variables while acceptance of the alternate hypothesis points out that there is a relationship. Any value that does not have a symbol (*) (or p-values greater than 0.05) does not have a substantial relationship.

4.8.1. Chi square tests

The Chi square test of independence was performed to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the variables of research statements and the respondent's biographical data. The p-value between "Social media platforms are important for organisations" and "Race" was 0.001. This means that there is a significant relationship between these variables, i.e. the race of the respondent has a significant role in terms of how participants viewed social platforms as being important for organisations. Race status also showed significant relationships with the statements: "Social media platforms are important in the organisations", p-value 0.005, and "Social media is the best communication platform in the organisation", p-value 0.113. This means that the race status plays an important role on how social media can be the best communication tool for the organisation.

A significant relationship exists between educational level and the following statements: "Social media is the best communication platform for interacting with stakeholders", p-value 0.391 and "I monitor what social media users post on the social media platforms of the organisation", p-value 0.535. This means that the educational level plays a role in terms of social media as a tool to communicate with stakeholders, the content posted on these platforms as well as the professional people who monitor the content on these platforms.

There is a significant relationship with the following statements: “DUT communicates effectively and provides responses to social media users regarding the organisation”, p-value 0.081 and “It’s important for social media platforms of the organisation to be managed by professionals”, p-value 0.806. This means that departments in the institution play a role in terms of having professional people who monitor social media platforms at DUT and engaging with its target audience on online platforms.

Furthermore, age shows significant relationships with the following statements: “The organisation has a specific content that they post on their social media platforms” p-value 0.042, and “The organisation responds to every individual that ask something regarding the organisation asked by social media users”, p-value 0.844. This means that the social media content posted on the institution pages is aligned with their brand and image through the posting relevant information that will benefit the audience. This is also shows that the online platforms are maintained and they engage actively with their target audience.

All values without an asterisk (*) or p-values more than 0.05 do not have a significant relationship.

4.9. Correlations

Correlation is defined as a statistic tool which shows an arrangement or connection between variables in a way that their scores move together in a recognisable arrangement (Adams and Lawrence, 2015:225). The scores for both variables can either rise or drop together, or one variable may tend to rise while the other variable drops.

The correlation is positive when the value of two variables moves in the same direction so that there is an increase in the value of one variable that is followed by an increase in the value of the other variable. The negative values imply an inverse relationship between variables. That is, there is no relationship between variables and variables have an opposite effect on each other. Correlation is said to be negative when the values of the two variables

move in the opposite direction so that there is an increase in the value of one variable which is followed by a decrease in the value of the other variable.

Bivariate correlation was carried out on the (ordinal) data. The furthestmost commonly used bivariate correlation technique is the Spearman's correlation. Spearman's correlation measures the relationship that exists between two variables measured on at least an ordinal scale (Adams and Lawrence, 2015:225).

The results between variables indicated the following patterns: positive values indicate a directly proportional relationship between the variables and a negative value indicates an inverse and opposite relationship. All significant relationships are indicated by a symbol (* or **).

As a result, only those measures indicating a significant relationship (highlighted by an asterisk) will be discussed, as shown by the Spearman's correlation calculation.

The correlation value between "Social media is the best communication platform for interacting with stakeholders" and "A strong corporate reputation in the organisation benefits the organisation" is 0.237. This is directly related proportionality. Participants indicated that the stronger the corporate reputation, the easier it would be to interact with stakeholders, and vice versa.

There is a direct proportional relationship between the participants' perception of "the effectiveness of having social media in the organisation" and the statements that follow. A directly proportional relationship exists between "Social media is the best communication platform for interacting with stakeholders" ($r = 155, p = 0.037$), and "DUT communicates effectively and provides responses to social media users regarding the organisation" ($r = 195, p = 0.009$). This also indicates that it is important for organisations to have effective social media platforms. One of the objectives of the study was to interact and engage directly with their audience with information regarding the institution.

A directly related proportionality exists between the statements “Social media platforms have positive effect in the organisation” ($r = 155, p = 0.037$), and “The organisation has a specific content that they post on their social media platforms” ($r = 186, p = 0.012$), with “The organisation responds to every individual that asks something regarding the organisation asked by social media users” ($r = 271, p = 0.000$).

This indicates that the content on each social media platform does have a positive effect on the audience as it is reachable and an easy way of communicating. The negative values imply an inverse relationship. That is, the variables have an opposite effect on each other.

The correlation value between “It’s easy to maintain the reputation of the organisation on social media if it’s maintained by a professional” and “Social media is the best communication platform in the organisation” is -0.238 , i.e. the more a professional maintains control of the organisation’s social media, the less effective it will become.

4.10. Interview Data Analysis

The data were analysed through the application of thematic analysis. In developing a coding framework from the transcripts, grounded theory was engaged. The importance of grounded theory was premised on the fact that a systematic and rigorous process of data collection and data analysis was apparent. A coding context was tested on a sample of the transcript. A coding framework was equally revised and improved, as needed. Using the finalised framework, data were transliterated and coded. Coding reports were examined, and results were categorised thematically and presented for discussion.

Interview data analyses were analysed using thematic analysis which can be defined as a qualitative data analysis method that comprises reading through a data set and identifying patterns in meaning across the data (Braun and Clarke, 2016: 56). Thematic analysis acknowledges the researcher as active when recognising themes to report on. The section

below provides an analysis of the interview data, the themes, a quote to support the subtheme and an interpretation is presented last.

4.11. Biographical information of the participants

The results indicated that the participants of the study comprised of seventeen participants. The classification of the gender of participants was five (5) males and twelve (12) females. In terms of race eleven (11) were Africans, four (4) were Indian and one (1) Coloured and (0%) White, respectively. Within the age category most of the participants were as follows: for ages 18 - 19 years there none (0), six (6) were within the 20 - 29 years' age group, another eight (8) were within 30 - 39 years category and three (3) were within 40-49 years. Furthermore, 50 - 59 and 60 and above, were not available (0). All participants were interviewed in line with their views on the correlation between social media and corporate reputation.

The following section provides the interpretation of the data collected from the data set. Thematic content analysis is implemented to group information into themes. The conducted analysis presents data from the interviews. The researcher observed how the case study organisation (DUT) use their social media to create and maintain a corporate reputation on online platforms.

4.12. Emerging themes from the study

The results and data analysis making up the qualitative phase of this chapter was guided by the research objectives, which were as follows:

- To determine the extent that DUT uses social media platforms in managing its corporate reputation

- To suggest ways in which these social media platforms can be used to build a positive corporate reputation at DUT
- To identify which social media platforms are more effective in maintaining the corporate reputation of DUT

The findings of the study underpin each objective of the study and are presented in the form of themes. However, there are overall findings and results that revealed and suggested ways in which social media can be used to build a positive corporate reputation for a tertiary institution such as DUT. Furthermore, findings equally revealed insight on the types of social media that are more effective in building corporate reputation. Premised on this outcome, most of the participants provide insight on ways social media can be used to reinforce corporate reputation. This was apparent from the results found and the emerging themes from the thematic analysis. Some of the emerging themes are discussed below.

4.12.1. Theme One: Social media and corporate reputation

Responses in this category were premised on the theme correlated to the theme of social media and corporate reputation. In this regard findings revealed that social media has significant leverage on institutional reputation especially that of a tertiary institution.

Therefore, respondent one stated that, “If an organisation wants to engage with its market or target audience, it needs to be visible and active on platforms where that market/audience is investing their time and energy.” A response from respondent two stated, “yes, every organisation should have social media platforms because it makes it easy for them to engage with their internal or external stakeholders.” Furthermore, respondent three in terms of social media and corporate reputation, agreed that social media can improve corporate reputation, “Yes. It would establish the brand as a thought leader, it makes it easy for students or stakeholders to search for relevant information or topics related to the institution.”

Respondent four affirmed that social media is important in building a corporate reputation, “It helps to build the organisation’s corporate reputation and helps to maintain it online.”

Respondent five support the already established notion that social media is important in building the corporate reputation of tertiary institutions such as DUT by stating, “The organisation gets the benefit to humanise its brand and reputation. The ability to create a connection is also one of the benefits of social media for organisations.”

Respondent six also concurred that social media is important in corporate reputation building, “They can engage more and effectively with their stakeholders, social media allows the organisation to have a two-way conversation with its social media users and build an engagement model that will allow their stakeholders' customers to have a voice.” Equally, respondent seven affirmed the significance of social media and corporate reputation stating that, “Social media is an easy way and low commitment way for potential customers to express their interests in your products.”

Respondent eight also reinforced the same view stating, “They should have, because social media allows for immediate interaction and customer feedback. Businesses can also respond to their customers right away.”

Respondent nine stated that social media boosts corporate reputation, “They should have because they need to have meaningful engagement with their social media users. Loyal social media followers are more likely to interact with posts and create meaningful conversations. Real engagement is more valuable to your online image.” Respondent ten mentioned that, “Social media allows you to have two-way conversations with your customers and build an engagement model that allows your customers to have a voice.” Respondent eleven stated that, “Every organisation should have social media. Social media for organisations is possibly the most cost-efficient media platform.”

Respondent twelve asserts that:

Every organisation should have social media because it will help the organisation to grow the organisations' brands equity, also one of the benefits for social media in business is that you can use social media to constantly provide quality information free of charge and earn that trust gradually and genuinely (respondent twelve).

Respondent thirteen responded that, “Organisations should have social media because it allows organisations to connect with the audience through social listening.” Respondent fourteen also stated that, “Certainly, they [tertiary institutions] should have social media platforms. Because social media are cost-effective.”

Respondent fifteen offered an unclear response saying, “No, more especially in the higher education sector. Because there are strategies used to communicate with the target audience. In supporting the established on the importance of social media support corporate reputation.” Respondent sixteen asserted that, “Yes, they should have, so they can achieve all the communication strategies they have for the organisation.”

Respondent seventeen equally reinforced the view of the preceding participants by asserting the following:

Yes, I believe it the benefit of every organisation to be on any social media platform if not all, to inform and engage with their target audience. Social media creates transparency; it allows for two-way communication between the organisation, its stakeholders, and the public. Also, social media builds brand loyalty and create brand awareness (respondent seventeen).

Responses in this category were supported by Szwajca (2017:161) suggesting that social media platforms are an effective tool for communicating with various groups of stakeholders; therefore, effective in creating the desired image and building the reputation of an organisation.

4.12.2. Theme Two: Social media types

Social media are significant innovations, attracting and expanding corporate reputation (Defourny and Nyssens, 2018: 24). Furthermore, Hoyt (2016: 484) suggests that social media helps in building and governing organisational communication, collaboration, and knowledge management that help in building corporate reputation.

Respondent one offered insights on the different types of social media used at the DUT, mentioning that, “Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn are used regularly.” The other participants concurred with this statement, as they all referred to these social media platforms as being the ones most commonly used by DUT, to some degree.

4.12.3. Theme Three: Corporate reputation maintenance and social media

With the increasing popularity of social media, an organisation must take cautionary measures in protecting its reputation and brands. It is worth recognising that corporate reputation can be maintained by using social media constructively. Therefore, respondent one refers to the question posed regarding the maintenance of corporate reputation using social media by stating, “It (social media) does play a role in creating brand awareness, maintaining a corporate identity, managing brand and corporate identity and engaging with stakeholders.”

Recognising the role of social media in maintaining the reputation of Durban University of Technology, Respondent two stated that, “The Corporate Affairs Department is the only people who engage actively with social media users, this makes it easy for them to maintain their corporate reputation as they post only relevant content on their social media pages.” Participant three and four shared similar sentiments, by acknowledging the significance of social media in maintaining corporate reputation, whilst also being able to communicate with a specific target audience or niche.

In response to the question of whether social media could be an effective source of corporate reputation maintenance, respondent five asserted the following, “Yes. Because the institution only focuses on conversations that are about the institution.” Respondent six affirmed the effectiveness of social media in maintaining the corporate reputation of DUT, “Social media is simply another way to get your voice heard by a wider audience. It is an effective platform to build and maintain a corporate reputation.”

Respondent seven affirmed that because of social media there is communication flow with students at the university. This view was reinforced by inferring that this was as a result of

social media, “Students receive information about academic programmes and employees get job opportunities through social media platforms.” Respondent eight affirmed the notion of social media being effective in corporate reputation maintenance by saying, “Social media enables the institution to maintain its reputation online by identifying obstacles standing in the way of a good reputation and finding suitable solutions.”

In addition, respondent nine equally provided insight on the question by stating that, “Social media allows DUT to raise awareness, and more about engaging in the right way with the audience you already have.” Respondent ten stated, “Social media at DUT frequently shares relevant information about issues relating to the organisation.” In response to the question, respondent eleven reported that, “Social media at DUT only participate in communication with their audience only with relevant information.” Participant twelve, thirteen and fourteen shared the same sentiment as respondent eleven with regards to the audience and content that the DUT social media team engages with.

Participant fifteen and sixteen referred to how social media could be used to maintain the image and brand of an organisation such as DUT. Participant seventeen affirmed the question by saying, “DUT offers clear and comprehensive communication to its publics; participates in public events; it aligns with its mission, vision, and the institutions' core values. This organisation proves to be of great service to the community in being socially responsible”

The responses in this category were reflective of the views of Kaul and Desai (2018: 23) who stated that corporate communication aided by social media usage provided a logical, relevant, and useful guide to maintaining and managing an organisation’s corporate communication by keeping the objective of reputation management at its centre.

4.12.4. Theme Four: Facebook and Twitter and DUT’s corporate reputation

Responses in this category provided significant insight on Facebook and Twitter as significant corporate reputation builders. The importance of the engagement of such social media in corporate reputation was echoed by participant’s responses. The first respondent

stated, “The dissemination of factual news and information. The platform also allows DUT to interact with an audience/market/individual. We can respond to posts where required. We can promote positive news stories and make major public announcements.” Respondent two states that, “It (Facebook and Twitter) can be used by communicating effective news to its target or stakeholders and also engaging with their social media users on relevant questions asked regarding the institution.”

Respondent three offered insight on Facebook and Twitter and corporate reputation stating that, “Facebook and Twitter can be employed by enhancing the institution in ensuring that they stay relevant and credible.” Respondent four stated, “Facebook and Twitter enhance the institution by building brand awareness and credibility.”

Respondent five claimed, “Facebook and Twitter can be used to enhance the institution by communicating more with student’s questions on social media.” In addition, respondent six asserted the following in reply to the question, “Facebook and Twitter enhance the institution by giving the targeted audience a platform to get the right content at the right time.” Furthermore, respondent seven asserted that, “Facebook and Twitter can be used to communicate issues that happen at DUT so it can make it easy for students to know more about DUT engagement with them.”

Participant eight and nine reported that Facebook and Twitter can be used in promoting corporate reputation, through promoting the DUT brand itself and ensuring that all of its interactions are transparent. Participant ten, eleven and twelve were of the belief that DUT could be more active on their social media, especially with regard to interacting with users and answering questions. Participant thirteen, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen referred to the need for DUT to adequately identify their target audience on each social media platform, and thereafter communicate according to those particular target markets. Participant seventeen stated that, “DUT can use these social media channels to generate positive publicity, interact with students, attend to students' complaints and concerns, and communicate and make programmes they offer known to the public.”

In line with the outcomes in this category, Bollapragada (2016: 43) reports that Facebook and Twitter can be effectively utilised by a university and its stakeholders, hence enhancing the organisations corporate reputation, as in this instance with DUT.

4.12.5. Theme Five: Students or external stakeholders and DUT’s social media platforms

Institutions of higher education now rely on social media platforms since they are an efficient, easily accessible and an inexpensive method to address barriers such as a lack of engagement, awareness, and finances (Horhota *et al.* 2014: 343).

In line with the preceding assertion, the study proposed to question how DUT engages with the students or external stakeholders on the DUT social media platforms. Responses in this category revealed various engagement methods by DUT with students and stakeholders. Participant one stated that, “Our Communications Department manages our social media platforms at DUT and they engage daily.” Participant two, three, four and five all stated that the Corporate Affairs department was responsible for engaging with the DUT social media accounts. Participant six and seven reported on how Facebook and Twitter are used by DUT to post relevant content and information for students and other stakeholders.

The remaining participants, with the exception of respondent seventeen, also concurred that there are professionals from the Corporate Affairs Department who are responsible for maintaining the DUT social media accounts. Respondent seventeen gave a moderate non-affirmative response stating, “I communicate mostly via email and/or WhatsApp which are personal.”

In line with the outcomes in this category, Davids (2017: 23) asserts that continued engagement with students and stakeholders through social media helps in facilitating open communication, leading to enhanced information discovery and delivery.

4.12.6. Theme Six: Social media platforms and response

Results from the data analysis continuously provide insight and correlation between corporate reputation and social media. This category sought a correlation and response time from Social Media Platforms.

Therefore, in responding to the question of whether the social media team responds to every question or query, all participants gave a negative feedback that the queries on the organisations social media platforms are not being attended, then other participants who have relevant information about what is being asked they answer each other. Leonard (2018: 32) states that social media is becoming a platform for external stakeholders concerns, reviews and complaints. Hence, responding to external stakeholder issue shows a caring attitude for the stakeholders. More importantly, it is important to respond timeously on social media platforms and also it ensures stakeholders that matters are resolved before they escalate on the public platform.

4.12.7. Theme Seven: Corporate reputation management and social media

Traditionally, social media reputation management was firmly associated with posting strategic content, monitoring social media channels and appealing to stakeholders. In line with this identified theme and premised on the question of whether corporate reputation can be built and managed through social media, respondent one *suggests*:

Yes, it can improve our relationship with the public, with prospective students, with current students, with staff, with alumni and with other stakeholders. It affords us with an opportunity to improve and increase brand awareness and if we promote our academics, researchers, staff and students, we can become famous for our excellence and expertise in various fields. These interventions will lead to a sustainable university that attracts students and staff to join the DUT family (Respondent one).

Respondent two asserted that, “Yes, because the institution or organisation would only reply to what was relevant to them, in that way making it easier for them to maintain and keep the

protocol of the organisation/institution.” Participant three, four, five and six concurred with respondent five, stating that DUT only posts and responds to information that is directly about the institution. Respondent seven stated, “By often providing necessary information to the public as well as responding to queries of students online.”

In addition, respondent eight mentioned the following, “No, because most organisations do not rely on social media in building their corporate reputation via the use of social media.” Participant nine, ten and eleven shared the same sentiment, stating that DUT does not use their social media daily, and therefore may not rely on it heavily to increase their corporate reputation. Participants twelve and thirteen agree that organisations can use social media to aid their corporate reputations, depending on the nature of the organisation. In response to the question, participant fourteen, fifteen and sixteen agree that social media can be used to maintain an organisations reputation, as they believe social media forms a large part of our world. They also state that social media has become the main access point for information and content whilst respondent seventeen stated, “Yes, the organisation can assign the role of social media management, to a professional who will be able to be creative and authentic to present the organisation in the best light by posting constantly; monitor the page’s activity; frequently respond professionally to comments.”

Responses in this category can be viewed through that lens of Njuka and Phiri (2021: 66) asserting that social media is proving to be a cost-effective reputation management tool for organisations. Social media also gives an instantaneous interaction and feedback between the organisation and its stakeholders.

4.12.8. Theme Eight: Social media platforms influence and corporate reputation

As demonstrated in many case studies, a corporate reputation can be tarnished in a matter of minutes, thanks to community nature and the rapid speed of information propagation on social media. With this comes added prospects and questions for the organisation, and the biggest of both is a corporate reputation which can be positively influenced by social media.

Premised on the preceding assertion Participant in this category were requested to offer insights on whether social media can influence corporate reputation. In this regard, respondent one stated and affirmed that social media platforms can influence corporate reputation, "They do influence because our staff, students and stakeholders are active on social media platforms." Participant two concurred with the first respondent and stated, "They influence because there is relevant information regarding the institution that is being communicated to students, staff via social media." In addition, respondent three mentioned that, "They [social media] influence because socials improve customer satisfaction. An organisation needs to make a good impression by sharing informative information that will help students or stakeholders." Respondent four stated and acknowledged that social media can influence corporate reputation and asserted that, "They [social media] influence because DUT gets to understand certain information that they always ask about and when and how they should interact with their audience."

Respondent five equally affirmed the view of respondent four in offering insight into the influence of social media on corporate reputation saying, "By being proactive and only produce content about the institution, which may have an influence on DUT's corporate reputation. Relevant content is a great way to show off your institutions' creative side and give the public perception of the institution and its brand." Respondent six asserted that, "It [social media] may not have a positive influence because they do not reply to all the questions asked by social media users." Hence an overall mixed response on the theme was observed. However, respondent seven agreed that social media can influence corporate reputation and stated that, "Negative comments posted by the public may tarnish the name of the institution." Respondent eight stated that, "With the negative comments that the institution can get, there is responsible in replying to that, to keep a good reputation for the institution."

In addition, respondent nine offered a non-confirming response to the question saying, "Social media may not influence because they do not reply to every query that is being asked online, they choose which queries they would reply on." Respondent ten stated that, "It

[social media] may influence because it makes it easy for the organisation to engage with their target audience.” Respondent eleven asserted that, “Social media may influence because it enables the organisation to know what their audience needs.” Respondent twelve stated, “Social media may have not had an influence that much because they do not rely much on social media for their corporate reputation.” Furthermore, respondent thirteen stated that, “It [social media] may influence DUT because it is the best way of communication.” Respondent fourteen asserted that social media may influence DUT because, “most of their informative content is posted there” and respondent fifteen stated, “social media may have a negative influence only if the image of the institution is tarnished and no replies to defend it.”

Respondent sixteen stated that, “DUT social media platforms are maintained by professionals, so social media won’t have a negative influence on the institution”. Respondent seventeen offered insight on whether social media platforms may or may not influence corporate reputation stating that, “If DUT’s target market, that is stakeholders, students and prospective students are not active online users, it changes nothing on DUT’s corporate reputation because all the post and activities on their platforms would not have reached the persons intended for. But if their target markets are active online users, then it will directly influence their reputation.” Findings from this category are correlated to the findings of the BBC’s 2018 study revealing that social media is the most immediate threat to an organisation’s reputation and if social media not taken seriously, it can and will directly impact a company financially and culturally.

4.12.9. Theme Nine: The role of social media platforms and corporate reputation.

Premised on the usage of social media to engage and inform organisational stakeholders, it can be deduced that social media can significantly improve corporate reputation. Hence a question was asked on whether DUT as a tertiary institution is reliant on social media for corporate reputation. Respondent one stated “Social media plays a role in managing our corporate reputation. We still rely on our staff and students to maintain our corporate image and reputation. Platforms change, people are constant.” Respondent two inferred the

following statement, “Yes, social media plays a huge role in the institution because it shows professionalism.” Respondent three responded with a “No.” Whilst respondent four recognised the fact that DUT is reliant on social media for corporate reputation improvement stating that, “Yes, because they get to understand their target audience.”

The fifth respondent responded, “Yes because they get to understand their audience and by that, it will help them improve where they were lacking.” Respondent six asserted this sentiment, while respondent seven responded in the negative. The eighth participant stated, “Yes. Social media plays a very big role in the institution because of the content that is posted and how the institution engages with the public, which can be a key to maintaining corporate reputation on social media.” The remaining participants all replied in the negative, stating that the organisation was independent of its social media and could still manage or affect their reputation in other ways.

In line with the outcome, it is significant for DUT to engage and rely on social media for the enhancement of their corporate reputation. As averred by Sz wajca (2017: 44), social media, when effectively applied to engage and inform the target audience (social media), can significantly improve corporate reputation.

4.13. Conclusion

This chapter analysed and interpreted the research findings and responses of participants at DUT. The descriptive statistics were presented to indicate the importance of social media in the organisation, the effectiveness of social media and social media corporate reputation in the institution by the participant. Furthermore, insight on how to use social media to enhance the corporate reputation of DUT was included. The chapter concludes with information on informed recommendations on how to effectively use social media to manage and enhance corporate reputation based on the research results and their clarification.

The study also conducted analyses like factor analysis, chi-square tests of independence, Pearson's correlation and t-tests on gathered data which showed substantial relationships between demographic variables like age, race, educational level, and different statements of the research.

Conclusions and recommendations for further study on the influence of social media on the corporate reputation of DUT are discussed in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the findings of this study, and this chapter will provide conclusions to the findings with respect to the study objectives. Further recommendations to assess the influence of social media on corporate reputation are provided. The limitations of this study are noted and areas that need further research are also suggested.

5.2. Summary of the theoretical study

The aim of this research was to assess the influence of social media on DUT's corporate reputation, and to investigate students' experiences and expectations of DUT's use of social media platforms. The target population was students and staff members from DUT. The research design and chapter outline were established based on the research problem.

Chapter Two reviewed the relevant literature about social media and corporate reputation. The literature discussed social media, the importance of social media in organisations, corporate reputation within South African Universities, the influence of social media on corporate reputation, DUT's corporate reputation and social media usage, maintaining corporate reputation using social media and other subtopics related to social media and corporate reputation.

It was noted that some organisations may have social media but do not utilise it regularly. Hence the researcher sought to investigate the influence of social media on corporate reputation in order assist organisations to engage actively with their audiences and improve the communication and to maintain their corporate reputation.

5.3. Summary of the empirical study

An outline of the research methodology was presented in chapter three, while chapter four presented the analyses and interpretation and discussed the findings of this study.

This study was a mixed methods research study and data was drawn from 180 questionnaires and 17 interview questions which made a total of 197 participants. From the findings, it was established that there are important strategies that organisations need in order to use and maintain their social media platforms for their corporate reputation online. The arguments supporting the conclusions of this study were done using descriptive and inferential statistics.

5.4 Achievement of the objectives of the study

The aim of the study was to assess the influence of social media on corporate reputation at DUT. The study aimed to assess the influence of social media at DUT on how the organisation manages, builds and maintaining a positive corporate reputation on social media platforms. The study focused on indicating and understanding the importance of social media and how organisations use social media in communicating with their internal and external stakeholders.

5.4.1 *Objective one was to determine the extent to which DUT uses social media platforms to manage their corporate reputation;* Chapter two has explored existing literature and discussed relevant information that gave a considerable insight into which extent does the DUT as an organisation uses their social media platforms to manage their corporate reputation. Knowing the social media platforms to use to communicate with your internal and external stakeholders, tracking and measuring the communication progress online, setting goals of the use of social media as an organisation and creating relevant content that is

communicated with the target audience, were discussed. As a result, the first objective has been accomplished.

5.4.2 *Objective two was to assess ways in which social media can be used to build a positive corporate reputation at DUT;* The results from collected data discussed in chapter four reveal which social media can be used to build a positive corporate reputation at DUT. Social media in corporate reputation is used to create and maintain the desired image and to build a positive corporate reputation for the organisation. The advantages of social media in the context of creating, building and maintaining corporate reputation online is that they can engage with their external stakeholders and target audience. Therefore this objective has been reached.

5.4.3 *Objective three was to identify which social media platforms are more effective in maintaining the corporate reputation of DUT.* The results from collected data discussed in chapter four reveal that social media is a great tool for addressing questions and concerns with the audience. Channels like Facebook and Twitter can be leveraged to communicate with people and engage in conversations which aim to see what audiences have on their minds or what their needs are. The usage of social media in an organisation encourages organisations to change their organisational communication and be more effective and active when responding to their targeted market in order to be more effective in maintaining the corporate reputation of the organisation. It is concluded that this objective has been realised.

5.4. Conclusions

The conclusions resulting from the findings are:

- The influence of social media on the corporate reputation of DUT is important as it makes it easy for the target audience to receive the relevant information concerning the institution. Higher institutions do not frequently use, or are failing to make use of,

social media to engage actively with their audiences to maintain a positive corporate reputation online.

- Corporate organisations need to invest in using the relevant social media platforms to create, build, maintain and convey the intended message to their target audience. Having social media platforms and managing online reputation has become a benefit for most organisations as it is easy to use and requires no cost to engage and communicate with the targeted audience.
- The effectiveness of using social media in organisations to maintain and build a positive corporate reputation has prompted the conclusion that social media is one of the most effective tools in engaging with the organisation's target audience.

5.5. Recommendations

5.5.1. Importance of social media in organisations (higher education institutions)

Social media plays an important role in every organisation. It is easy and convenient to access information, provide information and communicate information via social media. Organisations can easily connect with other external stakeholders and can make good use of these platforms for collaborations in achieving their targeted goal. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are the most used by almost everyone. Social media is about networking, collaborating, sharing information, and generating knowledge and content, and all of these features are of great value in the context of organisations.

5.5.2. Effectiveness of social media as a communication tool in organisations

Social media is a great tool for addressing questions and concerns with the audience. Channels like Facebook and Twitter can be leveraged to communicate with people and engage in conversations which aim to see what audiences have on their minds or what their needs are. Conversation threads can be started by asking a question or requesting the audience ask questions. Organisations should have effective social media platforms in their

organisations. The effective use of social media by an organisation involves posting content that is relevant to their organisation, and interacting with their audience on the relevant content that is aligning with their organisation's brand (Munyoro and Magada 2016: 7).

5.5.3. The use of social media for organisations

Social media is a unique place to attract audiences because the content is shareable. Organisations and their targeted audiences can interact in a no-pressure environment, and organisations can showcase the best parts that they have to offer. Young people make use of social media platforms for more than just communicating, they use it to find information and get a feel for brands and products online. Therefore, with that in mind, there are numerous reasons why organisations would want to eagerly embrace the usage of social media, namely brand awareness, recruitment and creating community. What remains important for organisations using social media marketing is having short response times and engaging actively with social media users. Social media for an organisation, if run well, is by far the most efficient point of contact for targeted audience wanting quick responses for general questions.

5.5.4. Engaging with the targeted audience

Engaging strongly on social media is the greatest way to attain an intense and diverse following from different social environments. Social media can successfully be utilised to engage and interact with actual and potential customers, for creating important and meaningful relationships with the audience. By engaging in social media discussions and responding actively to the conversation in a courteous manner, the organisation will achieve a positively built brand reverence, a positive corporate reputation and reliability.

5.5.5. Social media management

The key to choosing the right person to manage social media platforms for the organisation is all about knowing the aim of using social media; knowing what social media platforms the target audience is already on; and choosing a platform that matches the organisation and

the content it creates and wants to engage in. Organisations have to know that it is important to engage actively with their internal and external stakeholders and thus use different social media networks to promote themselves.

5.6. Recommendations for further research

The study assessed the influence of social media on corporate reputation at DUT, but was unable to examine the influence of specifically used social media platforms by the institution in maintaining a positive corporate reputation and engaging actively with their stakeholders on online platforms.

The influence of different social media platforms will give a better understanding of which platforms are more effectively and actively used by students and other external stakeholders, and assist in maintaining a positive corporate reputation. Ridica, Razvan and Daniel (2014: 1288) contend that certain social media platforms cannot accommodate the personal needs of individuals and as well as the needs of organisations.

Further research should be targeted towards the influence of social media on how to manage and build a strong corporate reputation for an organisation and engage actively with the audience. The higher education sector needs to understand their target audience on social media platforms.

5.7. Conclusion

The empirical findings of this study have shown that social media has a positive influence on organisations. From the review of the literature provided, it can be concluded that social media enables organisations to communicate actively and consistently with the audience in these platforms, with a good understanding of audience expectations. Social media can either build or tarnish the organisation's image if not managed properly. Organisations must integrate and adopt social media platforms to engage with their audience, internal and external stakeholders as social media is highly accessible. Ultimately, it can be said that social media is an affordable, effective and innovative way for an organisation to build its reputation, communicate with stakeholders, and share and receive information.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire

SECTION A

TITLE: The influence of social media on corporate reputation: a case study of the Durban University of Technology (DUT)

Please tick where appropriate

1. Demographic data

| | | | |
|-----|--------|------|--------|
| 1.1 | Gender | Male | Female |
|-----|--------|------|--------|

| | | | | | |
|-----|------|---------|--------|----------|-------|
| 1.2 | Race | African | Indian | Coloured | White |
|-----|------|---------|--------|----------|-------|

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|
| 1.3 | Age group | 18 -19 | 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60 and above |
|-----|-----------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|

| | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1.4 | Educational level | Less than Certificate | National Certificate | National Diploma | Bachelor's degree | Post Graduate |
| | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|------------|------------------------|------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 1.5 | Department | Corporate affairs unit | Public Relations | Marketing and Retail | Journalism | Visual Communication design |
| | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1.6 | How long are you employed at DUT? | 1- 9 years | 10-20 years | 21-30 years | 31-40 years | 41-50 years | More than 50 years |
| | | | | | | | |

| | | | | |
|-----|---|-----------|-----------|-------------------|
| 1.7 | How long have you been studying at DUT? | 1-2 years | 3-4 years | More than 5 years |
| | | | | |

2. Value of social media in an organisation

2.1 Are you active on computer-generated communities? Yes/No

2.2 Which social media platforms are you active on? Choose one.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|--|---------|--|---------|--|-----------|--|------------------------------|--|
| Facebook | | Twitter | | YouTube | | Instagram | | Other Social media platforms | |
|----------|--|---------|--|---------|--|-----------|--|------------------------------|--|

Please specify your view on the following statements

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|
| SD – Strongly Disagree | D- Disagree | N – Neutral | A – Agree | SA – Strongly Agree |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|

| No | Test Item | SD | D | N | A | SA |
|-----|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| 2.3 | Social media platforms are important for organisations. | | | | | |
| 2.4 | Social media is the best communication platform in the organisation. | | | | | |
| 2.5 | Every organisation must have active social media platforms. | | | | | |

3. Effectiveness of social media

| No | Please tick the most appropriate | SD | D | N | A | SA |
|-----|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| 3.1 | Social media is the best communication platform for interacting with stakeholders. | | | | | |
| 3.2 | I monitor what social media users post on the social media platforms of the organisation. | | | | | |
| 3.3 | Dut communicate effectively and provides responses to social media users regarding the organisation. | | | | | |

4. Social media and corporate reputation in organisations

| No | Please tick the appropriate | SD | D | N | A | SA |
|-----|--|----|---|---|---|----|
| 4.1 | It's important for social media platforms of the organisation to be managed by professionals. | | | | | |
| 4.2 | Organisations face challenges on social media. | | | | | |
| 4.3 | It's easy to maintain the reputation of the organisation on social media if its maintained by a professional. | | | | | |
| 4.4 | A strong corporate reputation in the organisation benefits the organisation. | | | | | |
| 4.5 | Social media platforms have positive effect in the organisation. | | | | | |
| 4.6 | The organisation has a specific content that they post on their social media platforms. | | | | | |
| 4.7 | The organisation responds to every individual that ask something regarding the organisation asked by social media users. | | | | | |

TITLE: The influence of social media on corporate reputation: a case study of the Durban University of Technology (DUT)

**Questions
Section B**

5. Demographic data

| | | | |
|-----|---------------|------|--------|
| 1.1 | Gender | Male | Female |
|-----|---------------|------|--------|

| | | | | | |
|-----|-------------|---------|--------|----------|-------|
| 1.2 | Race | African | Indian | Coloured | White |
|-----|-------------|---------|--------|----------|-------|

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|
| 1.3 | Age group | 18 -19 | 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60 and above |
|-----|------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------------|

| | | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| 1.4 | Educational level | Less than Certificate | National Certificate | National Diploma | Bachelor's degree | Post Graduate |
| | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|------------------------|------------------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| 1.5 | Department | Corporate affairs unit | Public Relations | Marketing and Retail | Journalism | Visual Communication design |
| | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 1.6 | How long are you employed at DUT? | 10-20 years | 21-30 years | 31-40 years | 41-50 years | More than 50 years |
| | | | | | | |

Section B

2 Social Media in Corporate reputation

2.1 Do you think every organisation should have any social media platforms? Explain how will it benefit the organisation?

2.2 What social media platforms are currently being used at DUT to engage with students?

2.3 Do you think these (used) social media platforms are effective in maintaining the corporate reputation of DUT? Yes/ No. And explain how.

2.4 In what manner can Facebook and Twitter be used in enhancing DUT's corporate reputation?

2.5 How often do you engage with the students or external stakeholders on the DUT's social media platforms?

2.6 Does the organisation reply to every query asked on their social media platforms?
Yes/ No.

2.7 Do you think corporate reputation can be build and managed through social media? Explain how

2.8 Please explain why social media platforms may or may not have an influence on DUT's corporate reputation?

2.9 Does DUT rely on social media platforms in maintaining its corporate reputation? If yes please explain.

Appendix B: Consent Letter



Faculty of Management Sciences

Department of Public Relations Management

Date August 2020

Dear Participant

I am a currently registered student with the Faculty of Management Sciences at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in Durban South Africa. As part of my studies and to qualify for the award of a Masters in Management Sciences degree, I have to complete a dissertation. I am therefore conducting a study titled, The influence of social media on corporate reputation: A case study of Durban University of Technology.

I have to distribute questionnaires to assess the influence of social media on corporate reputation at DUT so I kindly request you to take part and contribute to this study by completing this questionnaire which will not take more than 20 minutes of your valued time. All the data collected in this study will exclusively be used for the purposes of this research and confidentiality is guaranteed.

Should you not understand any question in this questionnaire, please do not hesitate to ask me. My supervisor can also be contacted on 031 373 5277 should you need to make any further enquiry. All your effort to participate in this study is exceedingly valued.

Yours truly

Lerato R Maboee.



CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Lerato Maboee, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

| | | | |
|--------------------------|------|------|-----------|
| | | | |
| Full Name of Participant | Date | Time | Signature |

I, Lerato Relebohile Maboee herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

| | | |
|--------------------------|------|-----------|
| | | |
| Lerato Relebohile Maboee | Date | Signature |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|-----------|
| | | |
| Full Name of Witness (If applicable) | Date | Signature |

| | | |
|---|------|-----------|
| | | |
| Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable) | Date | Signature |

Appendix C: Gatekeeper permission letter



*Directorate for Research and Postgraduate Support
Durban University of Technology
Tromso Annexe, Steve Biko Campus
P.O. Box 1334, Durban 4000
Tel.: 031-3732576/7
Fax: 031-3732946*

22nd December 2020
Ms Lerato R Maboee
c/o Department of Public Relations Management
Faculty of Management Sciences
Durban University of Technology

Dear Ms Maboee

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THE DUT

Your email correspondence in respect of the above refers. I am pleased to inform you that the Institutional Research and Innovation Committee (IRIC) has granted **Full Permission** for you to conduct your research "The influence of social media on corporate reputation: A case study of the Durban University of Technology (DUT)" at the Durban University of Technology.

The DUT may impose any other condition it deems appropriate in the circumstances having regard to nature and extent of access to and use of information requested.

We would be grateful if a summary of your key research findings would be submitted to the IRIC on completion of your studies.

Kindest regards.
Yours sincerely



DR LINDA ZIKHONA LINGANISO
DIRECTOR: RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE SUPPORT DIRECTORATE

Appendix D: Ethical Clearance



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375
Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za
http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

28 April 2021

Miss L R Maboe
Flat 902 House
354 West Street
Durban
4001

Dear Miss Maboe

The influence of social media on corporate reputation: a case study of the Durban University of Technology (DUT)
Ethical Clearance number IREC 116/20

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your final data collection tool for review.

We are pleased to inform you that the data collection tool has been approved. Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely,

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: IREC