EXPLORATION OF FACEBOOK AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING MARKETING SERVICES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

by

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DISSERTATION

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DECLARATION

I declare that **"EXPLORATION OF FACEBOOK AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING MARKETING SERVICES AT UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO"** hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for Master of Arts in Media Studies, and has not been submitted at this or any other institution. I further declare that is my own work in design and accomplishment and all the sources, ideas, thoughts of others used or quoted have been clearly indicated and fully acknowledged through complete reference.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my family for every effort they have put in place, both spiritually and monetarily, to help me realise my potential. May the Almighty God bless you, for the encouragement and support you have given me. I also dedicate this project to my supervisor, his colleagues and all those that supported me with the research. I could not have done it without you.

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ABSTRACT

Social networking became a common international trend which has spreads and reached almost every corner of the world. The use of social media platform has developed and exploded into an online platform where individuals can generate content, share it, bookmark it and network at an enormous rate. Amongst the users of social media, students and youth are the main users of social media sites. The research explored Facebook as a tool for improving marketing services at University of Limpopo. Institution of higher learning utilise Facebook for various reasons such getting more followers, maintain existing relationship between the university and its audience and also to communicate with the university audience. Social media can have a great impact on the university and its audience depending on the usage as a two-way communication platform.

The main objectives of the study are to identify the manner in which institutions of higher learning use Facebook for marking purposes; examine the performance of Facebook for marketing; and establish the challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as a marking tool. The study employed Nick Couldry's practice theory and Marketing communication mix theory which are highlighting the relationship between the media, people and organisations. The study also analysed other literature that supports the aim and objectives of the study.

A qualitative method was used in the study and results obtained through the use of online observation and semi-structured interview. Content and thematic analysis was applied to analyse the data collected. The population used as a sample were marketing and communication department employees at the University of Limpopo who are working with the university social media pages. With online observation of the University of Limpopo's Facebook page the findings show that the university's social media portray specifically Facebook as a one-way communication which they convey messages on the platform without taking into consideration the comments, criticism and queries of the students or audience at large. The empirical findings of the study indicate that Facebook is the most used social media platform at the University of Limpopo. Moreover, participants have highlighted that the purpose of all social media platforms are used to market the institution and as platforms to convey messages to their followers, staff members and university community.

The findings expose the various opportunities and challenges in using social media. However, it is proved that the opportunities outweigh the threats. Some institutions of higher learning use more than one social media platform. However, Facebook was proven to be the most widely used social media followed by YouTube, Twitter and Instagram.

Keywords: *Facebook, Marketing, Institutions, University of Limpopo, Organisation, Social media, Audience.*

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

E-MAIL – Electronic Mail

HEI - Higher Education Institution

INTERNET – Integrated Network

MySQL - Structured Query Language

SNS - Social Networking Sites

TREC - Research Ethics Committee

USA - United State of America

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Social media has changed and influences the way organisations communicate their products and services to the target audience due to the growth of marketing and dynamic society. The change has influenced how communication is carried out in various countries across the world. It goes without saying that it is imperative to understand how social media works in fast moving world and to learn its utopians and dystopian. Abeza and O'Reilly (2014), explains that social media play a crucial role in the society, as various social media platforms allow users to connect with each other, however, also producing and sharing contents and excerpts that are developed and also processing community knowledge that is disseminated on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube channel. This resulted with social media complementing other media while perceived as fast social network that entails various platforms (Abeza & O'Reilly, 2014; Laksamana, 2018; Ebrahim, 2020). In the study conducted by Hajli (2015), the majority of businesses take advantage of online media platforms to connect with stakeholders, and this results in corporate marketing and communications strategy that involve social media and its policies within the organisation. Therefore, social media should be seen as a tool that strengthens marketing of an organisation, while it brings growth and development through effective communication.

This study focuses on the exploration of Facebook as a tool for effective and improved marketing services at the University of Limpopo. Xu & Huang (2014) and Sharma & Verma (2018) posit that Facebook as social networking tool gives organisations opportunity to connect and have a means of communication with the target audience while ensuring that products and services that present their existence are well driven online. It becomes the responsibility of any organisation to understand it customers although putting effort on the integrated marketing communication. Hence, Wong et al. (2020) explicate that integrated marketing communication assists organisation to manage the developed relationships with customers to drive a brand value. Based on the above-mentioned statement, it is clear that integrated marketing communication

helps to create a symbiotic relationship with customers and other stakeholders through strategic messages that are communicated.

Online media platforms are not only transforming how the business navigate their approach to the customers and established relationship, but educational sectors have also been affected by the inception of this mode of communication. Hence, the study conducted by Xu and Huang (2014) established that there is a lot of migration of institutions of higher learning to social media to enhance the teaching and skills given to the learners. Moreover, institutions depend on the media to disseminate the messages. Bélanger, Bali and Longden (2014) articulate that majority of well performing colleges in the United State of America (USA) rely on social media platforms to engage students for teaching purposes. Additionally, the study conducted by Abeza and O'Reilly (2014) discovered colleges and universities are using social media platforms to recruit prospective students, interrelate with alumni, and connect with parents of the students and to showcase their institutions to the world. Rowem-Kenyon and Aleman (2016) maintain that social media allow universities a space to tweet and post news releases, publish current news, stream activities taking place to provide a glimpse into what the institution is like. Moreover, higher learning institutions have been found to be predominant in using social media for marketing purposes (Rowem-Kenyon & Aleman, 2016).

Statista (2021) shows that 73.06% of the colleges and universities globally reported as having Facebook pages and 59.1% reported as having Twitter account. Whereas 40,5% use YouTube to target prospective students and share videos about them. Fifty percent (50%) of the colleges and universities around the world revealed that they use social media to interact with registered students, and the other 50% utilise them connect with graduates. However, Thornton (2017) elucidated that most of the colleges and universities update their up-running statuses to present their existing images. Social media has some advantages that attract organisations which include its speed in disseminating news, cost efficiency and direct engagement with target audience.

(Hajli, 2015). Dehghani and Tumer (2015) posit that online media platforms are easily accessible through internet connection at a lesser cost. Xu and Huang (2014) further indicate that social networks are effective in quickly disseminating information and

allowing engagement to take place pertaining the posted information. Furthermore, social media create distinctive linkage among the active users and companies. Additionally, online media foils the offline media in the organisations. Universities used offline media before an inception of social media use, but now are able to connect even with community member who are practicing citizen journalism (Lund, 2019). This makes social media to also become part of campus life. Research conducted by Wong et al. (2020) indicates that 80% of students are on social media platforms. Whereas, in 2019 there were 96,7% users in the United State of America colleges while in 2020 the percentage was 98,6% (Wong et al., 2020). The targeted students are the students who are in universities and colleges as well as graduates who are using social media, and that is why it is imperative in the institution of higher learning to be effective on the platforms to enable them to robustly engage with expected communities.

Assimakopoulos, Antoniadis, Kayas and Dvizac (2017), in their study dealt with activeness of companies in supporting online media platforms, especially Facebook for the process of marketing. In similar vein, this study focuses on the use of Facebook as effective marketing reinforces and also intends to develop approaches that could be utilise for efficient online marketing. It is through the recommendations of this study that will be guided by the key findings, that the researcher will be able to help institution of higher learning on what to improve on when communicating messages on Facebook platforms.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Online media platforms are not static but dynamic and this forces any organisation that adopt them to be effective and understand the key fundamental elements that drive their efficacy. Bhardwaj (2015) articulates lack of understanding for smooth running of social networks by majority of companies that migrate to online for marketing. Despite the factual point that institutions of higher learning's awareness of the essence of utilising the online media platforms to communicate with target audience at a lesser cost, there is still a gap for adequate understanding of full functioning of these platforms (Fujita, Harrigan & Soutar, 2017). Organisational implementation of social media is the greatest initiative, but there is a lot of things to be learnt such as: management of social media traffic, creating brand recognition and awareness. In a study by Jaman and Anshari (2019), they postulate that there is still

a debate and argument on whether online media platforms in an organisation should have their strategy or coined with the entire operation within companies.

Social media provides a two-way symmetrical communication; and from the researcher's observations, many institutions still need to improve due to their tendency of practicing one-way communication online. Ertugan (2017) explicates that it becomes grim for organisations to manage symmetrical engagement online by responding to followers who most of the time outweigh the organisation through the responses online. Cao et al. (2021) elucidate that organisation should take into account that the stakeholders' responds or comments could be bad or good information about the organisation. The researcher trusts that the study will improve the mutual understanding between institutions of higher learning and their stakeholders. Thus, the researcher intends to explore the effectiveness of Facebook for marketing purposes at the University of Limpopo. It is essential to monitor and evaluate the public's responses on social media. Proper training is needed for public relations personnel to ensure marketing and communication efficiency in this regard.

Ertugan (2017), elucidates that there is a need for organisation to be well vested on how to engage audience and their environment of participation as well as the mood online. Sajid (2016) articulates that majority of organisations still find it challenging to connect and engage the target audience online. Hence, it is crucial to develop a clear knowledge on how social networks could be used as strategy of engagement and advertisements.

1.3 ROLE OF THE THEORY IN THE STUDY

This study is grounded on two theories from mass communication, namely: Nick Couldry's Practice Theory and Marketing Communication Mix Theory.

1.3.1 Couldry's Practice Theory

The researcher chose Practice Theory as it expatiates the impact that people have on the utilisation of the media. The theory also reveals the various use of media by people within a public domain. Couldry (2014) explicates that there is a need to understand what people are doing with the media, and what media also do to the people in various

contexts of communication for unique purpose. Therefore, this theory is relevant in the study as it it informs the researcher what the University of Limpopo is practically doing with Facebook to market their institution and convey their message to their audience, and what audience are practically doing with the message conveyed.

Moreover, Couldry (2014) advocates that if people agree that the world exist in the midst of media platforms, then there is a need to understand the penetration of the media and the implication of media studies as educational module. The principle of Practice Theory is on the role that people have on the media and the pivotal of media in the society and its practice. This theory is suitable because it is about the utility of the media, and the researcher in the study used it to understand how University of Limpopo use the media to market itself and the outcomes that the online media bring to the university.

1.3.2 Marketing Communication Mix Theory

Marketing communication mix theory sprouts from promotional marketing, which could be seen when marketing management process takes place between an organisation and its target audience. But it becomes important for organisations to have a clear understanding of environment in which target audience exist to structure messages that are suitable and efficiently present a brand (Fill, 2006).

Marketing Communication Mix Theory additionally shows that marketing practitioners who intend to use social networking as a marketing discipline and its applicability, should have a well vested understanding of target audience and their environment in order to formulate a dependable and strategic social networking plan for their organisations. The principle of the theory is about the relationship between management, organisation and its stakeholders through continuous two-way communication. Marketing Communication Mix Theory supports the two-way communication, as it strengthens the interconnected relationships between an organisation and stakeholders. The theory relates to the study as it shows the relationship between the University of Limpopo and its stakeholders or audience through the use of its Facebook page.

1.4 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

This section focuses on the relevant literature regarding the impact of social media for marketing purposes at institutions of higher learning. In this section, the review of the selected literature that is relevant to the current study is presented; and the review focuses mainly on universities that make use of social media to market their institutions.

1.4.1 Communication through the use of social networking site

Suvattanadilok (2014) refers social networking sites (SNS) as the forming and substantiating of online social networks for communities formed by people. The communities are people who share interests and activities or are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. In order to complete the definition of online social networking: the building of these social networks requires the use of software (Berg & Lune, 2017). A study conducted by Chesick (2015) further explains that presently there are hundreds of social networking sites (SNSs) that can attract millions of individuals within various technological affordances. Social network sites are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a semi-profile within a limited system, it allows social sharing of content, videos and image for marketing purposes with other users that share the connection.

Bhardwaj (2015) further elaborates on that in a study he conducted on the social networking sites, and according to Luo social network (interchangeably used as networking), websites are the most popular venues for socialising with one another and are considered to be a productive channel for establishing social networks among organisations and audience.

1.4 2 A brief description of social media

Social media is defined as a collection of interactive, open source and user-controlled internet applications enhancing the experiences, collaboration, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes (Sandvig, 2016). Moreover, Web 2.0 facilitates the flow of ideas, information, knowledge and promote innovation and creativity by allowing the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing of content (Sadaf, Newby & Ertmer, 2016). In a study by Mata and Quesada (2014) Web 2.0 is described as the second stage of development of the internet, it has a certain broad trends like interactivity, simplicity and sharing. Web 2.0 are websites that help with the building of social interactivity between audience and

organisations, and it opposes the first generation of Web 1.0, where people were limited to viewing content in a passive manner. Robinson (2015) states that social media sites are effective platforms for interactivity and exchange of information and ideas where topics are discussed and demarcated. Social media users cooperate in creating content for those who are in need of information and value control in social media participation. Kaplan and Shuen (2018) argue that social media are a group of internet-based applications that shape on the philosophical and technological fundamentals of web 2.0 and that allows the construction and exchange of user generated-content.

1.4.3 Performance of Facebook for marketing

Comparison between the social media channels that are available today indicated that the social network called Facebook is the largest and perhaps the most well-established of all (Ertugan, 2017). It is also one of the oldest social media channels and by October 2012, only eight years after its introduction, it had accumulated an audience of one billion active users (Facebook Newsroom, 2012). This statistic has since grown to 1.42 billion active users monthly (Statista, 2015). Facebook facilitates user-driven communications between its hundreds of millions of users, enabling them to share their thoughts with a network of family, friends and colleagues on their personal profiles (Palma, 2016). Because of its wide reach and customer-centred nature, many organisations have adopted Facebook as an additional or alternative channel for communicating with their customers. In implementing Facebook as a marketing communication channel, organisations either strive to become part of the conversations being initiated by users, or initiate conversations of their own in the hope that their customers will participate (Kamatula, 2017).

1.4.4 The use of Facebook for marketing purposes

From a marketing point of view, Facebook offers a number of advantages regarding usage, access and cost. They are easily accessed by an ever-growing number of people on a daily basis and demanding less financial resources providing magnified results through their viral nature. Along with the interactive communication they offer, it makes Facebook one of the richest mediums available for marketers (Brugger, 2015). The importance of marketing as a key for success in the education industry has been mentioned by Peruta and Shield (2018).

This suggests that SNSs might prove Facebook as an effective tool to inform and attract new students by providing information about the institution, the enrolment procedure and the activities that take place in the university. With this opportunity, many schools, colleges and universities now turn to social media and social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to effectively communicate with current members of the academic community who want to contact alumni and, more interestingly from an educational marketing point of view, to attract prospective students. O'Keeffee (2016) reviewed the literature in the application of social media marketing in higher education, and they found that it was not clear whether content on official university social media pages influences the choices of prospective students. However, prospective students turned to university social media and social networking sites for advice and consultation after they have taken their decision concerning their studies. Bélanger, Bali and Longden (2014) established that Facebook is the main SNS that universities use to communicate campus events and activities.

1.4.5 Challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as a marketing tool

Social media management is not a nine to five job. If customers post comments after business hours, they expect businesses to provide answers 24 hours daily (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016). This shows that social media presence, mostly in institutions of higher learning, is a 24-hour job. A study by Chen and Divall (2018) elaborate on how the social media is used to build relationships, their findings show the barriers to using social media as limited resources, specifically time and staff. The concern that was raised was that it is important to ensure that there is a person responsible for updating information, the staff should monitor their sites as well as review outside sites for information.

Clark and Bacon (2018) maintain that most organisations get excited to go online without a marketing plan. It should be understood that social media initiative uses the services of consultants, designers and developers to bring the best practice to bear. Chesick (2015) concurs that social media accounts are cost-free start up, the real cost comes in terms of staff time to resource and monitoring these channels. This is also true of South African organisations that are still coming to terms with Facebook as a marketing tool (Touchette, Schanski & Lee ,2015).

The preliminary literature outlined the introductory of the significant concepts that apply in the study. This is a necessity as it provides a foundation for clear understanding of the concepts that are fully outlined on chapter two which is literature review.

1.5 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This unit provides a detailed discussion and relevance of the methodology that is used for data collection and analysis for study. According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), qualitative research is an approach that allows the researcher to survey individuals experience in detail, by using a particular set of research methods such as in-depth interview, content analysis visual methods, observation, and life histories. A qualitative research approach for the proposed study will be chosen, because qualitative methods are useful in discovering the meaning that people give to events that they experience.

The study adopted the exploratory research design under qualitative research methodology to establish the impact of social media for marketing purposes. A research design is a plan of how the research is going to be conducted, indicating who or what is involved, and where and when the study will take place (Cresswell & Poth, 2016).

The exploratory research design is used to help the researcher to gather in-depth, qualitative information of the participant's attitudes and perceptions relating to concepts, products, services, or programmes through interviews. This included the exploration of areas where limited or no prior information exists or to describe behaviours, themes, trends, attitudes, needs or relations that apply to the units that are being analysed.

Detailed methodology employed in the study will be discussed on chapter three in the methodology chapter.

1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 Aim of the study
This study aims to explore Facebook as a tool for improving marketing services at the University of Limpopo.

1.6.2 Objectives of the study

- ➢ To identify the way in which institutions of higher learning use Facebook for marketing purposes;
- ➢ To establish the challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as a marketing tool; and
- ➢ To examine the performance of Facebook on marketing.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The information age society compelled the majority of people to utilise available technological tools including social media platforms for individual and corporate world purposes. However, there is inadequate existing literature on the utility of social media tools for marketing and communication by institutions of higher learning. Hence, the researcher deemed it imperative for this study to be conducted to add to the burgeoning of literature. The researcher has observed that social media could be a useful marketing tool for institutions of higher learning to reach out to their audiences. A lot of research has been conducted on social media (Church & de Oliveira, 2013; Carr & Hayes, 2015 and Siddiqui & Singh, 2016; Kwon, Park & Kim, 2014; Cohen & Salaber, 2015; Ertugon, 2017; Egers, Egerova & Kryston, 2019; Towers & Towers, 2020). The study intends to establish the effectiveness of Facebook as marketing tool for the University of Limpopo. This study informs and educates marketing and communication experts in the universities and colleges on the utility of social media for marketing purposes and the imperative of understanding the target audience's role, as well as the hiccups that need to be dealt with to market effectively. Nonetheless, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge as far as the use of social media for marketing purposes is concerned.

1.8 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The present study evaluates the exploration of Facebook as a tool for improving marketing services at University of Limpopo. The researcher selected the University of Limpopo Facebook page as it is a dominant communication platform available for most institutions to reach out to their audiences or stakeholders. Universities and

colleges take advantage of social media platforms, such as Facebook to improve their approach of marketing.

1.9 CHAPTERS OUTLINE

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION
This chapter discusses the background and rationality of the study. Moreover, it deals with problem statement and discussion on the role of the theory namely Nick Couldry and Marketing Communication Mix Theory were identified. The researcher also articulates the purpose of the study.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW
This chapter provided a cursory look in the literature both nationally and internationally. In this section a brief introduction of the most used phenomenon on the study are marked out. Information on the development of the internet and the web are outlined. Moreover, the discussion on the social media for marketing was defined looking at the ethics on the use of online media platforms. The chapter highlighted Facebook as a marketing tool looking at the Facebook features and organisational feature. However, comprehensive exploration of marketing in the organisation was given in details. Moreover, the utility of social media platform called Facebook as a marketing tool was explored. Challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as a marketing tool were covered in this chapter.
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY
This section outlined the methodology and research design that the study adopted, brief description of a qualitative research method. The research also discussed the used data collection, semi-structured interview and observation tools. Detailed information on the data analysis is discussed in the chapter. Population and sampling were outlined. Furthermore, quality criteria was likewise observed and used in the study to measure the quality of the data collected. The chapter also highlighted the ethical consideration used in the study to protect individuals taking part in the study.
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The chapter is mainly focusing on data interpretation and analysis. In this chapter online observation and thematic content analysis were used to analyse the accumulated data. Literature and theory were used to support the findings of the study.
CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION
This chapter provided a summary of the findings along with relevant recommendations. It further provided limitations and recommendations for future research. The conclusion of the study was provided to give out the final outlook of the research.

1.10 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Social media - The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines social media as "forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and blogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos).

Networking - The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines networking as "the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions; specifically: the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business."

Institution - According to the Oxford dictionary, Institution is defined as an organisation founded for a religious, educational, professional, or social purpose.

Marketing - the action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.

Communication - the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using other medium.

Profile (individual) -This occurs when any individual who want to be part of an online society create a profile to register.

Page (organisational)   -Online pages represent the image of the organisation on social media platforms could be a page of a public figure, religious, products or political organisations. Companies through their pages are able to upload information and interact with the followers.

Friend   -Friend on social media platforms is someone who sends an invite that one accepts to engage each other. But every user has a right to accept or decline the friend request.

Like   -This element could be seen on the content of Facebook that someone or organisation posted. The followers or friend are able to react to the uploaded information through this feature besides comments.

Online Fans -Fans are online community members who support a certain organisation or brand online based on what is communicated.

Timeline   -This is a wall where users are able to upload the content for education, entertainment or inform others. This represents someone on the virtual platforms based on what the advocate.

News feed   -The accretion of the interaction among online friends gets disseminated as a news feed to allow others to be updated on their friends' activities on Facebook. Organisations' activities are also circulated on the news feed.

Social media applications   - Applications can be seen in terms of entertainment games, polls, contests and any engagement programme on Facebook. Majority of applications are created on Facebook.

Tag   -A tag on social media especially Facebook, Instagram and Twitter occur when someone upload a content could it be a picture or any statement and the user mention other user's name.

1.11 SUMMARY

In conclusion, Facebook application is used as a substitute of the modern way of marketing institutions of higher learning. The application is not necessarily about

meeting new people online, instead they are about connecting the University with its audience. Furthermore, the study discussed the research problem and its purpose which aimed to tackle the issue of one-way communication that the institution imposes to their audiences. The Facebook platform should be seen as a two-way communication where their audiences are regarded as active information consumers and their comments, recommendation, criticism and opinions should be positively replied and taken into consideration.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter gives a cursory look into studies conducted about the status of marketing in the medium of communication. The researcher reviews literature to gain insight into the findings of other researchers about the role of social media as marketing tool and the importance of this study with the intention to add to the bourgeoning of literature. Effective marketing requires an attention and organisation media coordinator's understanding pertaining the factors that influence brand management and communication within a public domain. Hence, Wali, Amangala, Nwokah and Nkpurukwe (2020) indicate that interactive communication and skills of marketing are pivotal factors that assist organisations including institutions of higher learning in building symmetrical communication with the target audience. Interactive communication goes more than just understanding target audience.

According to Chesick (2015), companies are expected to understand appropriate channels that should be used to communicate with target audience to significantly market the brand. Therefore, marketers should have a thorough knowledge of channels of communication both traditional and non-traditional. The millennium generation have migrated to the online nowadays, and this shows the occurrences of web 2.0 impacts on daily basis lives of youth. There is fast sharing news, content creation and freedom of communication in which users become both active senders and receivers of messages. Additionally, Harrison and Barthel (2009) discovered that the users on social media platforms are able to express their opinions freely and surface the net, which resulted with majority of them spending much time online than in other aspects of life. Taecharungroj (2017) indicates that organisations and stakeholders are now on online platforms and able to quickly thrive and market the brand and share information.

2.2 THE RISE IN THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Geyer (*nd*) asserts that as a relative newcomer to the world of social media and high-end Internet content, South Africa's corner of the social media market has been steadily growing over the last few years, with international giants such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* battling it out over the local user base with local social networks like Mxit and 2Go. In 2014, the social media landscape in South Africa looked considerably different to how it looked just five years ago. In the 2014 SA Social Media Landscape research study, Facebook has shown considerable growth in the country, picking up 50% from where it was last year. Now at around 9.4 million active monthly users, up from around 6.8 million last year, Facebook has officially overtaken popular South Duffett and Wakeham (2016), proved that African social service, which retains just over 6 million active users, as it has been struggling to keep up with the flooding of the market provided by Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp. Twitter has shown the biggest increase in the country over the last year, growing 129% from 2.4 million to 5.5 million monthly users.

One of the most interesting facts about the state of South African social media is that most of the social media access seen comes from mobile platforms. However, Dooley (2015), also highlighted that 87% and 85% of Facebook and Twitter users respectively, in South Africa, access these sites from their phones (but not necessarily exclusively – there is still desktop usage among these). Google+, which is struggling to overtake the giants like Facebook and Twitter globally, is also lagging behind in South Africa, with just under 500 000 active users. Instagram, a popular photo sharing platform has around 700 000 active users in SA. South Africa's corporate social media landscape also showed significant improvement, and statistics from the study show that around 93% of major local brands use Facebook for marketing and branding purposes, while just over 50% use Twitter in the same regard, and other forms of social media less than that, but there is still awareness that social media is useful in this regard. Over 54% of local brands that make use of social media in this way do so by way of in house marketing teams, while 16% use third party products and services, and 9% use dedicated public relations teams. Considering that much of South Africa has yet to switch over to high-speed Internet access, these statistics will surely increase as the decade progresses. Many of the leading social networks are bound to change, but the

sentiment of online access and social networks will surely increase and remain important for both personal and business use over the next few years (Geyer, *nd*).

Modern digital technology is continuously and rapidly changing in this present era. The internet was initially a virtual information sharing space, however, it has developed into an online ICT platform that facilitates an online social environment, which promotes face-to-face interaction and relationships via social media (Kruger & Painter, 2011). Social media is only a little more than a decade old, but the rate of adoption has been faster than any other interactive ICT conduit in history, and is taking a larger proportion of people's time, especially among digital savvy Millennials (Matthee, 2011). Social media can take many different forms such as SNS (Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+), blogs and micro-blogs (Twitter), collaborative projects (Wikipedia), video-sharing communities (YouTube), virtual game worlds (World of Warcraft), virtual social worlds (Second Life) and instant messaging (Mxit), although most of these social media categories are often collectively referred to as SNS (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Brands use social media to initiate and participate in dialogues with consumers, foster relationships, deliver customer support, create brand communities, and connect with audiences by using interactive applications (apps) such as: posting videos and photos, responding to comments, and marketing communications (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich, & Bruich, 2012; Park, Rodgers, & Stemmie, 2011).

The development of social media has also prompted change in marketing communications and the consumer decision-making process (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki, & Wilner, 2010; Shankar & Malthouse, 2007). Marketing communications enables social media to generate revenue in order to survive, but too much commercial content can reduce the appeal. Therefore, social media should gain consumer acceptance in order to successfully integrate marketing communications into SNS, but sites that do not manage this prudently may result in negative attitudes that will evidently lead to a decline in membership and revenue (Clemons, Barnett, & Appadurai, 2010). This new digital ICT operating environment is far more interactive compared to traditional media and provides significant information about target audiences who are no longer only spectators, but also participants in the marketing communication process. Both negative and positive information is communicated by consumers who take ownership over the content that they share (Kalampokis,

Tambouris, & Tarabanis, 2013; Orpana & Tera, 2011; Uitz, 2012). Social media provides a platform that gives consumers an opportunity to voice their opinions, as well as to access an infinite amount of brand information, which affects several aspects of consumer behaviour such as awareness, purchase decisions and post-purchase evaluation.

Duffett and Wakeham (2016) Facebook is an online SNS that allows individuals to communicate and share information via the creation of a page and personalised profile. The user's Facebook page includes an individualised feed that permits news updates from "friends", whereas the profile allows the user to display information regarding their daily activities, interests, personal particulars, photographs, videos and groups. Individuals can communicate with one another via a chat function (instant messaging), wall posts and status updates. This makes Facebook an attractive market for companies to target these particularly indecisive and unpredictable consumers with relevant marketing communications strategies and tactics (Duffet and Wakeham, 2016).

2.3 THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL MEDIA

According to Dooley (2015), media history considers the historical dimension of communicating information, knowledge, and values to a broad audience. Although the term 'media' came into use only in the 1920s to denote the structures of such communication, media history takes account of the period at least from the advent of the hand press in the fifteenth century, and some interpretations include the scriptoria, oral traditions, and wall paintings of medieval times, delving occasionally into ancient and pre-history as well. The numerous approaches to media history share an interest in understanding the impact such structures have had on societies around the globe, the particular forms they have taken, and the dynamics of historical change. Each of these areas is the subject of a significant body of theoretical and empirical work, with many intersections and overlaps, taking examples from the various media, their spatial contexts, and development over time (Dooley, 2015).

Ritholz (2010) states that the earliest history of social media can be traced to 1792 when telegraphs were used to transmit and receive messages over long distances. Carton (2009) further mentions that throughout much of human history, technologies

were developed to make it easier for people to communicate with each other. According to Borders (2009), social media has evolved over the years to modern-day variety which uses digital media. However, the social media is not new. In addition, the social media did not start with the computer but instead the telephone. During the 1950s, phone phreaking, the term used for the rogue searching of the telephonic network, began. This process was accomplished through the use of homemade electronic devices that facilitated unauthorised access to the telephone system to make free calls. Phreaks were able to find telephone company test lines and conference circuits to complete their task. Moreover, phreaks were able to hack into corporate unused voice mailboxes to host the first blogs and podcasts (Borders, 2009). Below are the common social media platform used by organisations to market their companies/or organisations:

2.3.1 Description of Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website launched in February 2004, and it is privately operated by Facebook, Inc. (Facebook, 2004). Facebook was founded by Mark Zuckerberg and others when he was a student at Harvard; though when the site was initially launched, it was restricted to Harvard students only. Later the privilege was extended to high school students and later to everyone that is 13 years or older (Boyd, 2007). As of July 2010, Facebook has more than 500 million active users. In January 2009, Facebook was ranked as the most used social network worldwide. Also, in May 2010, Google announced that more people visited Facebook than any other website in the world. It declares that this was discovered from findings on 1,000 sites across the world. (TIMES, 2010). Users may create a personal profile; add other users as friends, and exchange messages, including automatic notifications, photos and comments when they update their profile. Additionally, Facebook users may join common interest user groups, organised by workplace, school, college, or other characteristics. Facebook allows anyone who is at least 13 years old to become a registered user of the website (Edosomwam, Prakasan, Kouame, and Watson, 2011).

2.3.2 YouTube

YouTube, founded in 2005, is the world's most popular online video community, where millions of people can discover, watch and share originally-created videos (YouTube,

2005). YouTube provides a forum for people to connect, inform, and inspire others across the globe and acts as a major distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers, large and small. YouTube is based in San Bruno, California and uses Adobe Flash Video technology to display a wide variety of user-generated video content, including movie clips, TV clips, and music videos, as well as amateur content such as video blogging and short original videos. In November 2006, within a year of its launch, YouTube was purchased by Google Inc. in one of the most talked about acquisitions to date. YouTube has entered into a number of partnership relations with content providers such as CBS, BBC, Universal Music Group, Sony Music Group, Warner Music Group, NBA, The Sundance Channel and many others (YouTube, 2005). YouTube offered the public a beta site of the site in May 2005, six months before the official launch in November 2005. The site grew rapidly, and in July 2006, the company announced that more than 65,000 new videos were being uploaded every day, and that the site was receiving 100 million video views per day (YouTube, 2005).

2.3.3 Twitter

In the year 2006 Twitter was established, while Facebook began to open its doors to everyone. Twitter gained a lot of popularity first because it offered more different options such as micro blogging and secondly because it was used by some celebrities (Jasra, 2010; Tweeternet.com, 2010). Until 2010, there was several social media created, such as Friend feed in 2007, which was a feed to consolidate the updates from social media and social networking websites and was acquired by Facebook in 2009 (Jasra, 2010). Ping.fm was created in 2008 and was defined as the auto magic micro blogging and networking web service that enables users to post to multiple social networks simultaneously (Hendrickson, 2008; Pirillo, 2010). In 2009, Net log formerly known as Facebox and Bingbox was launched and is a Belgian social networking website specifically targeted at the European youth demographic (AppAppeal, 2010), and Google buzz was born in 2010. Google buzz is a social networking and messaging tool that integrates a web-based email program which will work through the popular Gmail service, will allow users to post status updates, photos and links to members of their network, as well as pull in their activity on other sites like Twitter or Facebook (Google, 2010; Gross, 2010).

2.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERNET AND THE WEB

According to Kenney (2003), internet is not static but dynamic as there is always new inventions and some developments. The emergence of internet could be traced back in 1969 during war and developed by United State Defence Force in collaboration with universities. Additionally, internet's effectiveness to communicate with the community members then led to its continuation till to date. Hence, Wikström and Wigmo (2010) elucidate some utopians of the internet such as: online shopping, reading and listening of news, payment of bills, interaction of followers and streaming of movies and other programmes.

In the past, around 2000 businesses decided to have websites to gain more sales and market system shares, but minority of them succeeded. In the years 2000 and 2002 down the line almost well-established firms that dealt with internet shut down due to occurrence of challenges in the US (Wali & Andy-Wali, 2018). Thus, Kenney (2003) posits that organisation that are effective online and well vested with online community can navigate to the top line sales and bottom-line profitability. Additionally, the arising of technology has saluted to open opportunities for organisations beyond the role traditional media play ad provide. Internet has completely changed the way organisation communicate and market the products and services to the target audience (Siddiqui & Singh, 2016).

Online platforms provide a way for many organisations to strengthen new products and make it known to the target audience. But the hyperspace encapsulates various activities such as search engine, notifications ad subscription while engagement is efficacy (Lofgren, 2014). Additionally, Cybersquatting is user generated content that allows interactions and market growth of the businesses and community development (Taecharungroj, 2017). Cyberspace applications complement users' engagement which allow the provision of knowledge, content creation and dissemination (Ertugan, 2017). Moreover, Lofgren (2014) articulates that cyberspace is influential in running marketing process the same way traditional media such as newspaper was in the early 1800. Medium such as radio, magazine and television also have a significant role that they play in marketing. In the early 90s hyperspace became the dominant platform in running marketing. Users are able to surface through the net for information that is edifying and entertainment online (Lofgren, 2014).

According to O'Reilly and Battelle (2009), Web 2.0 is also seen as the second stage of the emergence of internet because of broad trends such as interactivity, easiness and sharing. Furthermore, Web 2.0 are known as websites that help with the building of social interactivity between audience and organisations and it opposes the first hyperspace in which there was limitation to view a content. However, its nature through development was changed and users were able to create more content.

In addition, the growth of social media has allowed the interaction among users and organisation. According to Sandvig (2016), the net applications accommodate what the content users create and results with effective environment, while it also allows organisations to be known to users. Furthermore, Sandvig (2016) indicates that social networks highlight the technological nature and include other hyperspace for the effective interaction community. A study conducted by Taecharungroj (2017) indicates that technological determinism allows users to engage one another and disseminate to other who are not physically connected. Moreover, Fuchs (2009) argues that online platforms support the notion of development of community through exchange of information among individuals.

According to Wali and Andy-Wali (2018), web 3.0 as the development of current web which gives a well-defined meaning to the created content and other shared information. Thus, Fuchs (2021) indicates that semantic web makes it profitable for easy access of the information that is chronologically arranged. Businesses and institution of higher learning are expected to have social media strategy, when they embark online for marketing and should understand the status of Web 2.0. Understanding elements that influence the status of marketing on social networks should be in the mind of marketers who are willing to take advantage of online tools. According to Pringle and Fritz (2019), hyperspace has become a targeted spot for communication of organisations pertaining their services or products including higher learning institutions.

According to Harrison and Barthel (2009), the use of internet has grown due to its users' accommodation, transparency, recommendations and connection among the participants. But the strategic design of any organisation that migrate online is also crucial to influence the users' decision to keep posted about it and share its content.

Marketers' effectiveness in circulating information about an organisation and reviewing who tags other users and their reactions are valued (Taecharungroj, 2017).

2.4 SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MARKETING

Organisations find it imperative to communicate their products and services to the target audience. For any organisation to be recognised, there should be communication, and one has to agree that dissemination of the message can't occur in a vacuum but within context that human beings exist, be it offline or online. Therefore, social media has changed the landscape of marketing which resulted with a pressure for organisation to create pages on the online platforms to interact with target audience. According to Abeza and O'Reilly (2014), social media could be defined as interactive technologies, open source and user-controlled applications that allow the exchange of information and ideas while strengthening the experiences, knowledge and influence. Moreover, social media allow ideas expression and indorsement of creativity while one edit and share a content (Clark & Bacon, 2018).

Rutter, Roper and Lettice (2016) state that online media platforms are applications that are effective and allow quick dissemination of data and ideas are deliberated and demarcated. Social networks utilisers cooperate in production of the content for those who need content and value online participation. Kim (2019) argues that new media as known as social media involves interactive participation that build the philosophical and elements of technology of hyperspace while allowing content production, which could be shared among users. Thus, social media coordinators in the organisations use them as channels of marketing to the target audience. The utopians of social media which involves cost efficacy and quickly dissemination of the content assist in advertising to accumulate revenues. The demographic information that is collected through social networking sites enables marketers to understand who the relevant target audience and their interest are, which help in creating advertisements (Suvattanadilok, 2014).

Through strategic planning and marketing of the product or service, an organisation can gain attention of the audience including the new one. Thus, Perrin (2015) posits that businesses through social media are able to gather adequate information about

the users. Suvattanadilok (2014) articulates the dissimilarities between traditional media and new media in table 1 as follows:

Table 1: Dissimilarity between social media and traditional media

Social media	Traditional media
Instantaneously update	Fixed and takes time to update
Provide unlimited time and engagement	Explanation is not in real time and also limited.
Prompt popularity assessment	Time-delayed and limited bestseller lists
Records easily available	Poor access to archives
All the media can be mixed	Inadequate media mix
Makes use of individual publishers	Make use of committee publishers
Countless	Fixed
Participation and sharing encouraged	The sharing of content not encouraged
Freedom	Control

Source: Suvattanadilok (2014)

2.4.1 Ethics concerning the use of social media

Kruger, Ndebele and Horn (2014) articulate guidelines that institution of higher learning should take into consideration when they utilise social media to avoid being victims of unethical new media marketing practice. Firstly, it is important to work hard on determining accuracy of the shared content due to a fact that everybody can share a content or hack user's page. But inaccurate news does not have long-term standing as users are able to caution one another pertaining such share content (Fuchs, 2021). Suvattanadilok (2014) argues it is imperative for an organisation to work on their accuracy and maintain consistency in communicating information on social media.

Secondly, the fact that users also upload information that is personal to them, this makes privacy to be a matter of concern. Despite the fact that users can allow their individual information published, this needs one to work on ethical standard. Therefore, organisation should strive for good ethical standard and develop social media policies in place to guide them (Hayes, Ruschman & Walker, 2009 as cited in Kguger, Ndebele & Horn, 2014). Lastly, according to Lofgren (2014), organisations

can use new media as marketing tool to communicate the products or services to target audience. But it is pivotal to understand the elements that influence online interaction to avoid harmful content. Tuten (2020) articulates that online media platform are very sensitive and ethically demanding in communicating and developing relationship with other users.

2.5 COMMUNICATION THROUGH SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Suvattanadilok (2014) articulates that social networking sites (SNS) as applications developed for engagement and content creation while forming online communities. One can define communities as people who share values, norms, activities and interest for certain purpose. But the development of online applications requires software for them to fully function and attain expected objectives. According to Kwon, Park and Kim (2014), there are multitudes of the new media that people migrate to depend on the affordance of data and internet connectivity. Moreover, advantageously social networking sites allow profile creation and exchange of content such as pictures, videos for marketing purposes or user connection. Bhardwaj (2015) further conducted a study on the social networking sites, and according to Luo, social network (interchangeably used as networking) websites are the most popular venues for socialising with one another and are considered to be a productive channel for establishing social networks among organisations and audience.

2.6 DISCUSSION OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS BENEFITS

According to Edosomwam (2011), engaging in social media helps corporates in strengthening the brand experience which will support brand building. The organisation becomes more attractive to the audiences, current and potential employees, if it has a well-built brand name. As a result, social media will help in building a good reputation for a business organisation. A couple of words can describe a brand whether in the audience or in the space. By building a brand, it helps to reinforce the brand in the minds of the audiences. Through social media, the organisation can repeatedly reinforce the brand name. Audiences experience a brand privilege while using a product or service and also when interacting with the organisations (Carraher et al., 2006). Brand awareness starts with the experiences of the employees. If the company is approachable, people-friendly, then the company

must make itself visible by inclusion on the web (Carraher, Parnell, and Spillan, 2009). Social media acts as a powerful way to communicate the brand value and brand attribute as they facilitate open forms of communication (Edosomwam, 2011). According to Edosomwam (2011), social media is best for the following situations:

- Promote open communication between employees and management.
- Enable employees to share projects ideas and work in teams effectively, which helps in sharing knowledge and experiences.
- Social media also promotes better content, such as webcast and videos, than just simple text.
- Helps to communicate collaboratively between current and potential audiences, in receiving feedback, product definition, product development, or any forms of service and support.
- Encourage members, or part of the organisations employees, to become members of a well-recognised community.
- Social media becomes a good venue for discussions and becomes a classic goal of marketing and communications, but the companies must ensure that the employees are adhering to the rules and etiquettes of social media.

According to Gretzel and Yoo (2008), social media has dramatically changed the planning for and engagement with travel experiences. In the context of online marketing, social media has become one of the fastest growing communication medium/technologies adopted in the internet environment and the tourism marketing as well (Buhalis and Law, 2008; Gretzel *et al.*, 2008). It has changed the way people communicate, making it the new norm in social communication for our modern civilization (Qualman, 2009). As a result of the integration of people and the rapid development of social media, marketers in general, and in this case, event marketers in particular, have realised the importance of social media as a marketing tool. They have started using it as a marketing channel to communicate with their customers (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). When an organisation announces a new product or an event through social networking sites (SNSs), users learn about it rapidly and can interact with it before trying it out as a product or a service or attending it as an event (Cong, 2013).

Recently, organisations use social media sites particularly Facebook pages to market their events and keep audiences informed. As a result, Facebook event pages and social media, in general, help potential attendees identify local events, encounter reviews and create more public relationships rapidly and easily; these factors play a critical role for event organisers and helps increase overall attendance (Becker *et al.*, 2009). Additionally, social interactions among fans on Facebook event pages are expected to create an emotionally engaging environment, which will, potentially, increase the number of attendees. Hence, Facebook event pages were selected for the current study, which aimed to explore how emotional factors, such as arousal and valence, affected users' utilisation of social media as well as their attitudes toward using social media to learn about and attend events (Lee *et al.*, 2012).

2.7 HISTORY OF FACEBOOK

Facebook as one of social media platforms was founded by Mark Zuckerburg, Eduardo Saverin, Dustin-Moskovitz and Chris Hughes in 2004 (Good, 2013). Moreover, Good (2013) states that Zuckerberg and his team developed this platform while they were still students at University of Harvard. This university use to create a booklet each year that was shared to university students and staff which entail profiles of the first-year students. According to Harlow (2013), this booklet Harvard University distributes to the students is known as 'face book'. It serves imperative role to make connection among students by knowing each other based on the details encapsulated by this booklet including their courses, social organisations as well as residence (Barnard, 2015). Based on the role the booklet played in the university towards the students, Mark Zuckerberg and his peers were then motivated to develop Facebook app as an online community engagement platform (Kirkpatrick, 2011).

According to Sin and Syn (2014), the intention of creating this online platform was to make engagement of students more easily and also for university to have online version of the booklet as called 'face book' (Sin & Syn, 2014). Then the site that was called 'theFacebook.com' and it was only accessible to staff members and students at Harvard University because one could log on through university granted email (Harlow, 2013). Therefore, innovation as well as uniqueness of Facebook elated students to such an extent that owners increase accession to accommodate students from other universities (Petersen, 2010). A study conducted by Good (2013) indicates

that users of Facebook escalated amasingly to such a point that, there was a need to manage the website on daily basis. Additionally, it was in September 2005 when the Facebook founders make it available for high school students and businesses in the corporate world.

Furthermore, Weber (2009) indicates that before Facebook Company permitted non-academic as well as international community members who were not residing in the US, it was scarce among hyperspace because majority of users were still build offline such as university campus. Joinson (2008) posits that the likeness of this offline societies on the online context led to different use among participants. Moreover, Shen and Bissell (2013) argue that Facebook topple other social network in various countries to date because of its unique means of allowing users to connect and engage each other effectively while they share lives and profile as aimed by Zuckerberg.

2.8 FACEBOOK AS A PLATFORM FOR MARKETING PURPOSES

Facebook as social media platform affords users opportunity to engage one another including public figures who have followers. This is because of its conducive way of use, access and cost effectiveness. The migration of people to online results with the high number of users who are able to provide magnified outcomes due to the viral nature. According to Brugger (2015), the freedom of expression and engagement that Facebook offers to users make it richest medium for marketers to communicate their brands. Moreover, Chmielecki (2014) posits that educational sectors are also marketing themselves on the platform and this influence the success or failure depending on the strategic approach.

Facebook has seen to be the most efficacy platform for dissemination of messages and build attention towards universities targeted students through relevant content production and other activities that represent the image of universities including enrolment process in the academic arena (Pancaningrum & Rahayu, 2017). Thus, many schools, colleges and universities adopted the new media to engage students who are registered as well as target the ones that graduated, from educational point of view.

But there is still on-going debate on whether the use of social media by academic institution really helps to achieve intended goal or more needs to be done (Acha-Anyi et al., 2020). According to Jaman and Anshari (2019), academic institutions' social media pages have an impact as prospective students use them to engage institutions for information and clarity related to courses that are offered and step-by-step guide for applications. Additionally, Belanger et al (2014) discovered that most universities rely on Facebook to quickly disseminate the information pertaining activities and events taking place on campuses.

Social media such as Facebook through registered profile are faces of the universities and target audience are able to learn more about them online while allow them to effectively perform what other users are doing such as content upload (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015). Concurring with Brugger (2015) and Kumar et al., (2016) posit that Facebook page allows companies to engage with expected prospective customers. Ertugn (2017) indicates social media also affords users access to each other's profile while it integrates different applications and improve interaction.

When an organisation creates a page and appears under suggestions items, users are able to like it to show their support while also seen as a follower (Barnard, 2015). Then, institutions are able to interact with target audience while build symbiotic relationship and allow access to each other's profile (Dehghani and Tumer, 2015). Additionally, institutions adopt new media for online community purpose, market a services or products and encourage amalgamation on the website (Jaman & Anshari, 2019).

Furthermore, it is imperative for all companies to have a clear perspective of their adoption of the new media as part of marketing elements (Baltes, 2016). In some instance, the end goal of organisations may be to escalate sales as well as advertising, and this could be achieved through a worked trust towards the audience. Concurring with the above statement Kamatula (2017) stipulates that people use social media for engagement with each other and follow a bran online if it affords their standard such exclusives and discounts.

The complex nature of Facebook presents paradox because when one uses it as a communication tool, all can be able to see what's happening and not everybody

becomes target audience (Jaman & Anshari, 2019). However, it goes without saying that users are not forced to follow certain organisation or create a profile online on social media platforms for interaction. Social media cuts deep the control of the message dissemination by institutions of higher learning as target audience afforded opportunity to choose what they should be exposed to and when (Nehls & Livengood, 2018). Institution should be in mind that online media afford them a wide range of opportunities to communicate their service, but management is very important (Lund, 2019).

Through online networks, organisations are able to reach target audience and see their brand while online community is developed, and also other users can be tagged by their online friends to view available advertised product or service (Rutter, Roper & Lettice, 2016). Facebook may not offer instant benefits while it requires activeness of users, but it has more utopians as compared to its dystopians towards users when are performing marketing process and connecting with each other (Ramadanty, Safitri & Suhendra, 2020). Furthermore, Pizarro and Davidson (2018) articulate some benefits of new media towards organisational marketing, but also revealed that organisation should understand duration that they value to market them online.

According to Pikas and Sorrentino (2014), some of social networks particularly Facebook offer the following advantages:

- Facebook shares dependable interaction among users in a way that, the information disseminated by marketers is not excluding the users. It is significant to have a schedule of what to communicate and the valid points that are relevant to target audience and making interaction more trustful.
- Facebook offers a profile through a developed brand strategy online while linking users to organisational website. It escalates traffic which becomes necessity for marketers regarding their activities. The report of King III demand organisations in South Africa to disseminate truthful information about their status of finance, ownership status and prospects of business. Moreover, social media can be utilised for this with the intention to develop a trust with target audience in the context they feel free.

- The efficacy of social media like Facebook helps consumers to easily access information about the institutions and this results with the familiarity of the organisations while allow them to respond to the opportunities and threats. The available information on the profile of an organisation on social network should be relevant and the institution must respond to the express about posted online content.

- The flow of interaction influences the efficacy of social media within a public domain. Audiences are able to interact with one another or the organisations regarding the needs, wants or expression and impression. Furthermore, inspire for the participation through humbleness and engage between users and organisation while assist companies to obtain data about users and how they can market.

- Facebooks allows unique level of data collection and interpretation to increase understanding as majority of social media platforms users are able to reveal strong emotion about a brand on their profiles. By having through knowledge of the obtained data, institutions of higher learning can be well vested with positive and negative perception about their brands while get benefitted about audience's perception and later develop effective marketing strategy based on gathered information.

- Social media connects target audience with organisations in a way that through relevant strategy, information can be exchanged fast between the two in the context of communication. This can result with the understanding of the brand in a positive manner.

2.9 FACEBOOK AS A MARKETING TOOL

Facebook can be referred as social media platform that afford people connection despite geographical location, while organisation can utilise it to communicate their products and services. According to Rowan-Kenyon and Aleman (2016) majority of users utilise Facebook to learn about other people, be it offline or online, engage fellows, circulate links, upload videos and pictures. In the year 2010, Facebook platform had increased online members and seen as second highest search engine that followed Google pertaining the number of hits each day as well as the precious amount of time users spent on it. The Y generation, which refers to all individuals who

were born in 1976 to 1999, were regarded as the most active participants who adopted Facebook as an alternative to email. A research conducted by Nobre and Silva (2014) articulate that Google had 154 million users who surface it for period of hour while 118 million users indicated to spent at least 6,5 hours on Facebook. The above-mentioned is supported by Thornton (2017) who elucidates that Facebook mobilise people for engagement and spend much time on it as compared to the surfacing of Google on daily basis.

Universities and colleges rely much effectively on Facebook to correlate online with and promote face-to-face communications within a seemingly circumscribed domain (Ciprian, 2015). Because of the popularity that Facebook has in service utilisation, organisations including universities use it to share the content with students. Hence, the researcher chose Facebook as social media platform to conduct this study on the imperative and influence of selected branding elements towards the image of Higher Education Institution (HEI) through the use of social media platforms. The University of Limpopo has created a Facebook page that users including academics as well as other online users are afforded access to connect and form part of the group.

According to Nobre and Silva (2014), users sometimes utilise Facebook to engage others and obtain information about them, which could have been delayed in offline interaction. Users have power to practice a process of social search and categorise the gathered information (Lukka & James, 2014). Moreover, Facebook provides users with surveying function which allow them to monitor and keep up to date with users' beliefs system, interests and activities (Nobre & Silva, 2014). One can argue that the search and surveying functions on Facebook, which users can utilise are the one that have attention towards fairly open privacy settings. Lukka and James (2014) argues that if social search can be seen to be virtuous in the eyes of the users, observation then gives guidance towards selection of friendship link to other participants on the online community.

According to Ciprian (2015), Facebook in 2007 had more than 21 million users with active registered accounts after its launch in 2004 and these users produced 1.6 billion page views every day. In 2020, Facebook had 1.69 billion registered members who are effectively engaging on this platform (Facebook, 2020). Thus, Nobre and Silva (2014) indicate that social networks are now incorporated in each day media practices

as users spend almost twenty minutes each day on the site while 230 of active users of Facebook log on at least once a day. Additionally, Facebook is seen as one of the wide developed query languages (MySQL) installations across the world encapsulating thousands of information system while visited by large users (Sandvig, 2016).

September in the year 2005, Facebook branched by launching high school version of the site in order to attract the young users and created efficacy engagement among them. Moreover, the team of this platform developed online communities for commercial companies in the year 2006 that resulted with over 22 000 companies having Facebook profiles (Thornton, 2017).

2.9.1 Facebook structures

The engagement features of Facebook as social network entails elements that allow users to communicate and exchange the information about themselves with other users including friends, families and other associates while are able to accumulate data about others. These elements include pictures, status, poke, wall and messages which the researcher explain in this study below:

2.9.1.1 The use of profile on Facebook

An imperative part of Facebook for one to exist on it is through creation of profile which allows the user to provide information as part of personal representation (Sandlin & Pena, 2014)). This profile part aspect has categories that users fill in such name, relationship status, location, interest, age, cell phone, hometown which not all of them are compulsory to fill (Fujita, Harrigan & Soutar, 2017). Ciprian (2015) indicates that the status/profile encapsulate picture of individual users or company which signify them on the platform and linked to the information produced by user on the site which is shared. However, micro-blogging allows users of social media to type a brief message to show others what they are working on the site. According to Thornton (2017), users that type profile messages are able to be notified, and that allow users to be on track and up to date pertaining what other people are doing. Sandvig (2016) argues that other advantage of profile use is to be able to find out about other users' interests and contact details which users are able to contact each other.

2.9.1.2 The importance of photos on Facebook

Social media platforms such as Facebook creates electronic file arrangements when a user upload several pictures. Fujita et al. (2017) posit that social media platforms give users opportunity to present and upload pictures which automatically are arranged into online albums, while users can share them with each other. Statistics by Online Marketing Trends (2010) has shown that towards the end of the year 2010, there were 60 billion users' pictures on Facebook and June as well as July 2011 were claimed to be months of 100 million for American Summer. Facebook has a power to introduce users to each other through a tag option that provides a link to profile pages (Kwon, Park & Kim, 2014). Furthermore, Fujita et al (2017) articulate that online user are equipped to remark on the pictures that got uploaded on Facebook, which permit feedback to be gathered and interaction to take place. Kwon et al (2014) indicate that primary role of dominant SNS flicker is to share pictures on the hyperspace. But some sites also allow videos host that users are able to react through comments. Moreover, quick exchange of the information as well as wide storage capacity provision allow one to back up photos which these seen as advantage to users to place content.

2.9.1.3 The Facebook poke feature

The Facebook poke feature became the most form of engagement among users on the site and seen as exceptional element for this platform (Sandlin & Pena, 2014). According to Kuss and Griffiths (2017), poke helps users to reach each other on the online world and virtually engaging them. Moreover, poke feature also assist user to know if they have been poked and who poked them on the platform (Meishar-Tal & Pieterse, 2017). Poke also through the created profile of user make it attract another user. The utopian of this Facebook feature may not be seen easily, but one can agree that it has a power to peruse engagement among users and assure them that they are not forgotten.

2.9.1.4 The use of wall feature on Facebook

According to Parra-Contreras, Lopez and D'Antonio (2014), a Facebook wall feature is an element on user profile which allow other users who are linked to post message which all can see. When one creates a message on the wall, the date and person

posted in become noticeable (Gok, 2016). Thus, a new message posted on the user's wall become visible on the news feed (Alalwan et al.,, 2017). Moreover, this feature allows users to leave messages that are of temporary nature while there is no obsession/ concern of the people who view it. Majority of users utilise this element because of the value of time, and other users see the updated message as the post on the wall which appears immediately when the users log on Facebook. Sandlin and Pena (2014) state that social media make it probable for users to peruse the previous and present conversation among them while making it easier to read.

2.9.1.5 The significance of message on Facebook

According to Fujita et al. (2017), Facebook as social networking site has also the role that email play like when one sends a private message to other user or group of friends. Despite the Facebook's provision of communication opportunity among users, the platform is not initiated to replace individual emails. However, Facebook also provide users a space in which private engagement takes place known as 'in box'. Gok (2016) articulates that messages created and selected in a manner which previously seen as short for an email system as the messages used for briefing and other interaction. The reply of messages on Facebook are connected with the originality of the content for it to make sense and easy to read, rather than when it is on the email which demands subject and full detail layout. Alalwan et al (2017) indicate that Facebook has introduced another element that allow users to disseminate coined messages to be able to communicate even with those who are in real time connected. This feature is known as chat application as users most of the time eager synchronous communication to be put things in order.

While the chat application is present on Facebook platform, there are other communicative applications and programs such as messenger which exist and other that allow users to record the said messages and user who said it. According to Perrin (2015), recorded messages as archived can be used for future references hence users have responsibility to use social media in acceptable manner.

2.9.2 Organisation features

Social networks sites offer approaches to group users for engagement. Groups created then are utilised to limit the access to content produced. According to Sandvig (2016), the groups created on the sites can be access by everybody while some users prefer them to be accessed by members only depending on the information discussed. Based on the organisation's features section, numerous of functional elements are explained such as groups, list of friends and activities.

2.9.2.1 Formation of Facebook groups

It goes without saying that shared values and interests are the one that connect people and results with development of groups. Moreover, Maresova, Hruska and Kuca (2020) indicate that the creators of the online groups are the one who remain with the rights of which user could join and who can be invited while continuously have power to remove member if need arise. The registered members of the group who follows the page are able to have information circulated on the group and react to it as social media provide a space for active participants who are both senders and receivers of the message.

Sandvig (2016) indicates that created groups make it possible for individual users to connect as online community and exchange information about various subjects, while members' lists is shown and other activities that are taking place. Moreover, a dominant feature that Facebook has on the site is the fast pace to send out message to all members of the group created by users. Fuch (2021) articulates that a provided space for discussions allow users to share their opinions, while feedbacks are given pertaining a particular content shared and active interactions between among a group of users.

A study conducted by Evans, Bratton and Mckee (2021) point out that the efficacy of the groups on social media relies on the created content to keep users updated and in touch and this could be achieved through the group coordinators present online and creativity. Moreover, there are sites that also provide users with options based on the elements provided to the members of the group. Fujita et al. (2017) posit that another efficacy of the developed groups is the availability to members who are not part of

them but active online. Members of the group are provided with updates on daily basis on what is developed in the organisation or about particular individual. Despite the energy and work an organisation or individual can try on sending messages out to inform the uses, the receivers of this message have option to decide on whether they want to receive it or not. Sajid (2016) posits that groups owners who stay informed and knowledgeable are able to rank the group's effectiveness based on the interaction and followers the group have, while taking into consideration how many times the group is visited by social media adopters.

2.9.2.2 The relevance of friends list on Facebook

Community can be built up both online and offline depending on the individuals' preference for social engagement and information circulation. According to Kuss and Griffiths (2017), social networking sites provide people with an opportunity to connect with each other for communication. These users can converge to share their preference and interests with other users. Nowadays, friends' connection also becomes imperative because of the pivotal information that is exchanged. Hence, the circulation of messages to all including branches of the groups is pivotal and arranged friends list serves role of how the messages should be structured before send to the participants online. The management of the connectivity becomes flexible and selective to meet the users' needs.

According to Tuten (2020), individuals' connection online especially when running business becomes beneficial to make it known to other target audience. Fujita et al. (2017) indicate that, as the online friendship serves purpose, friend request becomes a user's responsibility to accept the invitation or rejects it hence they have control on their profile.

2.9.2.3 Significance of events on Facebook

Fujita *et al* (2017) contend that engagement that occurs on Facebook among users can be managed by the platform concerning the shared content as there are policies of social media. If there is an event taking place, Facebook has a notification element that alerts users on what is reflecting on organisation/user's page and also pinpoint the calendar of the upcoming events. According to Sandvig (2016), events can be

developed by users on Facebook, while the application helps in sharing it to other users including associates on the group. It is through this that, users are able to invite their follower and inform them about what is emerging in their lives including upcoming events.

According to Hjorth and Hinton (2019), a webpage created when organisation intends to stipulate relevant information about an event. The access limitation can be created on a particular even and on other content produced. Moreover, when a page is developed for a particular event, the participants online can be given same elements as those reflected on their own profile on Facebook.

Furthermore, this affords them remarkable opportunity to share pictures, videos and reaction in the form of comments on the walls. A study conducted by Barnerd (2015) indicates that by utilising online schedule for events, the developers of the events are not only given the data of attendance scale and the reactions of the users invited but it reveals other users who are unable to attend the set events occasionally. Thus, Kuss and Griffiths (2017) argue that online elements for activities on Facebook does not instantly give users mechanism for structuring events any time when users are online.

2.10 MARKETING IN THE ORGANISATIONS

Silva, Feitosa, Duarte and Vasconcelos (2020) explain that marketing is the approach of planning and practicalisation and dissemination of ideas, products and services that strengthen the relationship between organisation and its target audience. According to Barnerd (2015), well planned and coordinated marketing demand institutions of higher learning to determine target audience, understand their expectations and the method of communication. Balakrishnan, Dahnil and Yi (2014) expatiate marketing as the effective management of symbiotic relationship that help to achieve a goal which is built between institution of higher learning and target market through utilisation of marketing tools such as services, products, sales, place, procedure, customers and irrefutable evidence. Organisation's wide range of marketing rooted in its power to monitor the dissemination messages about the produced product/service to the target audience (Belanche, Cenjor and Perez-Rueda, 2019).

Therefore, it is through marketing research that an organisation is provided with an opportunity to understand the needs of customers and are able to address them in proper manner. Additionally, marketing strategy could only be relevant and effective when an organisation understands the needs of the target audience. According to Galan, Lawley and Clements (2015), the institutions of higher learning could only be achieving presenting their service to prospective audience based on the gathered information, good reputation and creativity.

2.10.1 Ethics for marketing in institutions of higher learning

Institutions of higher learning in the society serve a purpose of learning and academic excellency towards the individuals for societal development. But one has to agree that since their existence occur within the society, there is a means for brand communication and familiarise it with targeted audience. This can be achieved through a marketing lens of the brand to disclose details pertaining its existence. According to Pringle and Fritz (2019), in the institutions of higher learning, marketing can be seen as effective analysis, strategising, implementation and monitoring of drafted activities that are developed to strengthen values with prospective audience to attain the set objectives of the institution.

In the past years, marketing was only seen and spoken in a shush voice in the academic space without checking correctly its implication on service. Kanagal (2015) indicates that institutions resistance to the phenomenon of the management of universities was connected to the traditional way of running activities and values such as state of analyses, assessment and criticisms. According to O'Keeffe (2016), as cited in Kruger, Ndebele and Horn (2014) the standard of the universities' academic excellence and quality was compromised at management practice such as the representation of HEIs. Moreover, it argued that marketing as located in the management space has been categorised to be connected to matters of ethical concern to avoid going against the values and norms of the higher learning institution.

According to Pringle and Fritz (2019), most of Higher Education Institution (HEIs) now find it imperative to market their institutions effectively and strategically in this ever changing and highly competitive environment. A literature on the exchange of ideas and practices of introducing a product or service to prospective audience emerging

from HEIs has been conducted pertaining the elements that one has to take into consideration when dealing with marketing especially on online platforms including ethics (Palma, 2016). Additionally, a study conducted by Kanagal (2015) places attention on the image management and reputation of the company and their implications on brand building and representation for marketing. Hence, it is imperative to note ethical practice when public relations practitioners market Higher Education Institution (HEI) to build strong brand and relationship with prospective audience. According to Kruger, Ndebele and Horn (2014), it is required that organisation build strong brand of high quality which is connected to the developed mission and vision as well as the desired objectives to be attained. The elements below are imperative when an organisation intends to market itself properly especially HEIs to the prospective target audience and should adhere to ethically (Kruger, Ndebele & Horn, 2014).

- Marketing elements are not only drivers of an institution but effectiveness of leadership of the institutions also affect the brand through their loyalty.
- It is crucial to see relationship marketing through ethical lenses when marketing an institution.
  - The institution's marketing viewpoints strengthen and increase academic value through the applicability of holistic marketing.

2.11 MARKETING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The existence of organisations encapsulates products and services that are intended to be provided to the customers or consumers. This products or services for them to be known by the target audience, should be communicated as a means of marketing within geographical location. Therefore, any organisation that seeks success of product/service provision should thoroughly market it through available marketing channels. It becomes imperative for marketers to understand what drives effectiveness of marketing and how marketing should be handled. According to American Marketing Association (2013), marketing can be defined as set of activities, institutions, creation process, communication, development and exchange of offerings that entail value for stakeholders in the society. Based on the statement above, it is

clear that providing the suitable service is not enough to prospective audience, as there is a need to be well vested also with tools and the way of messages structuring. Communication is the fundamental key for the success or failure of the organisation, hence it should be valued to achieve set objectives. Hence et al. (2020) indicate that organisation's failure to communicate its product or service to the target audience can results with customers not being aware of the existence of it which could lead to failure to attain set goals.

Wong et al. (2020) indicate that communication in the marketing process is imperative and should be managed through symbiotic relationship between organisation and target audience while allowing interaction to take place. But one could agree that management of business and internal communication influence the effective interaction with target audience (Pancaningrum & Rahayu, 2017). Understandable engagement among institutions and prospective audience has a power to strengthen trust of customers, profitability, customer achievement, customer maintenance while building long-term relationship with customer.

According to Weber (2009), the effective communication between the prospective audience and an organisation depends on the suitable message and channels available for dissemination while symmetrical approach is encouraged. The communication channels can be either traditional or non-traditional as reflected in the figure below:

Figure 1.1 Marketing communication channels
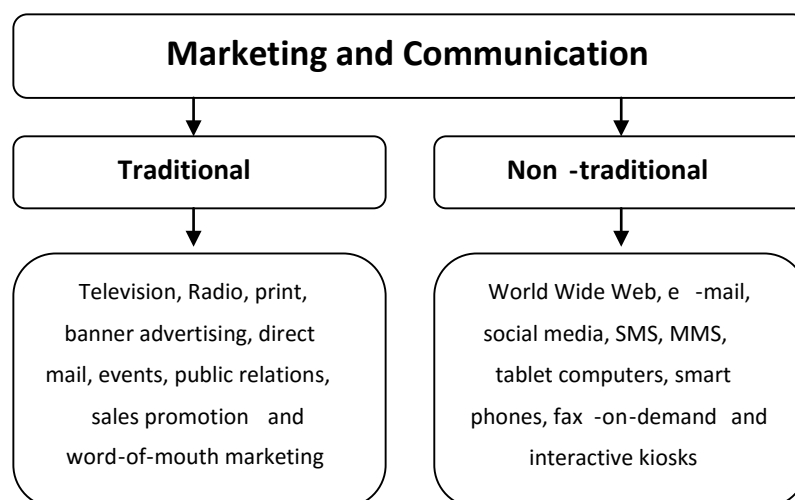
Through the figure depicted above, one can see that traditional communication channels include television, radio, print, banner advertising, direct mail, events, public relations, sales promotion and word-of-mouth while non-traditional which also known as new media include World Wide Web, e-mail, social media platforms, SMS, MMS, computer tablets, smart phones, fax-on-demand and interactive kiosks (Bardone-Cone, Sturm, Lawson, Robinson and Smith, 2010). According to Chonko and Hunt (2018), all these media have a specific role to play in an organisation and both have advantages and disadvantages.

It goes without saying that one of the greatest disadvantages of traditional communication channels is their value of asymmetrical communication in which marketer disseminate information to the prospective audience about a product/service, but audience themselves struggle to actively send the message (Palma, 2016). Asymmetrical communication becomes disadvantageous as it allows the flow of information in one direction without effective interaction.

But new media afford users opportunity to be both senders and receivers of the message while strengthening the relationship between organisation and its target audience (Barnard, 2015). This could be witnessed especially on social media platforms where users are able to engage each and create an online community. New media channels sometimes named 'pull' tools because to decides on their interaction while directly communicating, whereas traditional channels are often named 'push' as the message is pushed to the participants without allowing them effective respond (Ju, Jeong & Chyi, 2014).

Furthermore, Ju et al. (2014) stipulate that the power of communication during marketing lies in enabling prospective audience opportunity to be part of the process and organisation facilitate the engagement and nature of adopting new media channels. However, Palm (2016) articulates non-traditional communication channels that allows users to respond quickly to the message sent out to advertise product/service by an organisation.

Additionally, it is doable to create social media channels in a way that they play a role as launch pad to the prospective audience that allows a conversation with the organisation such that a 'request a call-back' on the hyperspace. This works effectively and differ from how traditional communications are operated as adopted by an organisation to provide information to the customers. Despite the fact that, organisations try harder to deal with all available adversities to communicate the products or services there could still be less responses that emanate from the prospective audience depending on their interest on what is promoted (Jaman & Anshari, 2019).

Pancaningrum and Rahayu (2017) articulate that new media channels are interactive in nature because of flow of participation, while they entails customer-direct crucial scores through facilitation of user-centric and direct communication which influence the strong long-term relationship and good marketing. Organisation's marketers are able to form messages that enable interaction and that value customers' personal needs and wants. Additionally, Chininga et al. (2019) indicate that any company that fail to ensure effective responds towards the messages of the target audience is more likely to fail in driving the brand to success irrespective how well the tools of communication were chosen to send out a message about the product or service to the customers. Hence, the activeness of an organisations could be measured by their ability to engage customers in a robust way and respond to their queries.

As discussed earlier on, new media platforms unlike traditional media, they adopt symmetrical communication culture which deals with two-way engagement through exchange of valued message and other information about an organisation or individual, and that allow the reactions of the receivers who are no longer passive. Consequently, Chonko and Hunt (2018) discuss the following outcomes of non-traditional communication tools:

- Interaction: occurs when a prospective customer start engagement while the recruiter put efforts in understanding the needs of customer.
- Intelligence: organisational marketers are able to accumulate information that is needed for effective marketing at a low cost.

- Individualisation: sale representation or marketers of the organisation are able to target customers individually and engage them at personal perspective.

- Integration: communication strategy of new media in the organisation can complement the traditional media campaigns for support and achievement.

- Restructuring of the industry: Disintermediation abridge the supply chain by shortening the intermediary and fulfilling the transformation with prospective audience.

- Independence location: organisational reaches could be escalated to achieve the globalisation.

Several new media communication tools that are available enable organisation to gain familiarity from customers through two-way communication. According to Jaman and Anshari (2019), social media is growing rapidly due to migration of individuals and organisation to online for interaction which has resulted with development of online community. Consequently, this study continues to discuss social media as a crucial instrument in the society and its benefit in monitoring audience-centric is also indicated.

2.12 PERFORMANCE OF FACEBOOK FOR MARKETING

According to Dhaoui (2014), Facebook as one of the oldest new media platforms is the largest and well rooted due to its uncomplicated accession. In the year 2012 October, which marked eight years of its launch, it gained one billion users who were effective and utilising it for various purposes (Facebook Newsroom, 2015). Additionally, Statista (2015) articulates that the platform has experienced growth of 1.6 billion users monthly.

Facebook monitors communications between its hundreds of millions of users, as there are policies guiding it, which allow users to express their opinions with other online community members, acquaintances and colleagues on the profiles (Van Deventer & Lues, 2019). Many organisations have migrated to online and adopted Facebook because of its dominant and users valued nature, on which they use a communication channel for products and services marketing. According to Nehls and Livengood (2018), organisations adopt Facebook as a marketing engagement tool,

while striving to be part of the users' interaction such that they can understand their interests as well as culture of communication online, which also gives perspective they have about the entire world. Consequently, Kamatula (2017) articulates that the growth and escalated popularity of Facebook and other social media platforms has been supported by a wide coverage in the press which encapsulated the gains as well as some challenges that originated with the use of the online networks. Users are not only obsessed with interacting with family members, friends and acquaintances but utilise the tool for marketing and communicating interesting activities.

Social media users are also active to make comments, judge and share their perspective about a particular brand especially the one that make news headlines. In the social media space, marketing is valued as two-way communication process as users are afforded opportunity to respond as compared to a one-way traditional marketing (Wikström & Wigmo, 2010). Hence, majority of organisations take advantage of online tools for marketing purpose because of their convenient in circulating suggestions through the interest of other users and services as well as products are speedily making known at low cost (Nehls & Livengood, 2018).

Several decades ago, online networks such as Facebook were made available to few people, but now they are adopted by urge number of users. The growth of participation on Facebook over the past years has been together with some challenges and adjustment for its purpose and use patterns across statuses (Ciprian, 2015). Moreover, online blogs, forums and other social networks such as Instagram and Twitter are regarded as other effective channels of communication.

The study conducted by Kanagal (2015) discovered that hyperspace is now regarded as the most accessible environment where organisations' sensitive information can not only curb to the organisation's business boundary due to the availability of access which can be done on smartphones and other internet connected devices. Additionally, Chonko and Hunt (2018) indicate that connection of users on the net and their interaction nowadays has the implication towards the success or failure of various organisations depending on what users are discussing about a particular brand.

Kumar et al (2016) articulated that majority of new organisations have made social media a centre of focusing for brand driving and ensure that, they stay effective on the

platform to communicate with the prospective audience. Moreover, Facebook offers users the means of communication that is quick and adoptable to exchange messages. Through profile creation, users are able to locate and connect with others as well as uniting on the online groups to share the information and interest (Sandlin & Pena, 2014).

Additionally, Baran and Galka (2016) elucidate that the rising use levels of individual effectiveness could be witnessed on social media platform such as Facebook as well as their willingness to stay online while administering the role of the platform and production of the content by users which is also generated and archived. Chonko and Hunt (2018) indicate that social networks are known for popularity and effective communication that attract marketers of various project to stay online and engage target stakeholders and connect them to the brand.

According to Kumar et al. (2016), Facebook as a marketing tool has influenced the development of other social networks and the upgrade of the internet in the past few years. In the past years, offline networks were used also for academic engagement, but various development of online networks has influenced the growth of academic participation on its impact which led to research (Baran & Galka, 2016). Different scholars have studied Facebook aspects such as its privacy, management and profit generation for institutions that market themselves online including institutions of higher learning (Kumar *et al.*, 2016).

2.13 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF USING FACEBOOK AS A MARKETING TOOL

The emergence of every tool has opportunities and challenges that users have to come across and deal with when using it. Therefore, this section highlights the challenges and opportunities of Facebook faced by divisions of marketing and publication in the institutions of higher learning.

2.13.1 Opportunities of using Facebook

Peruta and Shields (2018) indicate that university brand is what portray the institution to the people focusing on its uniqueness, the role it plays to fulfil students' needs, ability to deliver academic excellence and assist prospective students to make sound

decision. Touchette, Schanski and Lee (2015) indicate that uniqueness of the brand demand organisation's ability communicates it and work tirelessly with other subgroups within the premises of the organisation. But it is imperative for organisations not to rely on social media space only but also utilise other available media. Zimmerman (2020) argues that content that attract users on social media can drive an organisation and in the long run grow it depending on what is communicated to the prospective audience. Van Deventer and Lues (2019) indicate that the existence of brand within the communities gives the people opportunity to speak about it which could on be online or offline.

According to Xiong et al. (2018), in this fast-ever-growing environment, it becomes imperative for an organisation to utilise social media to make brand popular and connect it to the prospective audience as a lot of people are active online and fast to share message to the online community group.

It is important for organisations to try social media platforms in communicating their brands on a small scale and check the outcomes. Universities slowly can adopt social media and its implication on running communication with the target audience. Hence, universities should be brilliant in managing social media pages and actively communicate with the followers because poor social media page and response can result with students being in charge of judging how things are evolving in the university.

According to Brech et al. (2017), reactions of students on the online platforms of the universities have power to determine their view about how a particular institution run things. Chen and Divall indicate that social media complement traditional media, and both should be coordinated in an effective manner. But it is through social media platforms that organisations are able to quickly get feedback about their status of operation. Moreover, Chesick (2015) affirms one other role that social media could play in organisation is during crisis as its applications can assist in managing crisis. This is because the mood of the prospective audience can be analysed on social media and prevented before they can cause crisis. Additionally, Chen and Divall (2018) maintain that Facebook platform hold visibility on Google, which gives search engine optimisation (SEO). Madisonlogic (2011) indicates the following benefits when one uses social media:

- Reach: one benefits of using Facebook is its popularity and fast pace which can assist in making brand know.

- Traffic: Facebook manages the occurrences of traffic online to other corporate channels.

- New audiences: social media helps in connecting with prospective audience and create an effort to communicate with them and explain the brand especially to the new audience.

- Expertise: It is through Facebook that organisation's staff are able to provide relevant information to the prospective audience and educate them too while indicating some of organisational expertise.

The world and its industrial revolution develop every day, and this result in social media expanding. Therefore, public relations practitioners of organisations should be able to navigate and chose social media tools that are applicable in communicating organisation's products/service to the audience (Van Deventer & Lues, 2019). In similar vein, the selection of the media should be influenced by the available stakeholders that the organisations intend to attract and win, if it is to achieve its set goals.

Therefore, universities and colleges embark on social media such as Facebook to communicate and update registered students, high school learners who want to further their studies at tertiary level, as well as sponsors, graduates and overall community with interest on activities that are taking place in academic premises. This gives prospective students an opportunity to compare and research about their preferred academic arena. According to Clark and Bacon (2018), organisations are able to understand their target audience better on social media through interaction that takes place between online users. So, this influence the planning of marketing strategy, and how they can be effectively implemented to succeed in the ever-changing world.

2.13.2 Challenges faced by Facebook users

Social media management needs someone who is able to strategise and coordinate the platforms effectively and be up to date all the time. Whenever a customer poses a question or any comments about the product or service organisation providing, the

marketers are expected to assist by giving clarity which this made easier on social media (Van Deventer & Lues, 2019). This shows that social media presence, mostly in institutions of higher learning requires coordinators to be active all the time to connect with other users for the success organisation. Cao et al (2021) indicate that social media has power to strengthen relationship among users while it also requires user's time and exchange of the message effectively. Hence, it is imperative in the organisation to have social media coordinator who function effectively to circulate information that is important for public eye and review the sites pertaining the followers' reactions.

However, Raza et al. (2020), indicate that the majority of organisations still have challenges in developing social media plan, even though they desire to migrate to online platforms for marketing purpose. This is because social media demand well-structured formats with creative design of uploaded posters and the outsourcing of website as well as pages conveners for best outcomes. Alghizzawi et al. (2019) agree that social media profiles are cost-free, while a lot of money is spent on the design and outsourcing skills to win the users.

A lot of studies conducted on the utility of Facebook and its features have indicated that, few organisations mastered the platform and use it effectiveness while other created profile that are less functioning for marketing processes (Owyang, 2010; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016; Nehls & Livengood, 2018 and Vasconcelos, 2017). In South Africa, there are some organisations which don't have equipped public relations practitioners with skills, and this make it difficult for them to use Facebook to market their brands (Savattanadilok, 2014). In the same line, Agostino & Arnaboldi (2017); Stueber & Wurth (2017); and Silva et al (2020)] outline the common challenges faced by institutions when using Facebook for marketing.

Some of the challenges are as follows:

- Sometimes it becomes hard for organisation to persuade prospective audience to be connected with the organisation. Because target audience can be online throughout the day communicating with each other but turn to organisation's page if there is something that interest or benefit them.

- There is constant observation of the audience that is required as social networking demand monitoring. Sometimes, organisation can find it challenging to communicate well balanced message to the prospective audience without irritating them. But the effectiveness of organisation's page will depend on the time and efforts coordinators put online.

- Other challenge is management's lack of understanding of the role of social media for organisation. This could make them to obstruct the provision of funds for activities that are taking place online including marketing. Therefore, social media coordinators in the organisation may find it challenging to implement effective online strategy.

- Facebook offers a portal to multitudes of users, but the profile of each user differs histrionically. It becomes imperative for organisations to collect adequate information about prospective audience for efficacy of marketing campaign.

- Despite the culture of online that marketers motivate prospective audience to engage their pages on Facebook, risks could still be posed when individuals are expressing the thoughts on the brand's virtual space. Because the institution gets exposed to 'voice of the consumer' which may not always put organisation in the positive side depending on what's communicating and organisation's reputation.

2.14 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.14.1 The Practice theory

According to Brauchler and Postil (2009), social science theorists agree that there is no such thing as a coherent, unified "practice theory", only a body of highly diverse writings by thinkers who adopt a loosely defined practice approach. The practice approach starts not with media text or media institutions but from media related practices in all its looseness and openness. It asks quite simply: What are people (Individuals, groups, institutions) doing in relation to media across a whole range of situations and context? (Couldry, 2012). Rouse (2007) asserts that practice theory as concerned with (a) reconciling structure and human agency (as seen in the discussion of the relationship between practice, meaning, and social norms, above); (b) with the body (also emphasised by Postil and Stern in their overviews); (c) with the notion of

practice as both prelinguistic and dependent on hermeneutic processes; and finally, (d) deeply implicated in the self-reflexivity of the social sciences as well as possibly constitutive of those sciences.

Swidler (2001) explains that the aim of practice theory is to replace an older notion of "culture" as internal "ideas" or "meanings" with a different analysis of culture in terms of two types of publicly observable processes: first, practices themselves, particularly "routine activities (rather than consciously chosen actions) notable for their unconscious, automatic, un-thought character" (Swidler, 2001:74) and, second, discourse which "is not what anyone says, but the system of meanings that allows them to say anything at all" (2001:75).

2.14.2 Marketing communication mix tool

Trehan and Trehan (2011:42) defined marketing communication mix as a "dialogue between business unit and its present and potential customers that takes place during pre-selling, selling and post-selling stages", communication mix, or promotion mix is considered to be a fundamental aspect of business marketing initiatives (Dudovskiy, 2013). Todorova (2015) states that in the era of mass communications and emerging mobile technologies, an organisation must build an adequate mix of marketing communications, in order not to drown in a sea of information. This will be made in a relation with the good interaction of objects and forces, influencing the management outside the company, and marketer's ability to establish and maintain successful corporations with target customers. Marketing communications of an organisation is a complex of measures, techniques and methods by which information about goods, services or brand of the company reaches its users (Todorova, 2015). McCarthy (1998) determines the mix of marketing and communications as a specific combination of elements such as: advertising; personal selling; sales promotions; public relations and direct marketing that companies use to implement their targets for advertising and marketing. Figure 2 is a simplified diagram showing how marketing communication elements and activities can be integrated.

Figure 2.1: Marketing communication mix

Below is an elastration of the elements:

Advertisement: Philip Kotler and Kevin Lane Keller (2012) define it as any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services from the sponsor evident by the print media (newspapers and magazines), telecommunications (radio and television), network communications (telephone, cable, satellite, wireless), electronic media (audiotape, videotape, videodisk, CD-ROM, web page), and display media (billboards, signs, posters). It is an impersonal form of mass communication, which offers a high degree of control of those responsible for the preparation and implementation of promotional messages (Todorova, 2015).

Personal selling: Personal sales are expressed in a personal presentation of ideas and products to the client, in which the seller persuades and helps the buyer decide to purchase. Personal sales represent two-way communication between seller and buyer in order to effect the purchase by targeting long term relationships with retailers and consumers (Todorova, 2015).

Sales promotion: Encouraging sales techniques impact to the buyer through personal communication and a system of market tools to induce or accelerate the purchase of short-term effect. It includes marketing activities adding value to products

for a limited period of time in order to stimulate consumer purchases and effectiveness of intermediaries (Todorova, 2015).

Public relations: Public relations / PR / are an interactive system using one or more communication devices for notice measurable effects. They are relevant to all activities in the organisation and cover all communications. PR are not focused on the product; they are focused on the whole company. Their main objectives are to achieve understanding with the audience and influence public opinion (Todorova, 2015).

Direct marketing: One of the fastest growing sectors in the global economy is direct marketing, by which organisations communicate directly with their target customers to generate reaction and/or transaction. "Traditionally, direct marketing is not considered as part of the promotional mix, but it has become an integral part of the integrated marketing communications of many organisations and often includes separate targets, budgets, and strategies. It is not just direct mail or electronic catalogue". The development of technology and the use of the internet make possible to apply new and attractive forms of direct marketing that contain the potential for branding and generating sales (Todorova, 2015).

Todorova (2015) has stated that the powerful internet and mobile technology have led to rapid increase of companies' forces to offer their products and build relationships with your customers through social media, websites, mobile applications, e-commerce, online promotions, etc. Creating an online presence and finding the most appropriate way to communicate with the target audience is cost effective, fast and reliable.

These are the main tools for creating effective marketing communication mix of every business. Realising this aspect of its activity the company should be aware of the various legal and ethical issues related to marketing communications. Respect the privacy of customers and adherence to social norms and government regulations while building a powerful marketing communication mix contributes to the growth of any organisation (Todorova, 2015).

2.15 SUMMARY

The chapter discussed the significant concepts that apply in the study, such as the development of the internet and the web, a detailed description of social media, social networking sites, Facebook and lastly, marketing. This is crucial as it provides a foundation for a clear understanding of the study. Moreover, ethical principles on social media were discussed to give clear concern of how organisations could adhere to a culture of morality as they migrate to social media. The history of Facebook was also discussed in order to indicate how the platform fit into marketing procedure. The researcher also covered challenges and opportunities when Facebook is adopted for marketing. Furthermore, channels of communication that could be used for marketing were also explored as well as their uniqueness. Additionally, the researcher indicated the different types of media under traditional and non-traditional and how both symmetrical and asymmetrical fit into these media. The advantages and disadvantages that social networks have when one implement marketing plans were discussed. The researcher also gave a summary of the involvement of the institutions of higher learning on social media platforms for communicating their message to prospective students.

The researcher will discuss the methodology employed in the study in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodology that is used in the study. Besides enabling the researcher to attain the objectives of the study, the chosen methodology also helps the researcher to contextualise the problem articulated in chapter one. According to

Attia and Edge (2017), research methodology entails the strategy, setting, sampling, limitations, data collection and analysis tools in the study. This chapter's focus is to discuss the research methods used to collect data, the research design as well as the techniques that were employed in this study. This chapter also consists of an in-depth knowledge on the collection of data and the selected methods. It also discussed the ethical consideration that were followed during the data collection process. For this study, a qualitative approach was applied.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is qualitative in nature under which exploratory design is chosen to reveal the impact of social media for marketing purposes. Creswell and Poth (2016) argue that 'research design' refers to a particular strategy that a researcher chooses to conduct an investigation. Additionally, Bloumfield and Fisher (2019) articulate that research design and indicate the collection of data and data analysis strategy. The selection of research design depicts the decision about the priority given to a wide range of the research procedure.

The researcher used exploratory design to collect in-depth information pertaining the participants' attitudes and perceptions towards the services, programmes and products on Facebook as a tool that enhance the marketing service of University of Limpopo. This focuses on the exploration of areas where no prior information existed and also to reveals the behaviours, trends, needs and themes that emerged from data were given attention.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the systematic and theoretical analysis of the methods used to the area of the study. Methodology carries the theoretical analysis of the detailed methods and elements associated with the particular knowledge (Fletcher, 2017). Research methodologies encapsulate paradigm, models, phases, mixed method, quantitative or qualitative techniques (Fletcher, 2017). However, Snyder (2019) indicates that research methodology does not easily offer solutions. Instead, it offers the theoretic support for understanding the set of methods that could be applied to achieve a particular goal.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research approach. A qualitative research methodology is imperative for this study as it deals with independent subjects. Moreover, qualitative methodology allows the researcher to narrate while presenting crucial reasons and participants' points of view pertaining the studied phenomenon. According to Merriam and Grenier (2019), qualitative research method is a scientific research that intends to give answers by applying planned procedures. Moreover, qualitative assist the researcher to collect data, produce findings that were not easily determined about the investigated phenomenon and also produce findings that are beyond the boundaries of the study.

The qualitative research is concerned with qualitative phenomenon involving quality, it is also characterised with investigating the why and how of decision making, being non-numerical, descriptive, applying reasoning and using words (Chauvette, Schick-Makaroff & Molzahn, 2019). Additionally, Myers (2019) asserts that qualitative approaches enable understanding of experiences and processes by incorporating a multi perspective approach to studying phenomenon. In that light, the study supports that qualitative approach structure to best understand factors contributing to the effectiveness of Facebook for marketing purposes.

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

This section focuses on the value of choosing sampling technique and population. The researcher would use semi-structured interview and observations to attain the study's objectives. Hence, there is a necessity to have sampling and population in the study.

3.4.1 Population

The researcher chose the University of Limpopo's Marketing and Communications Department staff as the study influenced by the institution's utilisation of Facebook for marketing on daily basis. This trait of social media uses by the employees on its own made them relevant to the study. According to Etikan and Bala (2017), population refers to set of principles or the total group of people that a researcher depends on to achieve the objectives of the study or solve mentioned problem.

3.4.2 Sampling

Purposive sampling technique under a non-probability sampling method was employed to select this study's participants. Purposive sampling guides the researcher to choose participants that entail characteristics which are important for the investigated phenomenon. Consequently, purposive sampling technique is applied when a researcher focuses on the participant that give an insight about the issues that are partially known. The targeted population comprises of three (3) employees out of seventeen (17) at the University of Limpopo who are working at the marketing division. The chosen three (3) staff members are the ones who are coordinating university social media pages. The researcher also selected the university's Facebook page amongst other social media accounts for online observation. The University of Limpopo has four social media accounts including Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. However, the researcher purposively chose Facebook, since it is the most used social media account with many followers.

According to Schreier (2018), the purposive sampling technique is used to select participants for a study when the researcher has specific knowledge regarding the participants. Moreover, purposive sampling is defined as a method wherein individuals are chosen for a particular purpose (Hoban, 2019). Thus, Hulland, Baumgartner and Smith (2018) indicate that research sample is a set of population that represent the study's interest and a researcher select it based on the problem intended to be solved to achieve the objectives of the study. For the purpose of the study, participants must meet certain criteria such as being university employee at marketing department and working with Facebook on a daily basis. Hence, the researcher selected participants at University of Limpopo, who are social media coordinators for the marketing and communication division

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

For the researcher to deal with the problem and achieve objectives, there is a need to collect data and this can be done when the relevant data collection tools are selected for the study. According to Mclntoch and Morse (2015), data collection is the process of gathering information about the phenomenon while establish organised process that allow a researcher to research questions, test the hypothesis and review the

outcomes. This employed semi-structure interview and online observation as suitable tool for the study as the researcher observed the interaction of university with prospective students on Facebook while semi-structured interview questions directed to the coordinators of social media platforms for the university.

3.5.1 Semi-structured interview

The researcher selected semi-structured interview because of its influence on the set up of questions as well as detailed information. Additionally, the interviews benefit the researcher to attain different views about the studied phenomenon. Semi-structured interview, in this study, assisted the researcher to also accumulate non-verbal expression of the participants which connect to the gathered information on Facebook. According to McIntoch and Morse (2015), semi-structured usually adopted when the researcher aims to gather information about what the participants are doing and how they feel or think about a particular phenomenon. During interview questions the researcher asks questions prepared and monitor how they participants answer them to obtain fruitful information while follow up questions are also asked to explore arising issues (Johnson & Posthuma, 2019). The proceedings of the interview were recorded to allow the researcher to transcribe data and consent of participation gets presented to the participants before questions are answered.

Moreover, Vila-Henninger (2019) further explains that there are four elements of semi-structured. Firstly, semi-structured interview allow interaction in the view of conversation to take place between interviewer and interviewee. Secondly, set up of the questions allow the interview to be in an engagement to answer the questions during the proceedings. Thirdly, the researcher is able to review the collected information to narrate and exposes the themes emerged. Lastly, the context of communication where the data should be developed is guided.

Advantages of semi-structured interviews

The researcher used semi-structured interviews as it enabled the researcher to explore the researched phenomenon. Additionally, the semi-structure interviews further allow the researcher to delve deeper into researched topic. Therefore,

according to Brown and Danaher (2019), advantages of semi-structured interviews are as follows:

- Interviewers can prepare questions beforehand to help guide the conversation and keep respondents on topic.
- Allows for open-ended responses from participants for more in-depth information.
- Encourages two-way communication.
- Provides an opportunity so that interviewers can learn answers to questions and the reasons behind the answers.
- Allows respondents time to open up about sensitive issues.
- Provides qualitative data to compare to previous and future data.

Disadvantages of semi-structured interviews

Despite the semi-structured interviews been a perfect fit for the study, the interviews also have disadvantages. According to Brown and Danaher (2019), some of the disadvantages of the semi-structured interviews includes:

- It is time-consuming to sit down with respondents and conduct an open-ended interview.
- It requires extensive resources.
- It can be challenging to find an interviewer with the right amount of training to conduct the interview properly.
- You need to interview enough people to draw conclusions and make comparisons.
- It is possible to write leading questions, and that could bias the interview.

The University of Limpopo's marketing and communication division staff that coordinate social media pages of the institution were identified as relevant participants and invited to participate in the study. The researcher gave the participants a consent form to connect themselves and to understand the terms and conditions before they participated in the study. Moreover, the interviews were conducted to obtain insights about the institution's use of Facebook platform as a

marketing mechanism. The researcher did not articulate the time frame of the participants as their availability valued and guided this study.

3.5.2 Online observations

According to Jorgensen (2015), observation is defined as one of the research approaches that help researcher accumulate the insights about the population that is observed in the context. The researcher observed the University of Limpopo's Facebook page and created screenshots to provide a fully detailed information on the unobtrusive observation tool used. It is through observation and interaction that one gets the opportunity to learn about how a particular group communicate on the university Facebook page. Sometimes, it is imperative for the observed group to know about the observer while arguments made that if one is aware of the observation can change how they do things on daily bases to hide some of the activities. The researcher should be able to understand elements that influence the structuring of the questions to deal with a phenomenon. During the observation of the University of Limpopo's Facebook page the researcher chose unobtrusive observation tool, to avoid interjecting with the interaction while try to understand the environment of engagement between the university and followers to address the research problem of the study.

Consequently, Jorgensen (2015) articulates that unobtrusive tool observes the participation of the study's target population without interference. A researcher in the unobtrusive observation tool adjusts the roles depending on the structure of the studied phenomenon. But one has to agree that unobtrusive observation tool has advantages in the study pertaining the efficacy of the flow of the messages among the observed population.

However, Rosenbaum (2018) alludes that observation is a data collection tool that is dependable and effective in gathering information. The research to obtain primary information when applying observation technique in the study. The researcher visited the university's Facebook account to observe how the institution communicates its messages and responds to the public's comments and queries. Online observation was used to observe on how the institution communicates or markets themselves through Facebook. Online observation is defined as a data collection technique that is grounded on the internet-based community (Rosenbaum, 2018). It is through online observation that a researcher is able to gather data about uploaded information

regarding an organisation on the Facebook pages, that is utilised as communication and marketing technique.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

This section outlines data analysis technique used by the researcher to analyse the collected data. According to Chambers (2018), data analysis occurs when the researcher tries to make meaning out of collected data. Moreover, Jiang, Wang, Lv, Qi and Singh (2019) indicate that data analysis involves the assessment of the collected data using steps and logical explanation of the concepts on the data.

3.6.1 Thematic Content Analysis

The data collected using semi-structured interview method was analysed using thematic content analysis method. The researcher found it useful to reveal themes that emerge from the data from the participants and organise it categorically. The data were transcribed, read and important themes were identified, and this helped the researcher to avoid any exaggeration and fabrication of data and the research findings. According to Chambers (2018), thematic analysis technique applied when the researcher extract meanings or concepts from a data because through it one is able to get themes in deductive or inductive ways. Thus, Mogaji and Youn (2019) argue that thematic analysis is an approach for determining meanings and ideas from the collected data which the researcher transcribe the recordings to depict the patterns and understanding of the participants about the researched phenomenon. Scharp and Sanders (2019) indicate the following steps of thematic content analysis:

- Phase 1: Familiarising oneself with a data

This phase required the researcher to study collected data systematically and vigorously to familiarise themselves with the data which was transcribed from audio recording which were later documented from the interviews conducted. According to Mogaji and Youn (2019), the collected data, be it speeches or interview should be transcribed carefully with correct spelling as this step influence other steps of the analysis. Furthermore, Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) state that it is imperative for

a researcher to read through a data several times before coding and searching for meanings.

The researcher collected data and thereafter familiarise herself with it by reading it frequently. The researcher recorded the interviews and transcribed them, then read and re-do through the transcripts, making notes of initials ideas to be familiar with the data collected. This involved careful reading of the data to extract themes, explaining why Facebook is used as a marketing tool at universities.

- Phase 2: Generating initial codes

This step deals with the categories of the findings in related to the study's aim. The researcher created a preliminary list of ideas related to the data and organised it into significance groups and gave the initial codes to the data as indicated by Scharp & Sanders (2019). In this phase the researcher documented all participant's meetings, reflective journals and used a coding framework to generate codes. According to Chambers (2018), codes in the data can be formulated inductively or deductively depending on the questions researcher wants to answer and attain the aim of the study. Moreover, in this regard it was imperative for the researcher to begin the entire process strategically from the set of data and identify the important elements that may or may not repeated in the analysis.

After the researcher had familiarised herself with the data collected, a list of ideas was generated. This step was the production of initial codes from the collected data. The codes identified a feature of the raw data. All actual extracts were coded and collated together within each code. Codes of analysis that explain why Facebook is used as a marketing tool were generated.

- Phase 3: Searching for themes

This step involves naming of relevant themes in the data collected. Themes are organised based on the codes the moment initial codes are depicted. Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) guided the researcher to be able to give a name to each set of codes by writing a brief description for that term distinctly. Furthermore, these authors explain how codes produced into theme, subthemes and the occurrences of codes in the same

process the researcher would have to write them down and extract themes from them if need be. Mogaji and Youn (2019) argue that using tactics in the form of maps, software and diagrams is helpful in the study.

After data were coded and collated, different codes were organised and identified into credible themes. Assembling all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes were done. The researcher then analysed the codes and considered how different codes could be combined to form the all-comprehensive themes. Thereafter, the themes were then arranged into themes.

- Phase 4: Reviewing theme

This step guides the researcher to review the analysed data to ensure validity and reliability for the purpose of correcting mistakes and modifying themes. According to Mogaji and Youn (2019), this step involves checking and reviewing the themes identified in phase 3 to determine if they complement the internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. Furthermore, Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) maintain that highlighted data that entails themes should be understandable for themes to be clear and indicate the uniqueness. The researcher then had to re-read all the entire collected data to check if there are no overlaps of themes and how can the new themes be created.

The themes that developed from the collected data were then reviewed and advanced. The researcher began to review the themes to refine them and remained with interesting and salient themes. All collated extracts for each theme were read and considered to see whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern.

- Phase 5: Defining and naming of themes

This is the step in which the researcher had to define themes, review them while continuously analyse the collected data. According to Scharp and Sanders (2019), it is crucial for a researcher refine and define the codes to be able to understand what is entailed by themes and the overall meaning of the themes. Consequently, the researcher's analysis of the collected data's content should result with the themes that connect to the entire investigation of the study and the themes have sub-themes.

Themes were defined and further refined. The researcher ran themes names and clear working definitions that outlined the essence of each theme briefly. For each time, the researcher made an analysis and put it in writing. Themes that relate to marketing that is all about identifying the essence of each theme and determining aspects of the data collected under each theme was taken.

- Phase 6: Producing the report

This is the last step that once a researcher obtained themes from the data, report is compiled. According to Vaismoradi and Snelgrive (2019), relevant themes will be exposed through logical explanation. Hence, this step allows the researcher an opportunity to give a reader a glimpse of the entire study through discussion that is supported by a literature review.

The researcher made a final analysis and wrote the report, in this instance, the analysis for the dissertation. The researcher provided a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story of the data collected, within and across the themes.

3.6.2 Content analysis

Data collected through pictures posted and texts that form part of comments from the university Facebook page was analysed through content analysis. Content analysis method is relevant in the context of the study because there is a need to critically analyse the content of the social media sites. Tracy (2019) articulates that content analysis is a tool that allow a researcher to understand applied language, semiotics and texts to have an insight information about how people create a sense about certain aspect and the entire life experience. The researcher selected content analysis technique to analyse observation of the University of Limpopo's Facebook page. The researcher used content analysis to study the messages/responses of the university followers on Facebook page and the culture of interaction.

According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis technique involves the review of documents content and objects such as texts which might emerge as audios,

videos or images. Furthermore, Riffe, Lacy, Fico and Watson (2019) indicate that content analysis allow the researcher to get insight knowledge about the study by looking on the engagement and responses among the people including on online platforms.

3.7 QUALITY CRITERIA

This section looks at the quality criteria which was observed by the researcher when conducting a study. The researcher in this study earns trustworthiness by adhering to, Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), quality criteria could be seen as the trustworthiness of the study that is managed by the researcher. The researcher in this study manages the trustworthy by complying with the credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability.

3.7.1 Credibility

The researcher ensured that the credibility of this study was adhered to by giving the participants an opportunity to be the judges regarding to whether the findings of the study correspond with their perceptions for validation and approval. According to Thomas (2013), credibility in the study is earned when the researcher made an assurance that participants will be kept anonymous and identity will be disclosed for safety reasons.

Credibility also served a purpose of determining the factuality of the data collected. Tracy (2010) explains that credibility occurs when there is correspondence between the participants and the manner in which a researcher depicts the participants' viewpoints. Therefore, this study used applied credibility the researcher tried to understand the relationship between the University of Limpopo's use of Facebook for marketing purposes and its effect on the audience. The participants' personal information including identities were not revealed.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability generalises findings of the study and their applicability in other contexts. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), it is through transferability that a researcher can be able to prove the authenticity of outcomes. Moreover, the researcher in the

study provided the participants' crucial role for outcomes and organise them in a manner that are transferable to various settings. Thus, Mertens (2007) indicates that transferability in the research refers to process that could be taken to transfer results of the study to other contexts. This study ensured that all processes are followed to manage data collected based on the effectiveness of Facebook for marketing purposes at the University of Limpopo can be transferable to studies with similar topics. The study ensured transferability of the results by providing an in-depth and clear explanation of the research methodology and settings of the study. Mertens (2007) indicates that when the researcher follows the relevant process, the obtained results are more likely to be the same if applied to another environment studying the same phenomenon.

3.7.3 Confirmability

Confirmability was considered when the researcher ensured that results are organised in a manner that it made easy for other scholars to be able to review the results to see that there is no biasness that took place. The researcher in this study maintained confirmability by ensuring that the interpretation of data is not based on researcher's own preferences and viewpoints, was grounded in the researched and collected data.

Through confirmability, the researcher took steps that explain the findings of the study to avoid individual opinions in the interpretation (Mertens, 2007; Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). Confirmability also indicates how well the findings flow from the data (Shenton, 2004). The researcher ensured confirmability by searching the data for evidence that disconfirms the usefulness of Facebook as a tool for improving marketing services and also discussing the research process and findings with experts.

3.7.4 Dependability

Dependability in the research focuses on the manner in which research technique will give the same results on different occasions (Thomas, 2013). The study conducted by Korstjens and Moser (2018) indicated that dependability is consistency of the study's results over time. The researcher ensure that the analysis procedure relates with the chosen qualitative research design. The audit trail method was used to ensure dependability. The audit trail is when the researcher evidently explains the steps taken

from the initiation of the study to the closure through outcomes discovered to address the indicated problem (Tracy, 2010).

The study closely followed a University of Limpopo's Code of Ethics. In the study the dependability was tested using consistency method in the data collected through interviews. Consistency was used even when the participants are not the same individuals. Dependability occurs when research techniques selected gave the same results in various situations (Thomas, 2013).

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher obtains ethical clearance letter from the institution. Before asking for permission from the participants, the researcher informs the participants of the purpose of the study and their role in participating in the study. Ethics defines what is morally right and acceptable as well as what is wrong and unacceptable within society. The intention of the studies is to reveal new insights about existing phenomenon and other issues, but this should be done in manner that population does not get harmed (Peruta & Shields, 2018). In the study conducted by Wellington (2015) ethics are explained as a branch of philosophy that deals with the morality of people and guides the norms of behaviour of people. Furthermore, Sin and Syn (2014) indicate how the applicability of ethics are important in our lives and researchers are encouraged to respect the dignity of the participants and publish accurate results.

Scott (2013) articulates that ethical issues are important as they afford the opportunity for research proceedings, from identifying research questions and the approach for findings publishing. Additionally, Wellington (2015) articulates that ethics are principles that lead people on morally acceptable behaviours within the society. Thus, ethics govern how people should treat one another and behavioural conduct. The following are elements of ethical consideration that should be applied in the study:

3.8.1 Permission to conduct the Study

The researcher obtained ethical certificate from the University of Limpopo's Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) before collecting data for this study. This was important for the institution to peruse the proposal of the researcher, and see if it is

possible to conduct the study without harming and posing risk to the participants as well as the online users (Kruger, Ndebele & Horn, 2014). The study observed all the critical steps of research ethics outlined by the University of Limpopo.

3.8.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality means that the participants' credentials are known to the researcher kept confidential (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Berg and Lune (2017) point out that to guarantee the participants confidentiality, the researcher must not divulge records and lists of participants. The information obtained from the participants was used only for the benefit of the study and participants were not pressured to take part in the study (Hammersley and Traianou, 2012).

Confidentiality as a key ethical principle was respected by the researcher. The researcher did not ask the participants to enlist their names on the drafted interview questions used to obtain the data of the study. All the participants were kept anonymous and the questions of the study were checked by the researcher and supervisor.

3.8.3 Informed consent

The researcher informed the participants about the nature of the study and that their participation is voluntarily. Hammersley and Traianou (2012) state that it is imperative for a researcher to inform the participants about the nature of the study and should they wish to withdraw, they can without a doubts or fear. According to Arifin (2018), the procedure of obtaining the consent of the participants entails the following: consent form should be given to participants before the be part of the study, the purpose the study should be understood and participants should agree to form part of the study without being forced. The researcher obtained ethical certificate and also drafted consent forms that were shown to the participants.

3.8.4 Human dignity and respect

The researcher ensured that the participants' rights of human dignity and respect are taken into cognisance. The communication during participation in this study was not used against the participants and was also relevant to the study. According

Max Chochinov and Mckeen (2011), respect and dignity are very important aspects that need to be practiced hence privacy and self-worth through interpersonal reflected behaviours should be valued.

3.8.5 Plagiarism

An Onions (2021) defines plagiarism a practice of copying someone's ideas and make them your own. Beauchamp and Bowie (2004) define plagiarism as the act of using someone's work as your own or directly copy the work without giving intext referencing or citation. In this study, the researcher made sure that all work used is referenced and cited properly.

3.8.6 Turnitin

Turnitin refers to an internet-based tool that prevent plagiarism created by iParadigms LLC which also helps academic to know how much of the work is copied from the original sources (Definitions.net, 2020). The researcher checked for any plagiarism by submitting their study to Turnitin on the University of Limpopo's dedicated webpage.

3.9 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the methodology and research design used in the study. The researcher selected qualitative approach because the interest of the study rests in the human experience of an individual and their behaviour towards the use of Facebook for marketing purposes at University of Limpopo. Moreover, semi-structured interview and observation were chosen as proper data collection methods. It also gives an in-depth view of ethical considerations necessary for every research report.

The chapter further explained the importance of the selected qualitative research design and its relevance in this study. Additionally, references were made pertaining sampling techniques, sample and population of the study. This chapter also provides quality criterion namely: transferability, dependability, confirmability and credibility. Research methodology attends as a route which is selected by the researcher in order to achieve the objectives and aims of the study and also provide the solution or answer to the research problem.

The next chapter will discuss the data analysis and interpretation of the study.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, research methods used to conduct the study were clearly articulated. Therefore, this chapter provides a discussion of the findings of the study. The study aimed to examine the impact of social media as a marketing tool at the University of Limpopo. Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) was used to analyse the accumulated data, which include online observation and interview schedule. The identified themes are presented in accordance with the main objectives of the study, namely: (a) Identify the manner in which institutions of higher learning uses social media for marketing purposes (b) Establish the challenges and opportunities of social media as a marketing tool; and (c) Examine the performance of Facebook for marketing.

The themes identified in this section answered the following research questions:

- Why do institutions of higher learning use social media as a marketing tool?

- What are the challenges and opportunities of social media as a marketing tool?
- How does marketing and communication personnel evaluate public responses?

The emerged themes provided answers to the aforementioned research questions and further gave an in-depth understanding of the researched phenomenon. As a result, this chapter represent the main themes that emerged from the data analysis.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE TRANSCRIBED DATA

The process that was followed after the data was accumulated is articulated. Once the online observation and interviews were conducted, the audio recording were transcribed, the questions and participant answers were typed for analysis. Throughout the chapter, excerpts from the interviews are used and presented verbatim, where necessary. In compliance with the ethical conduct as stipulated in the previous chapter (Chapter 3) to ensure confidentiality, participants of the study are referred to by letter, i.e. as participant A-C. Any other identifying characteristic of the participants have also been omitted to avoid any participant being identified. The relevant biographic information of the participants is also presented.

4.3 SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS

The three participant's relevant demographic information is provided in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Demographic and background information of employees at the Department of Marketing and Communication, University of Limpopo.

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Nationality
A	Female	30-35 years	Coloured	South African
B	Female	35-40 years	African	South African
C	Female	35-40 years	African	South African

4.4 SECTION B: DISCUSSION OF THEMES

Twelve themes were identified from the analysed data, namely: (a) Distribution of information (b) Marketing tool (c) The effectiveness of Facebook (d) Target market (e)

Possible ways to reach Facebook site (f) Feedback (g) Facebook page performance and efficacy since its establishment (h) Sustainability of social media platforms (i) Updated content on Facebook page (j) Public reaction (k) Facebook response by social media coordinator (l) Engagement between marketers and audience. The themes are discussed concerning verbatim supporting quotes obtained from the interview transcript. Moreover, the findings are interpreted by providing supporting previous research and/or theories.

Table 4.2 presents a summary of the themes that became apparent through the application of the interview transcript.

Table 4.2: Demographics and themes

Section A
Demographics
- Gender   - Age   - Ethnicity   - Nationality
Section B
Themes
- Distribution of information   - Marketing tool   - The effectiveness of Facebook   - Target market   - Possible ways to reach Facebook site   - Feedback

- Facebook page performance and efficacy since its establishment
- Sustainability of social media platforms
- Updated content on Facebook page
- Public reaction
- Facebook response by social media coordinator
- Engagement between marketers and audience

4.4.1 To identify the manner in which institutions of higher learning uses social media for marketing purposes.

Theme 1: Distribution of information

The comprehensive literature indicates that social media platforms has grown into a platform for businesses or organisations to market themselves through interaction with customers, audience and self-promotions (Mochon, et al., 2017). In support, Pinto and Yagnik (2017) were both of the view that Facebook is a powerful marketing tool and a great space to keep customers, audience, and followers informed, regarding the development of a brand identity as well as broaden organisational reach. The study has established that the use of Facebook as a marketing tool has a positive impact on the promotion of institutional products; instruction of new services and programmes offered by the institution. As a result, the use of Facebook as a marketing tool at higher institution of leaning remains effective. Participant B has articulated the following regarding the use of social media, particularly Facebook:

Facebook helps in the marketing of University of Limpopo services and programmes especially to prospective students, current students and community members.

Another noteworthy example of this articulation was provided by participant C:

The purpose of Facebook is to sell the university services rendered to new interested students and bring out the best to those who are already students and staff members.

Significantly, participant C further stipulated that social media is used a platform to illustrate institutions achievements. The participant mentioned the following:

Social media is also used to show off the university achievements where those already part of the institution must not regret to be part.

According to Brown-Peterson (2017), communication with students and staff is essential at higher institution of learning. In response, various institutions communicate with both students and staff member using tools ranging from Emails, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube channels (Brown-Peterson, 2017). The study has further found that most commercial information is posted on the Facebook page, such as events and projects that the university is embarking on. Importantly, Facebook is regarded as a powerful networking site that allow the university to sell themselves and convey messages to their students, audience, followers and staff members at large.

Participant A said the following about the use of social media:

The purpose of Facebook at university of Limpopo are for Internal and external communication.

4.4.2 Establish the challenges and opportunities of social media as a marketing tool

Theme 2: Marketing tool

Diamond and Haydon (2008) postulated that a Facebook page is great less costly marketing tool for organisations and businesses. This notion was supported by Sotolongo and Copulsky (2018) who stated that the page allows organisations and businesses to identify themselves not only through listing product and services offered but also through sharing links, photos and posts on an organisational official page to bring out a better image of a business or organisations. It has emerged that Facebook is less costly to the institution. Participants has outlined that the use of Facebook to market the institution is not costly. Participants articulated the following regarding the costs Facebook as a marketing tool:

Facebook as marketing tool is not costly as compared to other social media platforms and creates a platform for both university and its audience to actively interact off limits (Participant A).

The use of Facebook allows branding awareness and marketing. It is effective and less costly and can also reach out to large number of audiences immediately as compared to other official social media pages the university has (Participant C).

In addition, Participant B highlighted the opportunities arising from the use of Facebook as a marketing tool and its attractions to the new community. Moreover, the study found that the use of Facebook is not only less costly but further brings and attracts opportunities for the institution.

Facebook creates a lot of opportunities in attracting new students and it also helps the institution to stay connected with their existing students and alumni.

Theme 3: The effectiveness of Facebook

Facebook helps to increase organisational recognition or awareness and a social tool that helps personnel to communicate more efficiently with their friends, family, colleagues, and followers at large (Hafiar et al., 2019). Musonera and Weber (2018) posited that organisations need to be careful because with Facebook users are in charge not marketers, which then creates interaction between followers and organisation. Majority of participants have emphasised that the university official Facebook page is effective and active, and that is achieved through powerful interaction. The findings of the study confirm the response of most participant. The following responses were articulated by participants when asked about the effectiveness of Facebook as a marketing tool:

It is a major brand touchpoint and it is also an official university page that has a lot of followers as compared to other university social media pages and that show the effectiveness of the networking site (Participant A).

Target market: with Facebook we are able to distribute information to our target market effectively, It also allow interaction between students and the institution

so it can be used as a two-way communication platform and It further allows to inter link the university website with our Facebook where we hyperlink and share the link on the website that amplify online visits (Participant C).

Brand awareness, drive website traffic: By posting links that's on the website, it helps to increase online visits, targeted advertising: Facebook advertising allows us to disseminate information relating to prospective and current stakeholders, student's services and feedback: Facebook allows two-way communication between the university and the students and to monitor and improve: We use data from our page's 'Facebook Insights' to understand what content works best and plan for the future (Participant B).

In line with the aforementioned, it clearly shows that out of all social media platforms the university official Facebook page is mostly used, as it accommodates various features looking at its benefits on the target markets, monitoring and improvements, drive website traffic, brand awareness, and communication.

Theme 4: Target market

According to Turnbull and Jenkins (2016), to engage with the targeted audiences or customers, official Facebook page can be used to attract a large number of people, and the page allows unlimited followers. Significantly, Facebook allows organisations to interact with their followers or audience without all the pressure of reaching thousands of friends as are often obvious to both non-registered and registered users, and this is considered as a beneficial marketing strategy that helps the organisations to reach multiple audience across the internet (Tran, 2017). The study established that the university is able to reach its target of audience through the use of Facebook. Participants emphasised that the university does not only targets new students but everyone who can see the public posts remains a target. The following was articulated by participants:

Not boosted as campaigns or ads, so it is not category specific. Everyone who can see the public posts of the page is a target (Participant A).

Even though participant A believed that the target of the university is not categorised, participants B and C believes that the targets of the university is not everyone but rather a specific group of individuals. Participant B and C respectively, highlighted the following:

> *Mostly new students, more followers from prospective students, staff members, sponsors and university community at large.*

> *New students, new and more followers from prospective students, staff members and sponsors.*

The majority of responses indicates that the target of the institution is categorised and their targets range from new students, prospective students, staff members, sponsors, and university community at large.

Theme 5: Possible ways to reach Facebook site

Jordan and Weller (2018) were both of the view that it remains a challenge for organisations and/or business to publicise their Facebook accounts, however, it also remains a priority for them to connect their Facebook page on their website home page. Jin et al., (2019) supported the notion when they posited that all organisational and companies printed material should include the Facebook page information as well as the use of other social media accounts to announce their official Facebook page. Participants have outlined that there are various ways that allows the populace to reach the institutions Facebook page. All participants have mentioned the following when asked about possible ways in place that enables individuals and community at large to reach their official Facebook page:

> *University website, word of mouth through recruitment office, newsletters, posters, and other social media platform.*

This clearly indicates that university website, newsletter, posters, and other university social media accounts plays a major role on the exposure of the university Facebook page. As a result, it allows one to obtain information that is related to the institution.

4.4.3 Examine the performance of Facebook for marketing.

Theme 6: Feedback

According to Pizarro et al. (2018), replying to the comments of followers on Facebook page is very crucial as a great way to build a more active connection with your audience and strengthen organisational or company's presence on Facebook. Moreover, responding to comments on the company or organisational Facebook posts encourages people to comment more and start a conversation in the page will look original which attract more followers (Mulindwa, 2018). The study has found that the university does not respond to all comments made on its official Facebook page. Responds are made to comments that clarity on certain important aspects. Majority of participants stated that it is risky as the feedback will attract nor raises issues that are not related to the actual message being posted. Below are the responses of participants:

> *No. A couple of dissatisfactions from students due to various challenges in general flummoxes the higher education sector. Planning social media activity around immediate feedback through comments is risky, as students tend to raise issues not related to the actual message being posted (Participant A).*

> *Some comments yes. In case they need clarity on certain important aspect, then we can create a post to clarify the raised issue. But is not always the case, because it is risky to plan social media activity around immediate feedback through comments as students tend to raise issues not related to the actual message being posted (Participant B).*

> *Yes, most of the comments are taken into consideration more especially those that are advisory or stating important facts. Factual points from the comments are mostly taken into consideration as long as the facts are to benefits both the University and its audience (Participant C).*

Two-way communication between marketers and audience is essential, whether the comment is bad or good clarity needs to be given out in a good manner that will still put the university in good pictures. However, with the University of Limpopo marketing

department it is not considered that way. They take into consideration some comments and the other ones are ignored while on the other hand one participant indicated that at all they do not consider public comments as they bring personal or irrelevant respond to the post posted.

Theme 7: Facebook page performance and efficacy since its establishment

Studies done by Nadda et al., (2015); Manca et al., (2018); Brown-Peterson (2017) found that Facebook has accumulated a mass audience across the world and has a huge impact in the digital age. In that sense, it has created several innovations that has helped make the site grow and expand rapidly. Geraghty and Conway (2016) highlighted the change on the traditional use of media to modern way which resorts in the use of social media to obtain updates, share, interact and convey messages. The study has found the use of Facebook as a marketing tool since its establishment has a positive impact and satisfactory performance in growing the institution. Participant C said the following when asked about the impact of Facebook:

> *Our Facebook page has a positive outcome as it has a lot of followers which mostly are prospective students, alumni and staff members which that enables the information to be shared easily.*

The response above indicates that Facebook is the most active social media platform with (56 091) follower, which is the highest compared to other official university social media platform namely: Twitter that contains (23 500) followers, Instagram have (7 006) followers and YouTube that have (5 600) subscribers.

Theme 8: Sustainability of social media platforms

The University of Limpopo has different social media platforms such as: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube used to market the institution. However, the study focused on Facebook. The study has found that Facebook thus far remains the most interactive platform amongst them all. All participants have articulated that Facebook remains the highest with followers than any other social media platform.

Participant A, B and C agreed that the:

University Facebook page have more followers than other social media platform used.

Moreover, participants have also outlined efforts generated by marketers that led to Facebook being highly recognised social media platform. Participants mentioned the following with regards to the efforts made:

Generally, Facebook as a platform has incentives for its users such as free of data mode, and less data rates compared to other platform. It is not that there has been an intensive effort by the institution only on Facebook, just that the cost of being online varies and automatically makes it a cost-effective medium for users who are university of Limpopo followers (Participant A).

Nowadays Facebook on its own generally grew rapidly due to its retail usage and effects of data mode and consume less data that plotted a lot of followers to the institution without that mush effort and most users are prospective students and former students at the university which bring high followers on the university Facebook page (Participant C).

Generally, Facebook as a platform has incentives for its users such as free of data mode, and less data rates compared to other platforms. It is not that there has been an intensive effort by the institution only on Facebook, just that the cost of being online varies and automatically makes it a cost-effective medium for users, who are our followers (Participant B).

Significantly, the response of participants clearly indicates that the university does not put much effort to attract their followers on all social media platforms but rather puts more efforts on their Facebook content such as updates and events, which are the ones that increase online visit by their audience.

Theme 9: Updated content on Facebook page

Dolch et al. (2018) the main reason for audience or followers to visit organisational Facebook page is to see what is happening on their news feeds. Therefore, when audience and followers see content that is relevant to them, they will be more likely to regularly visit the news feeds for regular updates of upcoming events, message

conveyed and news updates. All participants have outlined that the university Facebook page is regularly updated in order for audience and followers to receive regular updates about the institution or institutional developments. Below is an articulation of the participant:

Everyday based on the information we have that needs to be updated (Participant A).

Theme 10: Public reaction

Generally, organisations do not approach negative comments as public relation opportunities, yet they prefer to censor, ignore critical feedback (Willington, 2015). Thus, several marketing specialists recommend that negative comments from audience should be well treated as an opportunity to resolve potential problems (Willington, 2015). Participants have outlined that the public reactions from the university Facebook page are mostly negative. Participants have stated the following with regards to the public reaction on the Facebook page:

Mostly negative, the public see their Facebook page as an immediate opportunity to raise various issues (Participant A).

Badly as mostly bring out personal and political issues (Participant B).

In addition, Participant C further posit that:

Most of our audience are students and they see the university Facebook page as a platform to bring out their personal and political issues.

The above responses clearly indicate that the public reactions on the university Facebook page is bad as various issues are posted and mostly the issues posted are irrelevant or are tarnishing the University image.

Theme 11: Facebook response by social media coordinator

Responding to reviews, both good and bad shows audience that the organisation or company reads their page comments and care about their audience comments and what is said (Turnbull & Jenkins, 2016). The study found responding to comments as

being crucial in social media management as the goal remain to maintain high rate of followers, engagement and to boost interaction between organisations or companies and their followers. Participant A outlined how marketers should respond to Facebook comments as the social media coordinator:

> *We respond to comments where followers need clarity on a certain issue and only on information that we have answers to them... the fact that the reason we are addressing only the issues that are relevant to the post or issues that need clarity on certain issues is because a lot of students bring their own personal issues or political issues to be addressed on the university Facebook page which that is wrong hence, we ignore or hide comments that criticise or tarnish the university image.*

Interestingly, this indicates that most of the audience comments are ignored, hidden or deleted when it does not match to the post the university posted to ignore negative debates and to protect the university's image. According to Lafgren (2014), every organisation or company should have a way of dealing with the negative impacts they are facing on Facebook to maximise its use of as a marketing tool. Moreover, Peruta and Shields (2018) further stated that the use of Facebook involves many people with different points of view, ideas and opinions, therefore it is not easy for organisations or companies to maintain equality. However, all negativities should be given positive clarity as to assure their audience that their opinions, ideas and comments are important and are considered. The study has further found that the university has a possible alternative way to deal with comments that may results in arguments. Such comments are being deleted or hidden by the social media coordinator:

> *We hide the comments that rise unnecessary arguments, ignore the ones that are of personal agenda and the ones that are irrelevant to the post conveyed (Participant A).*

> *We delete or hide any negative comment that we feel will destroy the image of the institution. We only follow prominent profiles that are verified (Participant B).*

Participant C mutually supported the above given responses by indicating that:

> *We hide the comments that rise unnecessary arguments, ignore the ones that are of personal and those not related to the post.*

Theme 12: Engagement between marketers and audience

The study conducted by Taecharungroj (2017) found that social media engagements are essential as they provide the organisation or company with insights into how well their social media content is resonating with their audience or followers, as the information can be used to optimise and improve their posts in the future and further give the organisation or company a tangible metric to track their performance over time. Participant A particularly the social media coordinator has expressed the level of unsatisfactory on the engagement between the university and audience. The participant has highlighted the following:

> *Some students find the university Facebook page as a platform to insult management or to become political.*

This shows that the interaction between the university and its followers on Facebook is not on a satisfactory level and that disadvantage the use of Facebook as a marketing tool by the university.

4.5 SECTION C: ONLINE OBSERVATION

4.5.1 The use of Facebook for marketing purposes at the University of Limpopo

The objective has enabled the researcher to identify or observe the information that the University of Limpopo posts to market their audience or target market. However, the objective also enabled the researcher to identify strategies that the university use to post or market the institution on Facebook. Nonetheless, the study has entailed that the institutions can then communicate personally with all their audience, building on the relationship in a more direct approach and allowing consumers direct access to the organisation. Additionally, Jaman and Anshari (2019) support that organisations around the world are making use of Facebook to form audience communities, create word-of-mouth marketing and encourage integration with their own corporate website.

The following screenshots show how the marketing department at the University of Limpopo use Facebook to market the institution.
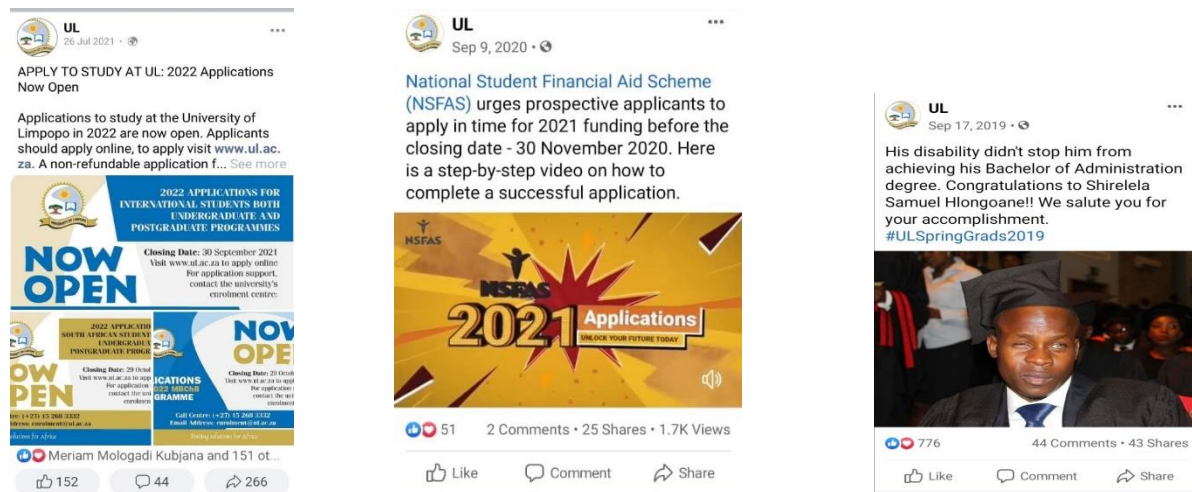

Figure 4.1: Facebook screenshots to market first year students.

The researcher observed that most of the posts on the institution Facebook page are mostly used to market first year students rather than sponsors or investors.

4.5.2 The growth of Facebook for marketing

This objective has assisted the researcher to distinguish the rapid growth of Facebook as used by the University of Limpopo to market the institution. Moreover, the objective came to the researcher's attention that amongst all other social networking sites Facebook is the most grown platform with more followers. The study indicates that Facebook is a wide reach and customer-centred nature, and many organisations have adopted this social network as an additional or alternative channel for communicating with their audiences. Nevertheless, the study further shows that the rapid growing participation in Facebook is accompanied by a progressive use and modification of the purposes.

The following screenshots show the growth of Facebook page through "likes and followers" as indicated by blue arrows, for marketing at the University of Limpopo.
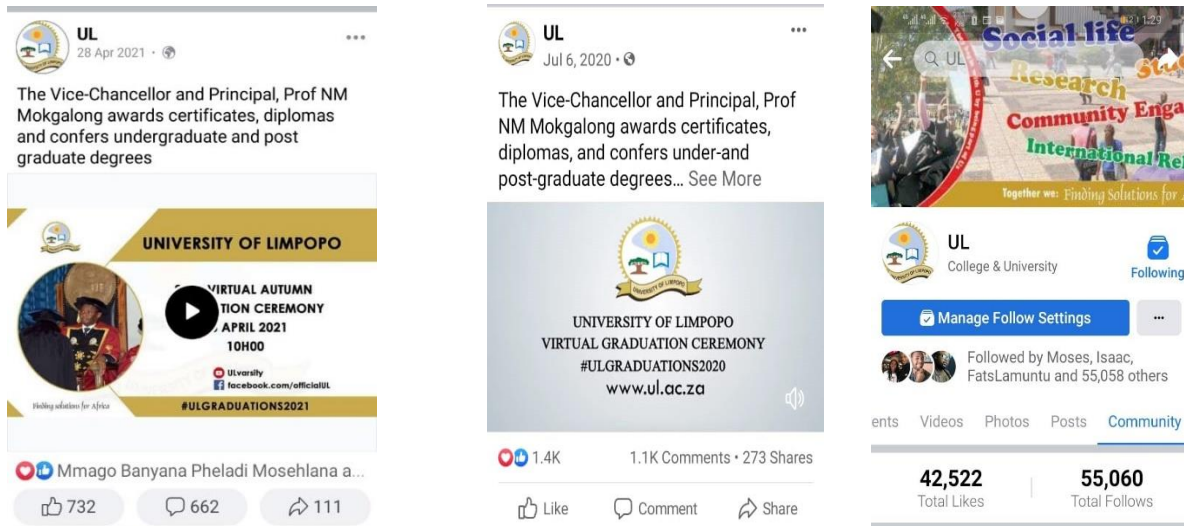
Figure 4.2 The rapid growth of university of Limpopo Facebook's page

The researcher observed the University of Limpopo Facebook page has grown rapidly since its development.

4.5.3 The challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as a marketing tool

This objective enables the researcher to identify the advantages that the University has on posting information on Facebook as a marketing tool for the institution. Furthermore, the objective focuses on the disadvantages that the institution and audiences are facing to further their relationship through the use of Facebook. The University Facebook reflects its capacity to satisfy student's needs and help potential students to make informed enrolment decisions.

The study highlighted that audience use these sites to comment, criticise and share their views that can make or break the institution's image. Marketing on Facebook is regarded as a two-way communication, as opposed to the one-way communication used in traditional marketing. However, with the University of Limpopo the study points out that there is no interaction between the university and its audience that means the communication is one-way.

The following screenshot shows the challenges and opportunities the University of Limpopo and its audience face on the use of Facebook as a marketing tool.

4.5.3.1 Challenges

Figure 4.3: Challenges phased by the university on their Facebook page.

4.5.3.2 Opportunities
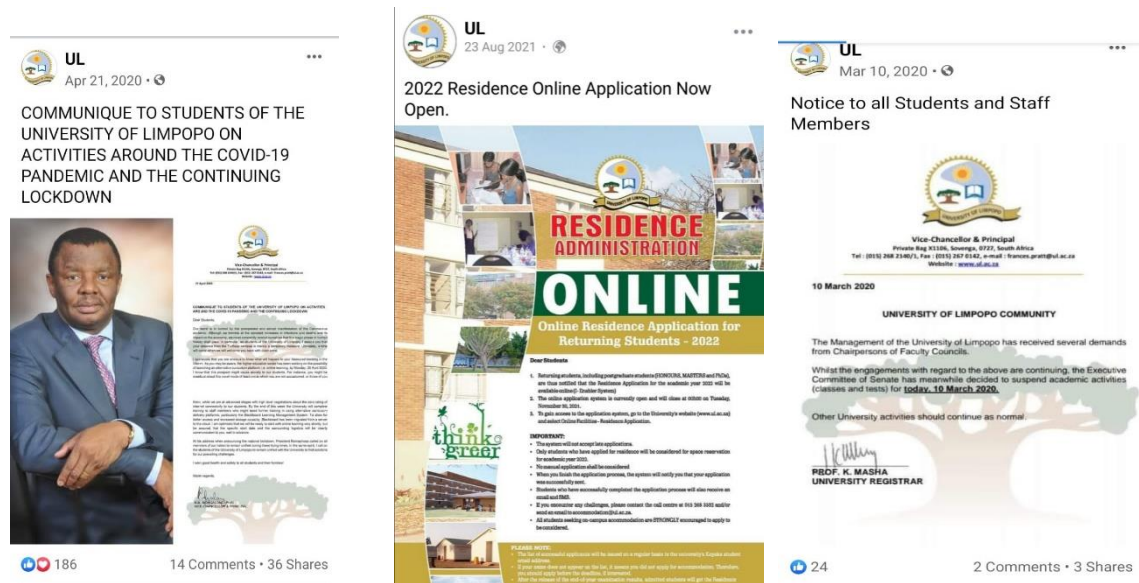
Figure 4.4: Opportunities presented on the university Facebook page to market the institution.

The researcher observed and noticed that the University of Limpopo Facebook page use Facebook to convey messages to their audience and not respond to their comments and criticism, which that makes the platform a one-way communication.

4.6 THEORETICAL INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

In this section, theoretical framework has been used to analyse the findings.

4.6.1 Practice Theory

Nick Couldry (2014) proposed that practice theory explores that media research should start with what people are practically doing with the media and what the media are practically doing with people across a whole range of situations and contexts instead of starting with media texts or institutions. The theory analyses different practices people engages in through, with and by the media, and relates to the study findings as broadly discusses what University of Limpopo marketing department do with the Facebook and what the social media site do with prospective students, staff members, alumni and audiences. The study findings indicate that the major usage of Facebook at University of Limpopo is used to market the institution, convey important messages to prospective students, to reconnect with university Alumni and to publicise university events and achievements.

The theory agrees with findings of the study that Facebook is the most preferred social media platform that audiences prefer compared to other social media platforms the university have. The theory further says that if people argue that we live in a media-saturated world, then how, for instance, have the media penetrated, perpetrated and infiltrated education by introducing media studies as a subject and how teachers, marketers, audience, alumni and prospective students use the media to make sense of interpreting and understand daily life.

4.6.2 Marketing communication mix theory

The study found that University of Limpopo uses Facebook more often to market the institution. The theory relates to the illustrated results as indicated that the University of Limpopo marketing and communication department prefer Facebook to sell and market the university image and achievements more than any other social media platform. The Marketing Mix Theory further elucidates that it is important for organisations to have a clear understanding of environment in which target audience exist to structure messages that are suitable and efficiently present a brand (Fill, 2006).

The Marketing Communication Mix Theory supports or collaborates with the finding as it states that marketing practitioners who intend to use social networking as a marketing discipline and its applicability should have a vested understanding of target audience and their environment in order to formulate a dependable and strategic social networking plan for their organisations (Fill, 2006). The theory relates to the illustrated results as indicated that the University of Limpopo prefer the Facebook to market the institution, target sponsors and new students, convey messages and sell the university image.

4.7 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

Through online observation the study has found that the University of Limpopo Facebook official page provide evidence on how the marketing and communication department market the image of the institution with the aim of attracting prospective students, new students, potential sponsors, alumni and community at large. The provision of screenshots provided an in-depth information on participation, interaction and followers of the university Facebook page. The purpose of online observation was

to outline various posts on the Facebook page to attract new audiences, the rapid growth of Facebook since its development at the university, challenges and opportunities faced through the utility of the social media platform specifically Facebook. Moreover, the empirical findings of the study were further expanded through the use of Thematic Content Analysis.

Twelve themes were identified from the analysed data, namely: (a) Distribution of information (b) Marketing tool (c) The effectiveness of Facebook (d) Target market (e) Possible ways to reach Facebook site (f) Feedback (g) Facebook page performance and efficacy since its establishment (h) Sustainability of social media platforms (i) Updated content on Facebook page (j) Public reaction (k) Facebook response by social media coordinator (l) Engagement between marketers and audience. These are discussed in terms of the objectives of the study. In line with the identified themes, the study managed to answer these research questions (a) why does institutions of higher learning uses social media as a marketing tool? (b) What are the challenges and opportunities of social media as a marketing tool? (c) How does marketing and communication personnel evaluate public responses? The analysis also provided more in-depth understanding of the researched phenomenon.

The first objective of the study was to identify the manner in which institutions of higher learning uses social media for marketing purposes. Participants in the study highlighted that Facebook is used for distribution of information. Participants revealed that they use the university official Facebook page to distribute information because through the page the information reach relevant audience. In that sense, the university Facebook page is regarded as the most effective social media platform to distribute relevant information. The empirical findings of the study discussed in the previous chapter and the literature review confirmed that social media platforms are very effective in distributing information to relevant audience. In line with the studies conducted by Mochon et al. (2017), Yagnik (2017) and Brown-Peterson (2017), social media platform is an effective way of distributing information to relevant audience as well as community at large.

The second objective of the study was to establish the challenges and opportunities of social media as a marketing tool. The majority of participants expressed that Facebook at the university is used as a marketing tool, that further help in growing the

image of the institution. The study found that Facebook is the most effective platform to market the institution. Moreover, the study established that through the use of Facebook, the university is able to reach its target market/groups which include sponsors and new students. Studies conducted by Haydon (2008), Sotolongo and Copulsky (2018), Hafiar et al. (2019), Turnbull and Jenkins (2016) found that social media platforms play a major role on the recognition and awareness of the organisations. The majority of participants have supported the above findings by articulating that the university Facebook page is effective as well as active and that is maintained through powerful interaction.

The third objective of the study was to examine the performance of Facebook for marketing. Participants have expressed that as much as it is important to respond to audience comments, it is also difficult as some audience want to address issues that are not part of the agenda, and others bring their political differences which aim to put the image of the university down. Therefore, participants have further expressed various ways in which they provide feedback as well ways in which they are able to handle the public reaction in the comment section. Participants also highlighted that they update information more regularly to ensue sustainability of Facebook. In line with the existing studies by Pizarro et al., (2018) Mulindwa (2018) Dolch et al., (2018) they found that social media platform is the most effective way to market the organisation and further reach their targeted audience through it usage. Significantly, participants have articulated that it is important to update regularly the content of the Facebook page to encourage audience to stay on the page.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The findings and discussion of online observation as well as identified themes with reference to previous studies conducted and/or theories were presented in this chapter. The tabulated biographic information of participants was outlined. Participants have been referred to as Participant A-C to ensure adherence in ethical principles. The study identified twelve themes from the accumulated data, namely: (a) Distribution of information (b) Marketing tool (c) The effectiveness of Facebook (d) Target market (e) Possible ways to reach Facebook site (f) Feedback (g) Facebook page performance and efficacy since its establishment (h) Sustainability of social media platforms (i) Updated content on Facebook page (j) Public reaction (k)

Facebook response by social media coordinator (l) Engagement between marketers and audience. The researcher used literature as reference to the discussion of identified themes. The identified themes were presented in accordance with the research objectives and answered the research questions developed for the study. A summary of the main findings of the study is provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with data interpretation and findings of the study. This chapter provides the recommendations and conclusion of the study. This section provides clarity on whether the aim, objective and research questions of the study have been met and answered.

5.2 AIM OF THE RESEACH STUDY

Limited research has been conducted with regards to the effectiveness of Facebook as a marketing tool for higher institutions of learning, therefore, the study aimed to examine the impact of social media, particularly Facebook, as a marketing tool at the University of Limpopo. The objectives of the study were: (a) to identify the manner in which institutions of higher learning uses social media for marketing purposes; (b) to establish the challenges and opportunities of social media as a marketing tool; and (c) Examine the performance of Facebook for marketing. Using the analysed data, the study answered the following research questions (a) Why does institutions of higher learning uses social media as a marketing tool? (b) What are the challenges and opportunities of social media as a marketing tool? (c) How does marketing and communication personnel evaluate public responses?

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Three recommendations were made:

- The first objective of the study was to identify the way in which institutions of higher learning use Facebook for marketing purposes. The study established that the university uses Facebook to distribute information to relevant audience. Therefore, the study recommends that the university should make use of Facebook as a two-way communication between them and their audience, and that should be through responding or replying to their audience comments, criticism and give out clarity on hanging issues from students.

- The second objective of the study was to establish the challenges and opportunities of using Facebook as a marketing tool. Findings of the study have indicated that the university is using the Facebook to grow the image of the institution as well as attracting sponsors and new students. As a result, the study recommends that the university create online shopping and use Facebook to advertise the university products along with deliveries of the purchased products, as this will be beneficial to the institution during these crucial times of the pandemic.

- The third objective of the study was to examine the performance of Facebook for marketing. The study found that the university does not respond to all their audience on the Facebook page, as there are those that brings their political agendas in the comment section. Therefore, the study recommends that the university equally use all social media platforms that the university has and inter-link them so every post to appear in all the university official social media pages that will increase online visits, audiences, and followers to all the official social media pages.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the empirical findings of the study and due to the explorative nature of the research, recommendations for future research are presented below.

5.4.1 Longitudinal study on the use of Facebook for marketing tool at institutions of higher learning

Longitudinal research could assist to assess whether the use of Facebook at higher institution of learning is effective or ineffective as a marketing tool. Longitudinal research can assess the outcome of the social media platforms to establish whether they are effective or not, in growing the image of the higher institution of learning.

5.4.2 Triangulation study incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods

Triangulation can be used in a similar study to this one with a larger sample size from a wider range of provinces at higher institutions of learning; therefore, being both qualitative and quantitative by nature. The quantitative aspect of the study would allow for generalisation of the findings.

5.4.3 Policy development and practice

A study regarding the policies and implementation pertaining the use of social media at institution of higher learning is recommended. This will assist universities to take stock on how their implementation and use of social media for marketing purposes. This is significant considering the shift to digital society in the country and worldwide.

5.5 LIMITATIONS

There are limitations to the study. The results of the study should therefore be interpreted in light of the mentioned limitations:

- One of the limitations of the study is that only one higher institution of learning was included in the study. Furthermore, the sample that was used was very small and limited to university of Limpopo. As such, the findings of the study cannot be generalised to all higher institutions.

- A second limitation of the study is that getting participants to participate in the study was not an easy task due to national regulations of COVID-19. Even though the researcher followed all recommended precautions and protocol, some of the participants did not seem to be motivated to take part, even though informed consent and confidentiality were explained to them. However, they later showed interest in participating.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a summary of the findings of the study of an exploratory study on the effectiveness of Facebook as a marketing tool at the University of Limpopo.

Although there were limitations concerning the study, it yielded valuable information that can contribute to future research.

The researcher believes that this study has contributed to widening the body of knowledge regarding the use of social media as a marketing tool in higher institutions of learning in South Africa. Regardless of the small sampled population, this phenomenon is seen across the country, and the researcher believes that the study has the potential to assist higher institutions, policy makers and all relevant stakeholders to effectively use social media platforms to market their organisation and grow its image. Finally, the study has provided an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of Facebook as a marketing tool at the University of Limpopo. The study has highlighted the need for more research, particularly in the national context, and a focus on the use of social media to market organisations. The researcher also believes that the study will encourage future research on the effectiveness of social media platforms in marketing the institutions.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

Candidate: Miss K.T Kaka

Student number: 201600678

Department of Communication, Media and Information Studies
University of Limpopo
Private Mail Bag X 1106
Sovenga
0727

E-Mail Address: trudykutloano@gmail.com
Mobile phone number: 063 989 1892

You are cordially invited to participate in a Master of Arts research to assist the researcher to complete the study. You are requested to record your agreement to participate in this study in this consent form which also serves as a letter of request. If you agree to assist this researcher in this study, please indicate your agreement to participate below.

Language editor will help to improve the quality of this study.

I -- agree to volunteer to participate in this research project from the University of Limpopo. I understand that this research is designed to gather information about the impact of social media for marketing purposes at the institution of higher learning (University of Limpopo).

Moreover, I understand that:

1. My participation in this research is voluntary, and that I will not receive financial compensation for my participation. I may withdraw my participation in a case of discomfort, and my withdrawal will not affect my relationship with the researcher.

2. I have the right to decline to answer certain questions if I am uncomfortable with any question.

3. My responses to the questions will be recorded with my permission only if I agree to the recording process. However, if I am not comfortable about recording my responses, I will not answer the questions.

4. Information that will be obtained from me in the form of views will be strictly used for research purposes and I request to receive a copy of the final research once it is completed.

5. I have a right to be anonymous and my identity provided to the researcher should remain confidential even if the information can be published for public knowledge and to educate members of the public about digital broadcasting.

_____   _____

Participant's signature   Date

I, Khutloano Trudy Kaka, clarified the scope of the research to the participant and explained his/her rights concerning his/her participation in the research project. He/she freely agreed to participate in this study.

Kind regards,

_____   _____   _____

Researcher   Signature   Date

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

NAME OF RESEARCHER: *KAKA KUTLOANO TRUDY*
DEGREE: *MASTER OF ARTS IN MEDIA STUDIES*
TITLE OF STUDY: EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FACEBOOK FOR MARKETING PURPOSES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO **Synopsis of the study:** *This study aims to explore the effectiveness of Facebook for marketing purposes at the University of Limpopo. The study seeks to understand how institutions of higher learning use Facebook to market their services to the public, and the manner in which they engage the public through this platform. The study wishes to identify opportunities and challenges provided by Facebook for marketing of institutions of higher learning.*

Confidentiality and Anonymity

This interview guide is a data collection tool for a masters' research. The information provided will be used for this research project. The rights of the participants are always respected. All the research ethical principles such as anonymity and privacy amongst others are taken into consideration in this study. The research participants have the right to be treated with dignity and honour. Their right of anonymity and privacy are well-maintained by the researcher during and after data collection procedure. Participants are not going to be forced to participate in this study. Confidentiality as a key ethical principle, will be respected in this research. Consequently, you are kindly requested to be honest in answering the questions stipulated below:

SECTIONA: BIOGRAPHICS

1. AGE GROUP	
30-35	**1**
35-40	**2**
Other, please specify	**3**

2. GENDER	
Female	**1**
Male	**2**

3. ETHNICITY	
African	**1**
Coloured	**2**
White	**3**
Indian	**4**
Other, please specify	**5**

SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What purpose does Facebook serve to your institution?
2. Why university uses Facebook as a marketing tool?
3. How effective is Facebook for the marketing purposes of the institution?
4. What are some of imperative aspects that you take into consideration when marketing the institution on Facebook?
5. What target market do you reach through the utility Facebook?
6. How do people find out about your Facebook sites?
7. Does the followers' comments form part of your content production and dissemination? How so?
8. How is the efficacy of Facebook since the institution launched the site?
9. How long has the institution been using Facebook for marketing?
10. Facebook page of the institution seems to have more followers than other used social media platforms. Do you agree? If yes, explain the effort you employ in this platform to attract more followers.
11. How often do you update content on Facebook?
12. Explain how does the public react to the content you post on your Facebook page?

13. As social media coordinators of the university, how often do you respond to the followers' comments on Facebook? What is needed before responding to the comments?
14. Are you satisfied with the level of engagement you are having with the public through Facebook, please elaborate?
15. What are the advantages and opportunities which come with the use of Facebook for marketing purposes of the institution?
16. What are the challenges and disadvantages you are facing when using Facebook for marketing purposes?
17. How are you addressing the identified challenges to maximise the use of Facebook for marketing purposes in your institution?

============================THE END============================

APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email: anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING:	17 August 2021
PROJECT NUMBER:	TREC/191/2021: PG

PROJECT:

Title:	Exploration of Facebook as a Tool for Improving Marketing Services at University Of Limpopo
Researcher:	KT Kaka
Supervisor:	Mr NC Baloyi
Co-Supervisor/s:	Dr EJ Malatji
School:	Languages and Communication Studies
Degree:	Master of Arts in Media Studies

PROF P MASOKO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:
i)   This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
ii)   Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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APPENDIX D: LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Topic: Exploration of Facebook as a tool for improving marketing service at the University of Limpopo

To	:	**TO WHO IT MAY CONCERN**
From	:	**Reneilwe Malatji**
Date	:	**16 December 2021**
Subject	:	Editing Kaka Trudy's thesis

I hereby declare the above-mentioned thesis to be accurately edited.

The editing process involved looking at the work in three distinct ways:

- Editing for structure to helps the reader follow the logic of the writer's argument.
- Editing for language and style to ensure good use of grammar as well as consistency in writing style such that the reader will be able to concentrate on the content.
- Proof reading in order to eliminate spelling errors, inconsistent formatting and other irritating distractions such that the document should be able to allow the reader to remain focused on the writing. I am confident that the edited version of Kaka Trudy's thesis will make it relatively straightforward and proficient enough to evaluate.

Sincerely

Reneilwe Malatji

……………………………………………………

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