


The influence of social media use on corporate reputation at a higher education institution



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ABSTRACT

The use of social media in organisations can assist in the creation and maintenance of a good brand, reputation and image largely due to the potential of developing interactive relationships with various stakeholders. This not only aids in building stakeholder relationships, but also in increasing an organisation's visibility. The aim of this research was to assess how a higher education institution, specifically the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in South Africa, uses social media platforms to build and maintain a positive corporate reputation. Additionally, the research examined how the institution actively engages with their target audience on social media platforms. A quantitative methodology was adopted with a sample population of 180 students from the DUT. Data was collected through the distribution of questionnaires to students and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0. 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. The research recommends that organisations prioritise investing in social media platforms and communicate effectively and actively with their audiences online.

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Introduction

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, p.3). Two stereotypical factors have a significant influence on corporate reputation, namely the organisation's market sector and country of origin (Davies, 2015, p.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, p. 2). Organisations closely guard their corporate reputation in order to avoid reputational risk (Schultz and Werner, 2003, p.3); to remain financially viable (Wang 2013, p. 2); and to create a positive identity (Adeosun, 2013, p.4).

Vollenbroek, Vries and Constantinides (2015, p.40) also suggest that when corporate reputation is not well managed, the reputation of the organisation may be tarnished. It can be argued then 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, p.5). Corporates invest heavily in maintaining a positive reputation for their organisations (Li and Bernoff, 2015, p.56). This is considered highly important as a positive reputation result in a good organisational image, brand and sustainability (Utz et al., 2013, p.40). Rindova et al. (2014, p.610) state that corporate reputation can be easily tarnished if not properly

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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 (now X), have often been used by organisations to manage and improve their corporate reputation (Li and Bernoff, 2015, p.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, p.115), such negative comments could adversely influence the organisation's corporate reputation. 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, p.606).

Johannes (2013, p.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 specifically on how one higher education institution, the Durban University of Technology (DUT), uses social media platforms to build and maintain a positive corporate reputation. Szamrowski and Pawlewicz (2015, p.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.

Literature Review

Social Media in Organisations

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, p. 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, p.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 (now X), 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, p.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.

Social media is considered by organisations, both public and private, as a strategic tool for competitive advantage. 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 and Arora, 2014, p.115). Many organisations also use social media as a strategic tool for their communication purposes and marketing as well as for sharing newsworthy information and knowledge to their target audiences and their stakeholders (Dreher 2014: 345).

Masekoameng (2018, p.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, p.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 and Arora, 2014, p.16). It is only after considering these factors that the organisation opens a social media 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, p.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 also shape the reputation of organisations by displaying good character to other social media users (Dreher, 2014, p.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, p.345).

Benefits of Using social media in an Organisation

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. Edosomwan et al. (2011, p.87) 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 (Carraher et al. 2017, p.45). The usage of social media platforms in organisations has become one of the easiest ways in improving productivity.

Clow (2014, p.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. Harris (2014) 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 (Harris, 2014, p.1).

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, p.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.

Feldman et al. (2013, p.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, p.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. 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. Corporate reputation is viewed as the perceptual representation of the organisation's past actions and its prospects. Corporate reputation is an immediate impression held of an organisation (Johannes, 2013, p. 3).

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. Although corporate reputation is an intangible concept, Moonsamy (2016, p.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, p.27) states that corporate reputation in the organisation is important for:

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

Corporate Reputation at a University

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, p.5) and the education sector has adopted marketing concepts to adapt to this situation (Costa et al, 2018, p.117). According to Iddrisu and Akolaa (2017, p.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, p.74).

Williams and Omar (2013, p.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, p.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.

Online Reputation Management (ORM)

Managing the online reputation of an 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, p.66). Online reputation management (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, p.20) states that online reputation management is about maintaining and building a strong and positive reputation, image or brand for an organisation.

Jones (2016, p.33) reports that online reputation is the managed reputation which involves the corporate reputation created on online social media platforms. Weber (2018, p.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 and Rensburg (2018, p.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.

According to Dijkmans et al. (2015, p.59), online reputation management involves interacting with the targeted audience on online platforms, monitoring the positive and negative content online, creating shareable content. Online reputation management (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, p.33). Floreddu et al. (2014, p.8) argue that "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".

Pollack (2015, p.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. 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. The aim of ORM in organisations is to actively prevent any negativity that could tarnish the image of an organisation online (Sasko 2014, p.9). In addition, Heever and Rensburg (2018, p.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, p.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, p.60) adds that online reputation management is communicating with the audience, monitoring and rectifying negative comments on the organisation's platforms. Portmann (2015, p.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: (i) there is a constant increase on the social media

usage and the perception of the advantages of social media in the decision-making process; (ii) a high degree of secondary transparency and perceptions of social media as a sort of business activities; and (iii) the need for the organisation not to lose their brand online.

Research and Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative research design was used to assess how a higher education institution, specifically the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in South Africa, uses social media platforms to build and maintain a positive corporate reputation. Quantitative research refers to a form of research design which seeks quantifiable and structured responses to a questionnaire (Trochim, 2012, p.211). In addition, quantitative research is distinguished by the deductive approaches to the research process aimed at lending reliability and credibility to existing theories (Flick, 2018, p.122). This research was divided into two phases: the pre-testing phase of the instrument on a smaller scale and the final data collection with a larger sample (n=180).

Sample and Data Collection

Purposive sampling was used to select participants which allowed for more insight into the influence of social media on corporate reputation at the DUT. A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed to students at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) and all questionnaires were returned to the researcher, which gave a 100% response rate. The research instrument was made up of 22 items, with the level of measurement at a nominal or an ordinal level. The structured closed-ended questionnaire consisted of 30 questions using a 5-point Likert scale. Using a Likert scale method for quantitative data allows for the ease of determining results, conclusions, graphs, and reports from the responses provided by the participants.

Data Analysis

Data collected was analysed using SPSS version 25.0. The results were presented as descriptive statistics in the form of cross-tabulations, graphs and other relevant figures for the quantitative data. Inferential techniques included the use of correlations and chi-square test values, which were 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 " $p < 0.05$ ". To ensure the reliability and validity of the research, a pilot study was conducted.

Findings and Discussions

Value of social media in an Organisation

Mollet et al. (2017, p.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. Students indicated in Figure 1 the various social media platforms that is most commonly used by DUT to engage with them.

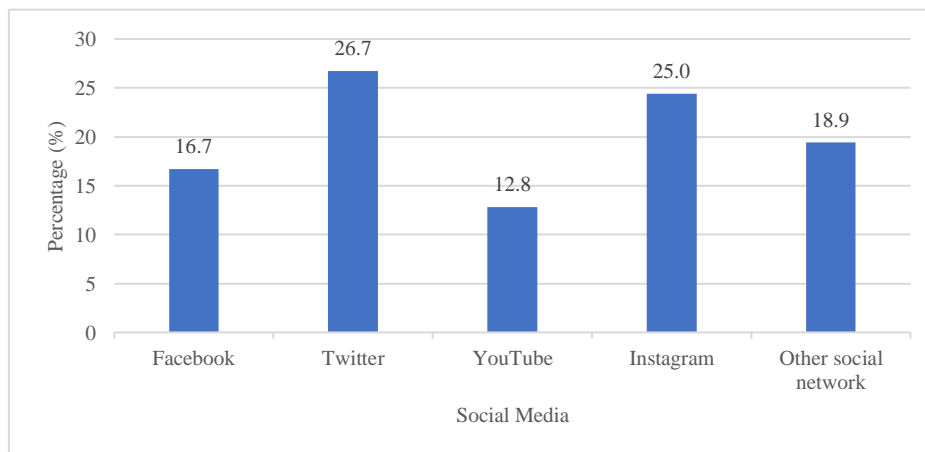


Figure 1: Social Media Platforms Actively used at DUT; *Source:* Authors

Figure 1 highlights Twitter (now X) as being the most 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 participants. This indicates that Instagram and Twitter (now X) are the most influential social media platforms by the participants at the DUT. It is important for any organisation to identify and then use the most appropriate platforms to connect and communicate with stakeholders. 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. Barker et al. (2014, p.184) states that 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 1: 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

Source: Authors

The following patterns were observed in Figure 2 and Table 1: there is a significantly higher level of agreement (Agree+ Strongly Agree), 70.0% agree and 15.0% strongly agree 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 ($p < 0.001$).

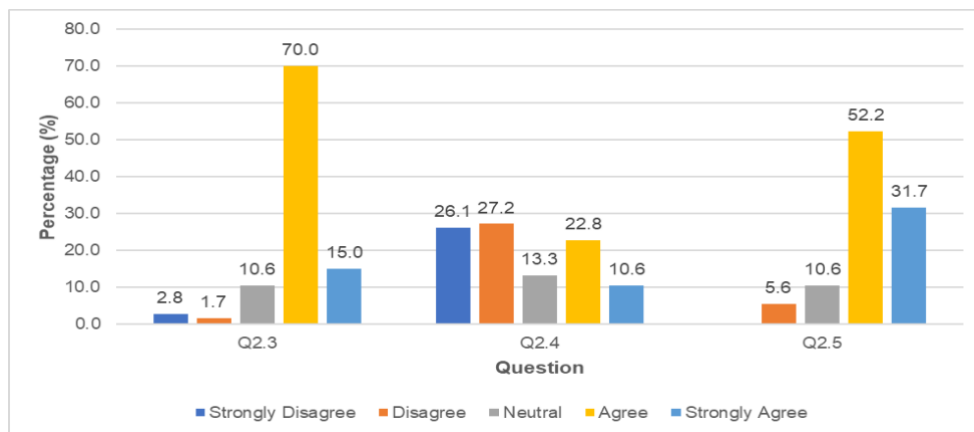


Figure 2: The Value and Importance of social media in Organisations; *Source:* Authors

The significance of organisations having social media is tested and shown in Table 1. 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. This resonates with Siapera and Veikou (2013, p.255) who affirm the importance of social media in the organisation including the sharing of ideas, building relationships with respective stakeholders as well as increasing the organisations visibility.

Effectiveness of Social Media

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.

Table 2: 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

Source: Authors

Table 2 details the scoring pattern of the results attained from participants. It 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”.

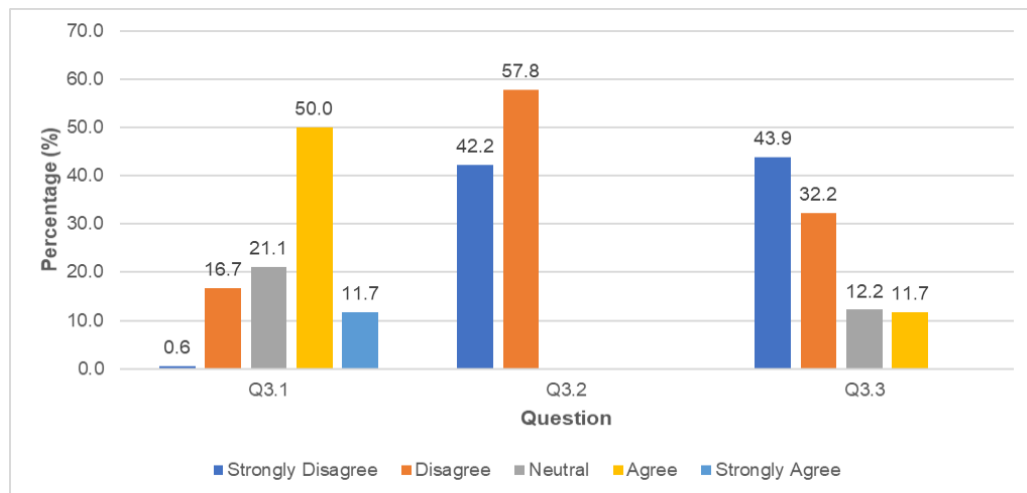


Figure 3: Effectiveness of social media; *Source:* Authors

The results in Figure 3 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. Munyoro and Magada (2016, p.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 et al. (2016, p.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.

Social Media and Corporate Reputation in an Organisation

Table 3 and Figure 4 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 3: 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

Source: Authors

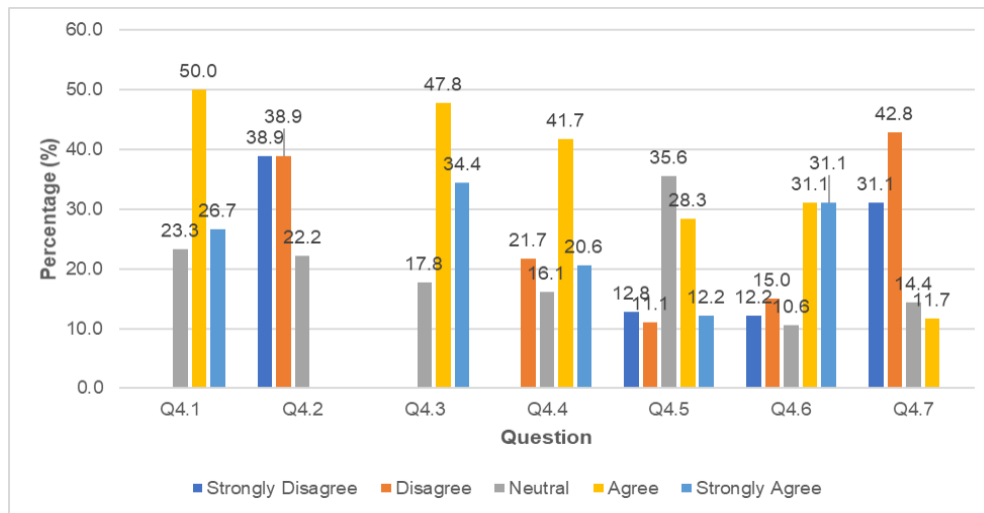


Figure 4: Social Media and Corporate Reputation in an Organisation; *Source:* Authors

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”. This could be due to a belief that 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.

Conclusions

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. HEI’s 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 minimal 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.

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