

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CORPORATE
COMMUNICATION TOOL BY THE NAMIBIAN BROADCASTING
CORPORATION (NBC).**

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ABSTRACT

The study assesses the use of social media as a corporate communication tool by the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). The main objectives of this study were to assess the social media platforms used by NBC as communication tools to engage with their audience. The study examined the extent to which NBC has adopted these social media platforms. Another objective was to determine how these social media platforms were being used by the Corporation. The study further appraised the quality and effectiveness of engagement with the audience by NBC through these media platforms. The study applied a mixed method approach in collecting data with a key informant interview being conducted with the executive and senior management of the NBC. Participants in the study comprised of five (5) Executive managers who were decision-makers and twelve (12) senior managers whom the researcher believed to be implementers of the executive decisions. The study established that all respondents who took part in the study had active social media accounts thus had the knowledge of social media and how it operates. The findings of the study indicated that the NBC subscribes to social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. It was further established in the study that NBC engaged its audience and stakeholders using these platforms with the purpose of communicating news and informing the public of upcoming programmes. Institutions such as the NBC are advised to initiate and enhance dialogue with their stakeholders on social media, create interesting and engaging content.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BBS	Bulletin Board System
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
COBRA	Consumer's Online Brand Related Activities
EWOM	Electronic Word of Mouth
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy and Research
NSA	Namibia Statistics Agency
NBC	Namibian Broadcasting Corporation
SNS	Social Network Sites
TV	Television
UNAM	University of Namibia
US	United States
USENET	User's Network
ARPANET	Advanced Research Projects Agency Network
Email	Electronic mail

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Firstly, let me highlight the fact that studying requires commitment, support and patience. One is required to wisely manage his or her time in order to meet deadlines. All these, in most cases are impossible without the blessings from Almighty God. Therefore, I would like to thank God for keeping me healthy while I focused on completing my studies. Carrying out a study like this, one requires guidance and advice from different expertise. I would, therefore, like to express my gratitude to my supervisor; Dr. Fred Mwilima, whose outstanding guidance and advice made it possible for me to complete this study. I believe his patience and encouraging words can elevate the next person to greater heights. I, therefore, wish to work with him in my future academic projects. Furthermore, I would like to thank all the participants in this study, whom without their participation, I could not have completed this study.

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DECLARATION

I, Master Penna, hereby declare that this study is my own work and is a true reflection of my research, and that this work, or any part thereof has not been submitted for a degree at any other institution.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Social media is being referred to as “game-changer” by the Knowledge Innovation Foundation and the use of these platforms is increasingly becoming prevalent across Africa, IPPR (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.24). In Namibia, mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants stand at 103, while the number of mobile phone users with potential access to the Internet stands at 470,000, IPPR (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.24). The number of people using the internet daily in Namibia has risen from 16 per cent in November 2012 to 39 per cent in September 2014 (Stoman & Stoman, 2012). The use of social media through mobile phone devices is one of the fastest household adoptions of technology in the world’s modern history (Sata, 2013). This rise indicates a shift in the organisation of online communities (Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.1). Namibia with a population of 2.54 million (Namibia Statistics Agency, 2020) is increasingly taking to social media. It is estimated that 10 per cent of the population is on Facebook, with a large percentage of these being in the age group of 18-35 years old, IPPR (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.1).

Gomez (2011) opine that corporate institutions now use social media for different intentions such as customer service, marketing, internal communication, public relations or corporate communication and corporate social responsibility. His conclusion is consistent with Rybalko and Seltzer’s (2010) findings that social media has changed how institutions communicate with the public, especially that they now use this platform to connect with customers. However, there is a lack of literature on the use of social media platforms by corporate institutions in Namibia and the

Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) is one such an institution and this gap in knowledge has created the opportunity for this study.

In today's world, the internet and new technologies are playing a powerful role in informing, educating, and connecting people compared to the traditional media. Costs for sharing such information is inexpensive compared to the traditional media. Social media is more than just for information dissemination, social media has the power of collaboration, sharing, participation, and empowerment. It has transformed the way companies communicate with their stakeholders, and that makes it very important for companies to take advantage of these new media platforms, especially if they have to keep a strong relationship with their stakeholders. Social media has given an opportunity to companies to engage in dialogic communication with their stakeholders (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010).

Many companies have thanked the development of social media channels because people are now able to learn about a product or service being offered by certain organisations through these channels (McCorkindale, 2010). Institutions no longer have control of information over their products or services in the social media world. While some companies have taken advantage of this new technology, however, not all have done so as there are still companies that need to develop strategies for adopting social media for communication (McCorkindale, 2010).

This research was aimed at assessing the use of social media as a corporate communications tool by the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation. An understanding was to be established whether they adopted social media platforms as communication tools for enhancing corporate communication. With the significant advantages that social media brings for increasing stakeholder participation

and engagement (Sweetser, 2010), companies should fully embrace this technology in order to gain organisational success. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the use of social media as a corporate communications tool in order to understand how they use it to engaging online scenarios for communication with their stakeholders.

An analysis of all official social networks namely, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube used by the NBC was conducted. Facebook is a social network site where users can create a personal profile, add friends, and post messages on the walls of friends and other pages within Facebook. Twitter, on the other hand, is a microblogging and social networking service where users can send and read messages called tweets in 140 characters or less.

Social media has changed the field of corporate communications and the way it is practised and possibly professional effects. Companies use social media to instantly communicate their achievements with their stakeholders and is therefore used as an important tool for strategic corporate communication (Breakenridge, 2012). The emergence of social media has established a new style of communication pattern between a company and its customers, giving customers the power to give instant feedback and ideas.

Many organisations have adopted social media as a very important communication platform (Linke & Zerfass, 2012, p.17). It should be noted that when social media emerged; organisations only experimented with these new technologies. Their major aim was to participate and profit from these technological developments. This was however criticised by earlier research which suggested that the focus should be on coming up with strategies that help to encompass structures

to enable the use of social media in communication (Linke & Zerfass, 2012, p.17). In countries such as Germany, many organisations, including political entities and non-profit organisations have since adopted social media as a communication platform (Linke & Zerfass, 2012, p.17).

Corporate companies are adopting the use of social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube to reach a large number of people. The Digital Readiness Report of September 2009 points out that public relations are leading the adoption of social media networks in organisations. Sashi (2012) is of the view that although everyone is busy with their work in organisations, social media still enables communication amongst professionals to maintain a strong and quality relationship with their customers, media and partners regardless of where they are.

Social media helps to improve community relations; therefore, it must be at the centre of all communication activities of public relations. This is because it improves organisation's engagement with the public by improving community relations. According to Ndlela (2014) social media can be used as a very effective tool for internal communication. Rokka, Karlsson and Tienari (2014) suggest that companies not participating in social media are missing out a window of opportunity, as their customers are likely or are already disseminating information about them some of which may even be damaging information about their brand.

In today's life of technological advancement, companies are facing a huge challenge when it comes to their brands. This is because company brand images, reputation, success and failure are determined by the image built by the company in social media and also their own performance in the globalised market system. Therefore it is necessary that communication professionals learn

and adopt these new technologies if they have to keep going with the future of public relations and communication (Breakenridge, 2012).

NBC is not excluded from this practice since it has adopted various social media channels as a means to reach out to its audience. However, research to validate the reason why and how these platforms were adopted is not available, hence the purpose of this research.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The recent advances in communication technology, participative social media in particular, has had a dramatic impact in transforming the patterns of communication. Social media has increased both connectivity and participation in all spheres of life (Matali & Mwilima, 2017 p. 46). This observation is congruent to Luoma-aho's findings that this change has transformed what was previously known as audience to netizens (Luoma-aho, 2010) and therefore signal a huge transformation in the communication media as information users and receivers have now become information generators (Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2014). Because the media is the main casualty of the digital revolution (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2012), the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation is inevitably impacted by the social media which can either be a menace or a messiah for the corporation, although Matali & Mwilima (2017) opine that it presents a number of opportunities to corporate bodies such as the NBC. The corporation has adopted various social media channels as a means to reach out to its audience. This study, therefore, finds its niche in assessing NBC's usage of social media as a corporate communication tool in engaging its audience and the extent NBC has used this empowerment communication tool for the benefit of both the corporation and its audience.

1.3 Research objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- (a) Assess the social media platforms used by NBC as communication tools to engage with their audience.
- (b) Examine the extent to which NBC had adopted these social media platforms.
- (c) Determine how these social media platforms were being used by the Corporation.
- (d) Appraise the quality and effectiveness of engagement with the audience through these media platforms.

1.4 Significance of the study

Holmes, Hadwin, and Mottershead (2013) argue that there is a link between social power and the media. This view is supported by Ngai, Tao, and Moon (2014) who catalogue the impact and changes brought by social media. Social media platforms provide opportunities for organisations to engage their stakeholders instantly, timeously and engage in a continuous dialogue (Rybalko et al., 2010). Although interactivity is the hallmark of social media, the avenues, effectiveness and quality of such interactivity are equally important, IPPR (as cited in Matali, 2017). Given the lack of adequate research on the use of social media as a corporate communication tool in Namibia, this study will play a pivotal role in filling the academic gape by providing literature on the subject. The study will afford a set of frameworks to support critical thinking and applications of new media technologies in promoting efficient and effective communication in organisations such as the NBC. This will empower the NBC and other institutions to lead in innovation and use of new media technologies and thus remain relevant and compete with other global broadcasting

institutions. In essence, this study will be very helpful to policy makers and administrators of institutions like the NBC.

1.5 Limitations of the study

Namibia is endowed with both print and electronic media, but this study was limited to electronic media and in particular, the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation and cannot therefore be generalised to all media organisations.

1.6 Delimitation of the study

This study assessed the use of social media as corporate communication channels at NBC with special emphasis on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn social media platforms.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 History of social media

The literature review covers areas of interest to the research topic from previous studies. It was important to benchmark this research with other existing similar studies on social media as a corporate communication tool. This was because it helped the researcher to have a broader understanding of the subject being investigated, and thus be able to identify gaps in the available literature and make recommendations where possible. The literature stood as evidence to what was available and therefore enabled the researcher to defend his arguments on the topic under study. New media technologies have fundamentally changed the way corporate bodies interact with their audience. News organisations now have more means than ever to reach, engage with, and influence their audience. The use of social media among institutions has been on an increase, especially the Government-owned public enterprises, including the government itself, IPPR (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.1). Such a move is motivated with the belief that through social media, organisations are able to effectively communicate with their target groups. However, research to back up this conclusion is lacking. Social media is believed to have a greater impact on the way institutions communicate and interact with their stakeholders. It instantly connects organisations with their customers. It has the advantage of instant communication where people get exposed to services offered by companies. Engagement is long-lasting and constant on social media (Vernuccio, 2014).

The term social media is conceived to describe new platforms of digital communication that continually appear in an interactive electronic environment, underlining their participative and

collaborative social characteristics (Vernuccio, 2014). Social network sites are commonly used as an umbrella term for all social media and computer-mediated communication including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Myspace as well as the inaugural network sites of Cyworld, Bebo and Friendster (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social network sites are defined as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and navigate their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Basu, 2017).

According to a study by Sewe (2014), the earliest forms of communication were through audio and visual. In his study, he reveals that historical research indicates that in ancient times, people used to communicate by using smoke signals during the day and lighting beacon fires at night in China, Egypt, Greece and Sub-Saharan Africa. Drums were also used in many ancient societies to extend the range of the human voice. The beginnings of social media were seeded during 550 BC when the regular postal system was established in Iran where horse riders and horse-drawn wagons carried mail. Baruah, (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p.10) used Figure 1 to demonstrate the evolution of social media.

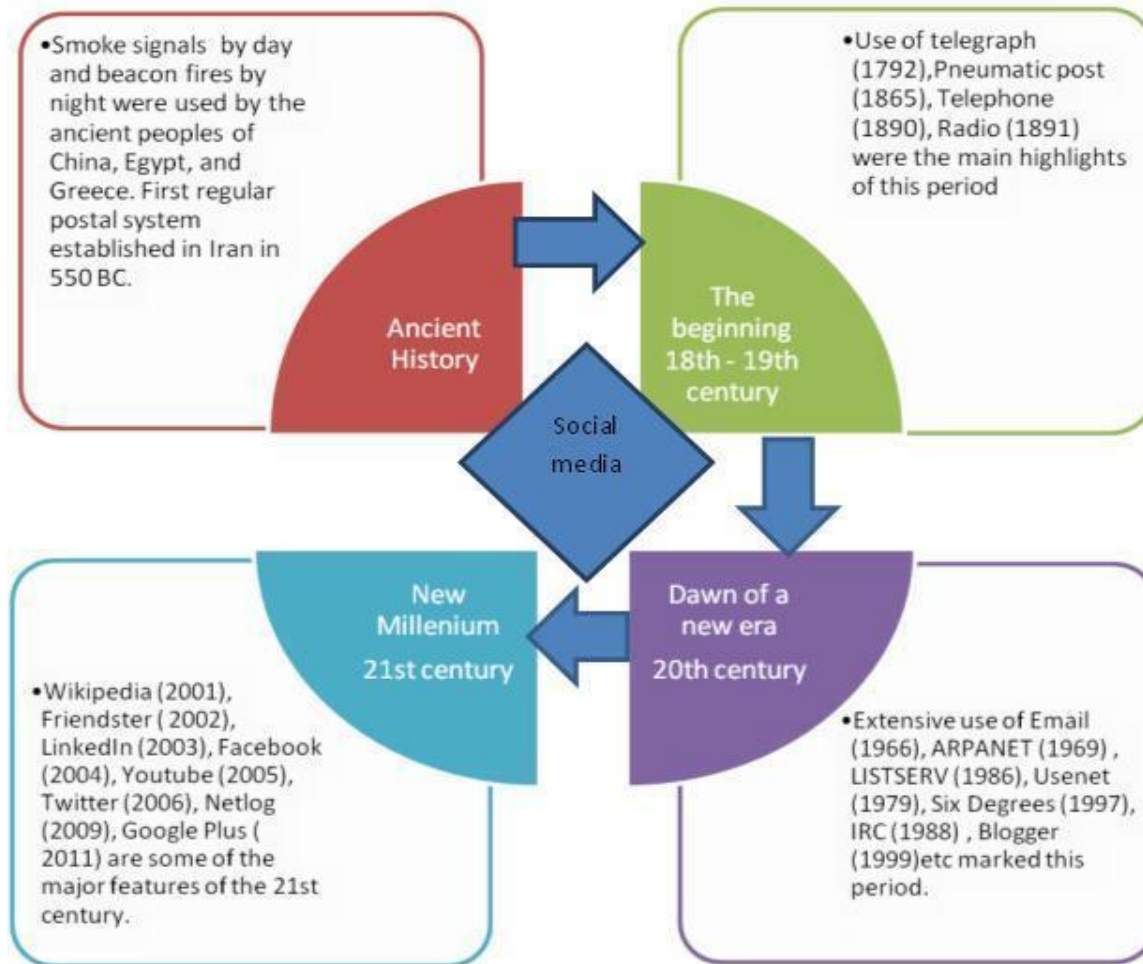


Figure 1. History of Communication Source: (Baruah, 2012)

Baruah, (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p.11) notes that the 18th and 19th centuries were significant in the development of communication technologies with the discoveries of telegraphs, telephones and radios. This development meant that for once in history, people were able to send and receive messages over long distances whereas the 20th century is known for the introduction and development of the internet. The introduction of the internet completely changed the communication landscape because people were now able to transmit messages from one person to

another by the web or digitally. As indicated in the diagram above, internet-based communication involved the use of Email, ARPANET, USENET and Bulletin Board System (BBS).

The internet provided an array of social networking sites including, Live Journal, Blogger, Six Degrees, Napster, Lister and Internet relay chat. The 21st century experienced a substantial growth of social networking sites following the launch of Facebook, Twitter, Photobucket, Orkut, YouTube, Friendster, Fotolog, Google plus, Digg, Netlog, Ning and Myspace among others. Social media has become a convention of the online landscape and major social networks and social media websites make changes and improvements on a fairly regular basis, so it is certain to keep evolving in coming years, Baruah (as cited in Sewe, 2014).

2.2 Understanding social media and Web 2.0

Since the emergence of social network sites which emerged during the 21st century, companies have had good opportunities to communicate better with the public. Social media is part of the Web 2.0 revolution. Earlier researchers point out that IT consultant, Darcy DiNucci conceived the term Web 2.0 back in 1999 and it was made known to the mass market in 2004 by O'Reilly (Visser, 2010). Web 2.0 are web applications that expedite collaboration and exchange of information. Visser (2014: p.14) defines Web 2.0 as “the effects of extensive collaboration and user participation on the marketplace and corporate world”.

Kim, Lee, and Lee, (as cited in Gomez et al 2011, p.161) suggest that since the evolution of Web 2.0 platforms, we have changed the way we communicate through the internet and has seen the rise in the use of social media for communication as a central tool for institutions. Social media

include but is not limited to web applications such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Myspace and many more Hearn et al, (as cited in Gomez et al 2011, p.161).

As per the findings of a study conducted by Burson-Marsteller Communications (BMC) Group (2012), social media enables new levels in the discussions that were never possible to achieve before. In the same vein, Levick (2012) suggests that the digital revolution has changed many aspects of society including democracy and the way human beings react to situations. Miller (2011) agrees and maintains that the impact of Facebook on humanity is immense such that by 2010, six years after it was launched, it was evident that Facebook would be a useful tool for socialisation for all age groups especially the elderly. For Levick, (2012, p.9) “signs abound that the free democratisation of the free market system is underway”.

The introduction of social media has brought an advantage of constant virtual connection and sharing of information, ideas, and opinions which helps to display a collective opinion that has not been experienced before in the traditional media. Holmes, Hadwin and Mottershead (2013) argue in favour of the link between social power and the media. Their views are supported by Ngai, Tao and Moon (2014) who record the impact and changes brought by social media. The benefit of engaging in this virtual community can help to build a reputation, create career opportunities, or even direct monetary revenue (Tang, Gu, & Whinston, 2012).

According to Siapera (2012, p.8), the improvement in technology has made it possible to access internet almost everywhere and noted that portability of communication devices such as cell phones have had a huge effect on the progression and usage of social media claiming that “this portability introduces an element of continuous availability and connectivity to the internet across

boundaries of space and time”. Livingstone and Brake (2010) contend that social networking has been adopted quickly by young people world-wide which enables them to present themselves, learn and build relationships while concerns of privacy, bullying and harmful contact continue to grow.

The speed at which information travels, the ways in which it moves and the transparency of such information have changed as a result of social media (Mayfield III, 2009). Hesmondhalgh and Toynbee (2008) argue in favour of their value in social and political life stating that social media sites bear crucial democratic values and constitute tenets of liberal democracy. Their argument is supported by Huaye and Sakamoto (2014) who laments that social media such as Facebook, Twitter and others come with benefits of joint opinion that can influence people’s actions. In the same vein, Miller (2011) suggest that the impact of Facebook on humanity is enormous such that by 2010, six years after the application was launched, it was evident that Facebook would be a useful tool for socialisation for all ages.

Ryan (2015) maintains that online social networks have infiltrated all generations of internet users becoming a prominent communications tool, especially amongst the young generation. Therefore, organisations are increasingly using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to connect with audiences. Social media improves multi-tasking while one is working. Results from previous research indicate that it is not enough to have a new, unique “hook” to keep users around forever. Twitter’s low character counts was cited as an example and was acceptable back in the days, but now the more dynamic users are getting irritated with the gimmick (Ryan, 2015). Platforms that consistently evolve with new consumer trends emerge as the most popular

platforms. For example, Instagram constantly introduces new features on a regular basis and has become a much more preferred platform than its original niche could allow. Therefore, the secret for social media platforms to last is the fact that they will only survive if they allow themselves to change functions and format over the years or else they will fail (Ryan, 2015).

For many people, social media is deemed as a simple means of communication, making it easier to stay connected with friends and family, but for others, it is an inexpensive marketing tool that can be leveraged to the power of businesses (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). In both contexts, social media has become permanently part of society, and it is almost impossible to imagine a future without such platforms. The brands might change, and the platforms might evolve, but the social media concept is here to stay.

Having said that, it is imperative to mention that social media is not perfect and is not without its challenges. Consumers and brands alike are starting to notice the flaws and weaknesses of these systems, and even major players like Twitter are starting to feel the pressure to address these faulty points (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). As the world focuses towards the future of social media, there are bigger challenges linked with privacy and legitimacy of information that circulates on social media that the next generation's platforms will need to address (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). Recognising and anticipating these changes can help organisations to balance and carefully monitor their involvement with social media in the marketing world.

2.3 Social media as engagement tools

Corporate communication can be described as a range of management functions related to internal and external communication of an organisation (Cornelissen, 2008). These management functions vary from one organisation to the other. Corporate communication functions have drastically changed in terms of how they are being executed since the evolution of social media. The functions range from media relations, community stakeholder relations, internal and external communication and marketing communication. These are discussed in detail in the paragraphs below.

2.3.1 Media relations

Research shows that creating good relationship with the media requires constant effort and attention as alluded to by (Karaduman 2013). Good relations with the media afford an organisation a good chance of coverage. It is therefore the function of corporate communication to ensure such a relationship exist between the organisation and the media. Through social media, corporate communication professionals are able to strengthen their relations with the media by constantly engaging each other. Duffy (2015) suggested that “[E]veryone is busy and social media enables communication professionals to maintain ongoing, quality relationships with influencers, media, customers and partners regardless of where they are”.

2.3.2 Community/stakeholder relations

Community/stakeholder relations are other functions of corporate communication which must be maintained at all times. Loosing trust from the community or stakeholders is a risk that can lead to the closure of business (Karaduman, 2013). Community relation is important because companies need support from stakeholders and the entire community within which they operate.

Duhe (2012) opined that social media helps improve community relations and must be at the heart of corporate communication activities because it has potential to enhance organisation-public relationship by increasing trust and improve community relations.

2.3.3 Internal and external communication

Internal and external communication is also another responsibility corporate communication is tasked with. Nowadays a company's reputation and brand success or fiasco rest on the image built by the company in social media. It is therefore imperative for communication professionals to learn and adapt new practices of communication within and outside the organisation (Breakenridge, 2012). Social media platforms afford opportunities for institutions to have real communication with internal and external publics. For both internal and external publics, social media brings opportunities because it is easier for the publics to be watchdogs and track companies with unethical communication behaviors (Sweetser, 2010). The value of social media in terms of internal and external communication is that users are highly engaged and want to be heard (Burson-Marsteller, 2010).

2.3.4 Marketing communication

Marketing communication and advertising makes part of the list to the functions of corporate communication. Companies have adopted the use of social media as a means to market and advertise their products and services. This has empowered consumers by affording them opportunity to express their views or opinions on a product or service freely on social networks (Benetoli et al, 2019). Hence, companies need to aggressively participate in social media in order

to listen from the good or damaging messages about their brands. Social media can help them in gathering feedback and building relationships.

2.4 Importance of social media for communication

Earlier studies point out that companies using social media are on the increase with Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube being the popular platforms (Carim & Warwick, 2013). Macnamara (2010) suggests these social media platforms are being used to complement traditional communication platforms to enable organisations to maintain and keep a strong relationship with their stakeholders.

Matthews (2010) states that the manner through which companies respond to the social media revolution is indicative of future success and that companies which are not embracing social networking sites are going to be left behind. The study further projects that corporate companies will increase their pace to catch up with the ever-changing social media platforms because of the invaluable role they will continue to play in the communication industry.

The evolution of social media has brought an impact on how communication and public relations are being practised in contrast to the previous years before these emergent technologies (Wright & Hinson, 2010). These new communication platforms brought to the fore, opportunities for companies to not only publish information but to also measure the effectiveness of the communication process.

Sweetser (2010) concurs that compared to previous years before the emergence of social media, companies now have opportunities to have real conversations with both internal and external

publics. This makes it difficult for companies to stay away from social network sites but to be present in order to keep up the conversation with stakeholders. This can be evidently proven by the study of Burson-Marsteller (2010), which found that the value of social media is that users are highly engaged and want to be heard.

Macnamara (2010) attests that public relations practitioners employ social media in gathering feedback and building relationships with stakeholders, while other practitioners use it to market their products and services and promote their brands

Research indicates that social media can be used as an effective tool in handling a crisis. Most organisations use social media to handle some emergencies, especially Twitter. Public relations professionals who rely on social media tools in handling crisis in their organisations positively recommend social media as effective in contingency managements (Wigley & Zhang, 2011).

Findings from previous research of Wigley and Zhang (2011), have it that social media has reduced the turn-around time of organisations when communicating with their clients. Organisations are now able to disseminate information quickly to their target public (Wright & Hinson, 2010). On the other hand, another research finding by Wright and Hinson (2010), pointed at some of the major challenges associated with social media. These were identified as, the need to respond quickly, the need for the organisation to be on online at all time in order to attend to queries that may arise.

Another challenge is the requirement of authorisation to comment publicly when it comes to government institutions. One would not just publicise government information without permission

from senior authorities. Social media is also an issue with organisations that are engaged in using it as a communication tool because it requires such institutions to identify clear objectives and reasons why they have to use social media networks, and institutions have no total control over their publics in terms of what they post on social media (Macnamara, 2010).

Considering the above, the researcher sought to utilise content analysis to determine the efficacy of social media use by NBC. This decision was made after assessing the efficacy of descriptive vs, content analysis. Although a descriptive analysis is essential for conducting statistical analyses, as it provides an overall distribution realm of the research data, and assists in identifying outliers and typos, and provides a mechanism for identifying associations among variables (Loeb, et., al, 2017)). However, a content analysis was found to be more appropriate as it is an efficient research tool that is effective in determining the presence of specific words, phrases, or concepts within some aspect of qualitative written data. Using content analysis, the researcher was able to quantify and analyse the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts (Elo, et., al, 2014). Content analysis is most often used to:

- Identify the intentions, focus or communication trends of an individual, group or institution.
- Describe attitudinal and behavioural responses to communications.
- Determine psychological or emotional state of persons or groups.
- Reveal international differences in communication content.
- Reveal patterns in communication content.
- Pre-test and improve an intervention or survey prior to launch.

- Analyse focus group interviews and open-ended questions to complement quantitative data (Elo, et., al, 2014).

A study by Gomez and Velez (2011) on social media as a strategic tool for corporate communication, performed a content analysis of Facebook and Twitter accounts of about 400 Puerto Rican companies. In their conclusion, they found that these companies had not fully exploited social media platforms for the purpose of communicating with their stakeholders. These findings concur with that of MacCorkindale (2010) who found that the Fortune 50 companies were using Facebook but were not utilizing its full potential. Instead, the Facebook page was used to post information about the public instead of posting information about the organisation. Only a few companies used Facebook for disseminating information about their corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Thus, the question arises what NBC is doing?

2.5 Classification of social media

Scholars classify social media into four main categories, which include social network sites (SNS), blogs, content generating and sharing sites and user appraisal sites. These are discussed below.

2.5.1 Social networking sites (SNS): Through these sites, people are able to build social networks or social relations by for example building relations based on a shared interest or activities (Matali & Mwilima, 2017). They provide web-based platforms to build such social relations. SNS provide a platform for people to interact using the internet, email as well as mobile phones. According to Baruah, (as cited in Sewe, 2014), the most popular websites that offer social networking are Myspace, LinkedIn and Facebook. Social networks permit a user to generate profiles or personal

homepages online and set up a social network. What makes the social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but relatively that they enable users to articulate and make noticeable their social networks (Basu, 2017). This makes it possible for individuals to make connections that would not otherwise be made, but that is often not the goal, and these meetings are frequently between concealed ties (Naseri, 2019).

2.5.2 Blog: A blog is an online journal where an individual, group, or corporation presents a record of activities, thoughts or beliefs. For one to set up a blog, one has to select the available blogging platforms that comprise wordpress.com, blogger.com and wordpress.org among others. Blogger.com and wordpress.com offer free blogging platforms thus anyone can set up an account. A popular subcategory of blogs is microblogging. A microblogging site is ultimately like any other blog except for the fact that it limits the number of words that one can publish in one message. Twitter is an example of a microblogging site. It has a word limit of 140 characters.

2.5.3 Content generating and sharing sites: They function as sources of information on various subjects. These are photo-sharing sites like Flickr.com, Picasaweb.google.com as well as video sharing sites like YouTube. There are also slide sharing like slideshare.com where one can share PowerPoint presentations and document sharing site like docstoc.com among others. Usually, these sites provide free content for all internet users thus people can search for various kinds of content, download and use the content available without being charged a fee. These sites also afford a platform for users to produce and share content with others. This is mainly useful for people who are unable to access adequate educational resources.

2.5.4 User appraisal sites: These serve as a platform for appraisals of various products and services. One example is www.pagalguy.com which affords consumers to write reviews on various products and services. User appraisal sites provide a platform for a consumer to make fitting decisions before purchasing a product or paying for a service.

2.6 Benefits of social media to organisations

The good thing about the web is that when an idea is born it can accelerate a brand or a company to superficially instant recognition and fortune, Scott, (as cited in Wright & Hinson, 2008). Scott indicates that although communication through the web is usually free as compared to purchasing space via traditional advertising, only a slight number of public relations practitioners are efficiently employing blogs and other social media when communicating with their strategic publics. The challenge to public relations and marketing personnel is connecting the incredible power of social media by having other people tell your story from one person to the other, Scott (as cited in Wright & Hinson, 2008).

Wright and Hinson (2008), in their study, examined the effect of new technology on public relations and established the potential of social media to bring vivid changes to many aspects of public relations. In their study, Wright and Hinson (2008) suggest that new technology has meaningfully empowered a wide variety of strategic publics by offering them new dynamic media which many people are using to communicate effectively with both internal and external publics. Weber, (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p.14) emphasises that the communication world is intensely shifting in a digital direction and those who understand this conversion will communicate much more effectively than those who do not understand this shifting. Public relations in the digital age

needs an understanding of how your key segments are gathering information and then influencing them at key points-doing so requires strategies that clasp the digital age, Key, (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p. 14).

According to Jones, (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p.14), institutions that engage in using social media tools appear to be more reputable and more innovative than those who do not. This means that the more an institution uses social media, the more it attracts and retains clients to its brand. Accessing social networking sites and social media tools permits a company to directly connect with the public and get a clear idea of what they need, where they are and what makes them tick?

In addition to that, social media has the potential to save companies a lot of money and time through enhancing traditional and online campaigns; therefore, yielding better response rates to pitches, Swallow, (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p.15). However, Tabellini and Yip, (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p.15) aver that corporate social media channels should provide relevant updates, news and address client issues or answer questions regarding the company or brand. Companies which fail to address or ignore customer concerns online are risking not only their online reputation but bottom-line sales as well.

Freberg (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p. 15) summarises the main uses of social media as; (1) establishing online identity, (2) conducting research, (3) launching events and creating awareness of an issue, (4) using media relations practices in reaching both traditional and non-traditional media, (5) engaging with customers in dialogue, (6) creating new online partnership, (7) communication with internal and external audiences, (8) crisis communication and crisis management, (9) reputation management for corporations and individuals.

2.7 Social media as a marketing tool

The research topic is aimed at assessing the use of social media as a corporate communication tool by the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation. Equally, marketing is a form of communication which by extension is linked to corporate communication, therefore it is necessary to include the marketing part in order to qualify the literature. The introduction of social media has had many organisations change the way they market their products and engage with their target markets. Given that the use of social media in sharing and engaging with others continue to grow, it would be a great thing for business institutions to develop and implement a sustainable social media strategy in order to successfully take advantage of the rapidly changing business environment, Bennett (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.17).

Vanessa (2012) suggests that the discovery of “trending topic” in social media is another big influence. Twitter refers to a trending topic as a hash tag-driven topic that is instantly prevalent at a particular time. Based on who you follow and where you are located, trends are determined by an algorithm that monitors burning subjects. The author further states that trends, as they are commonly referred to assist institutions in knowing what is acceptable and what is not, at a particular time in the market sphere.

According to Hensel and Deis (2010), social media marketing is a recent phenomenon that began with social media dominating online communication. The authors describe social media marketing as a form of internet marketing that implements various social media networks in order to achieve marketing communication and branding goals. Assad and Gómez (2011) note that social media marketing primarily covers activities involving social sharing of content, videos, and images for

marketing purposes. Social media marketing programs usually centre on efforts to create content that attracts attention and encourages readers to share with their social networks, resulting in electronic word of mouth.

Marketing techniques adopted by social media marketing include targeting consumers' online brand activities, electronic word of mouth and these techniques are used to successfully advertise online. Social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter provide advertisers with information about the likes and dislikes of their consumers which is vital, as it provides the business with a target audience. Consumers' online brand-related activities (COBRAs) are another method used by advertisers to promote their products. An activity such as uploading a picture of a product purchased on Facebook is an example of a COBRA (Chenhall, 2005).

Electronic word of mouth (EWOM) is another technique for social media marketing. Electronic commendations and assessment are a convenient way to have a product promoted via the consumer to consumer interactions. A review of a company online would be an appropriate example in this case. A good service would result in a positive review which gets the company free advertising through social media; however, a poor service will result in a negative consumer review which can possibly ruin the company's reputation of marketing results in earned media rather than paid media.

Increasing publicity and increasing traffic are the top two benefits of social media marketing (Vanessa, 2012). Previous studies suggest that some marketers have discovered that their social media engagement has generated increased exposure for their businesses, particularly increasing

traffic which is the second major benefit, Bennett (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.19). Studies also indicate that the majority of people who own mobile phones and almost all business organisations have an active presence on social media. Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, LinkedIn, Instagram, Google+ and Pinterest are the most used social media networks. Bacon (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p. 20) reveals that there are many ways to maintaining a successful online and social media presence. Some of these ways include:

2.7.1 Contents

This is the backbone of social media which commands that online and social media platforms will not dictate traffic unless they publish fresh, relevant information on a regular basis for their audience's consumption. When social media networks and accounts do not publish fresh content they are considered dead, (Bacon (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p. 20).

2.7.2 Engagement

Organisations must constantly engage their audience if they want to realise a successful social media campaign. When organisations and individuals engage their online audience, they are seen as friendly and responsive. As a result, these individuals are more likely to go the extra mile to defend the organisation, promote a name, brand, product, service or cause, (Bacon (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p. 20).

2.7.3 Skills

Bacon, (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p. 20) notes that there are technical skills required to drive a vibrant social media presence which include graphics, research, design, back-end management, analytics, optimising, monitoring and others. Not knowing which to deploy, how and when to deploy it or utilizing them wrongly is a sure road to disaster.

2.7.4 Consistency

Knowing what to do in order to have a winning social media campaign and how to do it may not be considered as a guarantee for success unless that knowledge is backed by constant efforts and commitment to doing it all the time (Bacon (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.20). The absence of consistency accounts mostly for the online failure of institutions and public figures, who have all it takes as well as the budget to be visible online, but whose activities are a whimper, Bennett, (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.21). Colliander and Dahlem (2011) concur that most marketers are using social media to develop loyal fans of about 70% or more and gain at least 71% marketplace intelligence.

2.7.5 Improved sales

Bacon (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p. 21) further states that it takes time to develop relationships that lead to sales as a large percentage of marketers who take time to find great results. Research indicates that more than half of marketers that have been using social media for a minimum of three years, report that it had helped them improve sales. On the other hand, because they lack the needed tools to track sales, 50 per cent of all marketers who undertook this survey

reported that social media had not improved in their sales Bacon, (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p. 21

2.7.6 Increased exposure

It was suggested by Colliander and Dahlén (2011) that the majority of marketers indicated that their social media efforts had increased exposure for their businesses. In their study, they found that almost all marketers who engaged in social media marketing for one year or longer indicated that it generated some exposure for their businesses. This is also an advantage to the NBC to capitalise on social media marketing if they need to generate income because by utilising social media they expose what sort of business they are into. Customers will be in a better position to choose from their different products as they have information available at their disposal through social media.

2.7.7 Business partnerships

It has been proven that the more time businesses invests in social media networking, the more they are likely to gain business partnerships (Bacon, (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p. 21). Most marketers that invested at least one year in social media marketing reported that they gained new partnerships. Empirical evidence has proved that more than half of those who invested only 6 hours in social media weekly, were able to build new business partnerships (Chenhall, 2015). Marketers selling to other businesses were more likely to achieve this benefit than those selling to consumers (Chenhall, 2015).

2.7.8 Generated leads and marketing expenses

Chenhall (2015) opines that by spending as little as six hours per week, 66%+ of marketers saw lead generation benefits with social media. More than half of marketers with at least one year of social media experience were generating leads with social media platforms.

2.8 Social media in organisational communication

Building brand loyalty can only be by the common efforts of employees, clients, suppliers, and partners. For companies to gain and sustain a competitive advantage, they need determined employees and partners (Macnamara, 2010). Company leaders need to recognise the indisputable advantage of using social media in this changeable environment, it can create an unexpected opportunity for the organisations. Social media tools are able to accelerate and enhance employee innovation, engagement, and performance (Macnamara, 2010). The use of social media in organisational communication results in better business performance, creates long-term capability and ultimately sustains business success (Jue, Marr, Kassotakis, & Kruse as cited in Macnamara, 2010).

Social media offer a great potential to share more, learn more, and accomplish more than it was ever possible in the past. Unlike traditional forms of media, which have limited pages or time on the airwaves, social media are “infinite” in their potential Jue et al, (as cited in Macnamara, 2010). Considering the above, it is the researcher’s view to highlight that companies should be aware and make use of all the available tools for corporate communications to be able to get their ideas across to different target groups. Nowadays, word of mouth is of increasing importance in company marketing and communication, and companies should be able to utilise all the available

communication tools, especially social media because of their increasing importance in everyday communication.

2.9 Social media in business

The concept of doing business in a virtual world is still new and “scary” but full of opportunities (Safko, 2010). Social media in business can be seen as a set of highly effective tools for customer service, business-to-business and internal communications. Most social media tools are used in marketing, sales, public relations, and communications (Safko, 2010).

The use of social media can result in a number of benefits for businesses. These benefits can range from developing trust that ultimately creates influence among consumers (Safko, 2010). Companies have the opportunity to present their services and products through social media advertisement and through social media, corporations to create an image of innovation that can deliver a message to all generations.

On the other hand, social media websites provide a direct line to consumers that in addition to all, can allow companies to receive direct feedback (Jefferson III & Traughber, 2012). Jue et al (as cited in Macnamara 2010) opine that forums, social networking profiles and wikis enable employees to offer their ideas and experiences when the project team signals the need for assistance. Social media results in employees communicating more effectively, they can access needed information faster, and collaborate with a wider network across the globe. It also helps to speed up the integration and adoption of corporate cultures and values and serve as a bridge that

spans cultures, fostering acknowledgement and understanding of diverse populations, beliefs, practices, products and services.

2.10 Social media engagement strategies

Given the strategically important position of informing and educating they occupy in society, the NBC owe it to themselves to implement a communication system that is up to standard, one that is professional and in step with the times. In such a competitive context, managing the brand of an institution and communicating its strategy requires very sophisticated management Canals (2013 as cited in Sewe, 2014, p.22).

Social media as indicated earlier is defined as a group of internet-based applications that build on the conceptual and technical foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the formation and interchange of user generated content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.65). The term “Web 2.0” defines the conventional of new principles and technology development trends that mutually form the basis for the next generation of the Internet which is characterized by user involvement, openness, and network effects (Musser & O'Reilly, 2006). An essential part of social media is the creation of user-generated content, which collaboratively connects the collective intelligence of the individual users and leverages network effects (Scherp, Schwagereit, & Ireson, 2009).

Huang et al. (as cited in Chirumalla at al. 2018, p.3) conversed how social media can drive innovation in organisations by nurturing the emergence of informal networks, weak ties, boundary spanners, and social capital through enhancing knowledge sharing and transfer. Considering the potential opportunities of social media tools, many organisations have moved away from

traditional marketing methods to social media marketing (Ananda, Hernandez, Garcia, & Lamberti, 2016). Constantinides and Fountain (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.3) suggested a classification centered on the use of various social media tools as marketing channels. These include blogs, social networks, content communities, forum/ bulletin boards, content aggregators, and virtual worlds. Social media in Business to Business (B2B) has a positive affiliation with sales processes (i.e., creating opportunities and relationship management) and performance Rodriguez, Peterson, & Krishnan, (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.3). Although the benefits of applying social media in B2B has been renowned as positive, there are challenges that adversely influence the perceptions of the usefulness of social media in B2B organisations: reputational risks and legal issues, lack of staff knowledge/training, senior managers' lack of support, and reluctance to lose control of the brand (Siamagka et al., 2015). Michaelidou et al. (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.3) identified several hurdles to social networking site usage in B2B organisations, including uncertainty in using social networking sites to achieve objectives, employees' lack of knowledge about sites, and higher cost of investments. Hence, bearing in mind specifically how social media may expedite improved marketing and Research and Development interface in the B2B company context holds high value for the present study.

The existing social media research focuses either on R&D (Chirumalla et al., 2018) or marketing (Moore et al., 2013; Siamagka et al., 2015 (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.3), but not on the interface between marketing and R&D in a B2B setting. Rohmann et al. (2014 as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.3) indicated that previous studies on social media have mostly focused on the early stage of the New Product Development (NPD) process. Internally, social media helped organisations to involve functional departments with direct contact with customers in product

development in order to collaboratively develop ideas and concepts (Rohmann et al., 2014 as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.3), thus joining boundaries between functions and enhancing community building Vuori, 2012, (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, .3). Vuori 2012, (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.3) established that internally social media is also used for internal communication, knowledge transfer, reaching personnel, and conducting internal idea crowdsourcing. Blogs are usually used in the formation phase to identify the needs and preferences of customers, to discover new trends, and to generate attention before the market launch of a new product (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In the late stages, social media tools are used for tasks surrounding the launch of the product and the customer service support purposes Rohmann et al., 2014, (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.3).

Furthermore, the tools allowed companies to perform R&D, marketing, and sales tasks, Roch & Mosconi, 2016, (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.4). However, researchers emphasised that the current literature does not present a complete picture of the application areas for social media in NPD, Roch & Mosconi, 2016; Rohmann et al., 2014 (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.4). Song and Song (2010) (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.4) suggested that communication technologies and decision-aiding technologies are used to reduce the negative impact of physical separation, goal incongruity, and cultural differences on marketing and R&D interface integration. There are several factors that influence the successful use of social media in new product development, Kumar, 2013, (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.4), including the selection of the right IT tool, alignment of new product development processes, restructuring of the product development organisation, hands-on training for product development managers on the use of

social media, organisational change management, and the culture of the organisation to drive decisions based on input from social media.

Researchers and practitioners are using social media engagement strategy as a way to steadily address numerous factors related to the social media adoption process (Cawsey & Rowley, 2016). The idea at the meta-level is defined as a form of social, interactive behavior, which is considered as a passing state occurring within broader relevant engagement processes developed over time Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, & Llic, 2011, (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.4). Previous research has suggested various frameworks, scopes, or evaluation practices that seem to be linked to the engagement states and processes. For example, Marcos-Cuevas, Nätti, Palo, and Baumann (2016) (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.4) presented value co-creation practices divided into three primary categories: linking (i.e. practices related to mobilising social connections and networks such as co-ideation, co-valuation, and co-diagnosing), materializing (i.e. operational practices related to the production of a value co-creating offering such as co-testing, co-design, and co-launching), and institutionalising (i.e. organisational practices related to the design of institutions and structures to capture and retain value created such as embedding). These practices can help to attain “sustained purposeful engagement” between actors in value co-creation, thus providing related stakeholders with an equal opportunity to contribute ideas, raise questions, and allow others to respond to these ideas and questions, Bryer, (2013) (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.4). In the case of the NBC this will provide an opportunity for the audience to ask questions and make meaningful contributions and the NBC will be allowed an opportunity to respond to the raised questions and ideas.

Rodriguez and Peterson (2012), (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.4) characterized social customer relationship management in B2B marketing into four stages, namely content, conversations, engagement (friends, partners, collaborators), and meaningful relationships. Consequently, client relationship management initially starts with the need to attract users by providing compelling content through online communities, webinars, and blogs, thereby creating a platform for conversations on the content, which results in engagement with the users and in turn creates deeper, meaningful relationships with users and the community. Similarly, the NBC would provide convincing content on their pages as a way of attracting users and create conversation. Cawsey and Rowley (2016) proposed a framework with six components of a social media strategy: monitoring and listening, empowering and engaging employees, creating compelling content, stimulating electronic word of mouth, evaluating and selecting channels, and enhancing brand presence through integrating social media. Jussila et al. (2012), (as cited in Chirumalla et al., 2018, p.4) categorized social media use of interaction forms in the B2B innovation process into five types: without direct interaction, one-way interaction, two-way interaction, community-interaction, and user toolkit-supported interaction.

2.11 The impact and effectiveness of social media

2.11.1 Impact on politics, business and productivity

Social media is regarded as a tool that plays an important role in many elections around the world, including in the U.S, Iran, and India where every politician in need of support joins the social media sphere. Social media has served to rally people for a cause, and have inspired mass movements and political unrest in many countries including the “Arab Spring” uprising (Ryan, 2015).

Ryan (2015) maintains that internet-savvy companies are using social media networks to advertise and promote their products. Not only do they advertise but also use social media to build customer loyalty and other functions. The instant interactions and feedback from customers assist businesses to understand their markets and improve their products and strategies. Business institutions have gone to the extent of giving-away prizes to influence customers to visit their website on a regular basis. When compared to television advertisement and other marketing strategies considered to be expensive forms of marketing, social media is deemed as a cheap and effective way to enhance brand image and popularity (Ryan, 2015).

However, research by (Ryan, 2015) shows that many British companies have lost billions of dollars per year because of employees being addicted to social media. This resulted in many companies blocking social media networks in their institutions as addicted employees can distract themselves on such sites, instead of focusing on their work (Ryan, 2015).

2.11.2 Effect on socialisation and cost factor

Ryan (2015), suggest that through social media, people are able to connect with their friends wherever they are, make new friends, trade ideas, share content and pictures, do business and many other activities they want to engage in. Social media has enabled users to stay abreast of the latest global and local developments. Professionals engage in social media sites like LinkedIn to improve their careers and business prospects. Students have taken advantage of social media by collaborating with their peers to improve their academic proficiency and communication skills.

Today it is possible for one to learn about other people's cultures and societies by connecting with people in other countries (Ryan, 2015).

In the research of (Ryan, 2015)), it shows that the cost of many social media campaigns is extremely cheap compared to other campaign forms. For example, the setting up of surveillance and monitoring systems can be free or performed with a very small advertising budget. Furthermore, using video and graphic art content, institutions can encourage the public to establish compelling campaign material to provide testimonials. It is technically reasonable to produce low-cost video and audio clips using a desktop computer and video-editing software while the creation of high-quality video content or podcasts is generally contracted out to professional media companies at traditional market rates (Ryan, 2015).

2.12 Social media usage amongst people in Namibia

There are currently 1.28 million internet users in Namibia and by January 2020, 2.89 million Namibians were connected to mobile networks. In 2017, there were 500, 000 Namibians on social media (NSA, 2017) and in 2020, this figure increased to 710, 000. In July 2019, Namibia had 589 800 Facebook users and 210 600 Instagram users in Instagram in 2019 the majority of which were women (52, 9%). Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube are the most popular in Namibia. In Namibia, an increasing number of institutions have adopted the use of social media platforms and they include, The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), Motor Vehicle Accident Fund (MVA), Namibian Qualification Authority (NQA), Telecom Namibia, Mobile Telecommunication Limited (MTC), New Era newspaper, Namibia Press Agency (NAMPA), The Namibian newspaper and Namibian Media Holdings (NMH). Potential: Social

media comes with both advantages and disadvantages such as creating a large connection with audience; allows direct connection with audience; allows for the creation of organic content and paid advertising; allows the creation of links to drive traffic to other websites or platforms; allows evaluation of one's performance as it allows one to see comments and the number of likes; improves quality relationship. Companies that are not participating in the use of social media are missing out (Rokka, Karlsson & Tienari, 2014) as social media has become a strategic communication tools (Breakenridge, 2012), which are used by corporate entities to connect with customers and maintain quality relationship (Sashi, 2012). NBC, in particular, has adopted various social media channels to reach out to its audience. The corporation, also has a social media policy.

Social media influences people's lives both positively and negatively (Miller, 2011). Social media can make people more attentive of what is happening at a local, national and global level. It also has the ability to twist one's opinion of the truth. By boosting false ideals, praising selfishness and making the possession of fame, fortune and talent qualifications to be considered a treasured person, social media has the capacity to ruin society (Chang 2010). Societies with strong moral roots are in direct opposition with social media landscape on many levels. The Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry posits that "some media messages have been linked to the cause of numerous health concerns for youth" (Miller, 2011, p. 23). Static or motion pictures posted on social media for entertainment purposes can provide graphic, sexualized and negative representations of what life is like and what is considered acceptable.

According to an article published in the *New Era* newspaper by Shihomeka (2017), the proliferation of internet access and an increase in mobile phone subscriptions in Namibia and

globally necessitated assumptions, debates and enabled greater digital participation of youths and adults in the political sphere. These assumptions and debates led to a decline in the moral obligation of our citizens being questioned.

Social media can be defined as interactive computer-mediated technologies or websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking and virtual communities, share information, ideas, personal messages and other contents such as videos and audios.

Some of the popular social media platforms in Namibia are Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram and LinkedIn. All these platforms can be accessed via mobile phones. Some studies reported that over 500,000 Namibians are on these platforms. The presence of youths on social media platforms is said to be higher than the elders' online presence. Although Namibia is characterised by a high national unemployment rate at 34% especially among the youths, which stands at 43%, the majority of the youths in Namibia own mobile phones for easy communication purposes (NSA, 2017). There are reportedly more mobile phones than the size of our population. It is said that more males own mobile phones than their female counterparts. Shihomeka indicated in the above referred article that, even the youths from marginalised communities have access and own mobile phones. There are two groups of mobile phone owners in Namibia: those that own smartphones that can enable them to have access to internet services including mobile social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and others and non-smart phone owners.

This can be attributed to affordable phones available at Indian and various Chinese shops around the country. Interestingly, Social Media is currently praised for creating digital publics whereby

citizens from different corners can meet at their convenience to debate, discuss, share and educate each other on various issues that affect their lives regardless of their political affiliation, social class, ethnicity, age, education level or employment status. Shihomeka's latest observation on various platforms in Namibia was that citizens create social media pages on Facebook or other platforms to serve as a meeting and discussion points of various political, social, economic and technological issues. This can best be described by the increasing and mushrooming of various Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups joined by citizens especially the youth. Fascinatingly, University graduates, youths from well-off families and grade 12 school leavers tend to dominate these digital platforms than any other group.

Youths in urban and semi-urban areas are mostly on social media than others due to the digital divide that cripples the democratic digital sphere (New Era, 2017). Analysis of a few social media pages in Namibia revealed that political parties, government agencies and ministries have created these platforms, however, there is less engagement and interactions with the grassroots level (New Era, 2017).

Shihomeka opines that many of these sites created are not updated regularly. These are commendable e-democracy initiatives by citizens to create political and social networks for inclusivity and social coherence. While others gain and benefit through digital literacy and information sharing, others go so low by discrediting others, calling others different names, vilifying and blackmailing others, destroying their personal identities and that of their relatives/families, revealing private and confidential issues, recording personal and private mobile conversations and share them on social media, share their half-naked or sexually revealing pictures

on social media, expressing their anger and frustration on these platforms rather than seeking clarification and advice from appropriate and relevant offices or experts; judging and crucifying elders publicly which is against our cultural norms as Africans. All these issues led to societal morality being questioned (New Era, 2017).

According to the Stat Counter Global Stats, social media statistics for Namibia as from July 2019 to July 2020 has increased as illustrated in Figure 2.

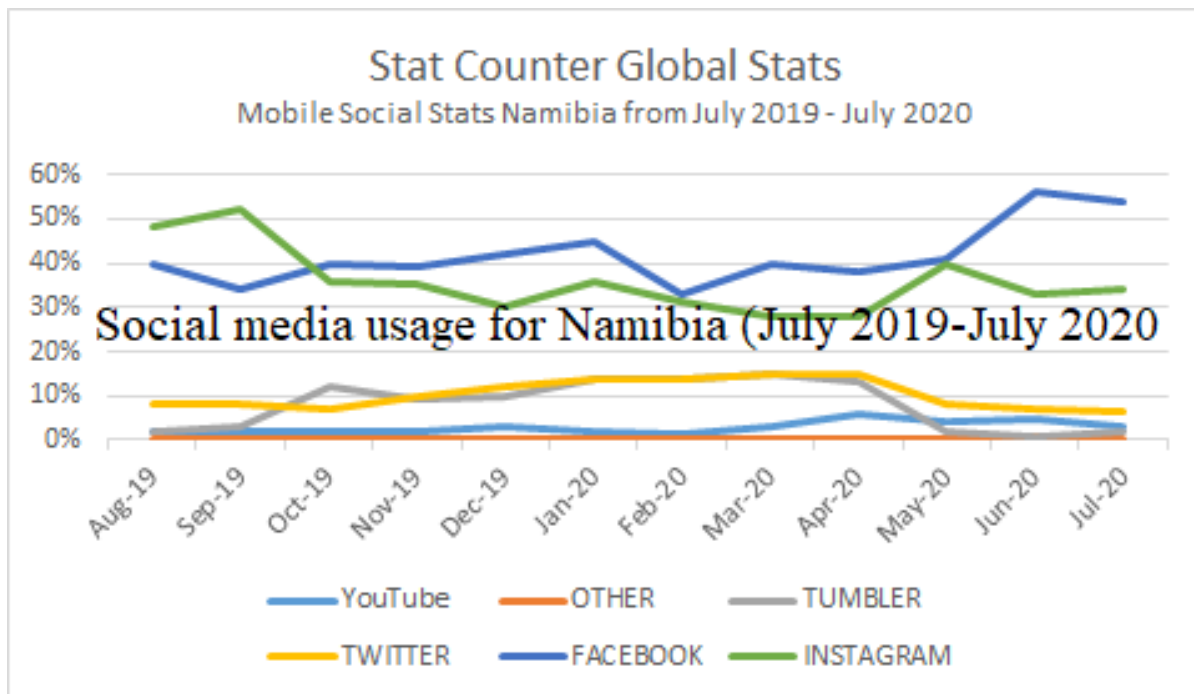


Figure 2. Social Media Statistics for Namibia. **Source:** (Global Stats, 2020)

2.13 Social media in higher learning institutions

Students are relying on mainstream technologies such as computers, mobile phones and the internet for fast communication and convenient access to information and services, as revealed by

Kennedy, (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p.17). This may have particular implications for the administrative services provided by universities-general student services, teaching and learning services, Caries & Kraviks, (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p.18).

Ridings and Gefen, (as cited in Hayes, Ruschman and Walker 2009) state four reasons why people participate in online communities. The following are the reasons:

- a) Information exchange. This reason was cited as the most frequent one.
- b) Social support exchange: the degree to which a person's basic social needs are satisfied through interaction with others.
- c) Friendship: a way for individuals to search for and communicate with others for the purpose of establishing and continuing the friendship.
- d) Recreation: the internet as a form of recreation, like television, and new forms of online gaming.

A report by Pew Internet and American Life Project of 2009 indicated that 73% of American teens used social networking sites and 65% of the teens used the social networking sites on a daily basis to send messages privately. The report further pointed out that older teens are more likely to use Twitter compared to the younger ones and that Facebook had a large number of profiles by teenagers. The Nielson (2012) report, (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p. 18) on the state of social media established that an average of 47% of social network site consumers engage on social care.

Social care refers to customer service through social media and that it has become an immediate imperative for global brands. The report pointed out that consumers turn to a wide variety of social

media platforms for social care. The same report further states that those who make use of social media are most likely to comment or ask a question about a company's product or service on Facebook. A total of 29 % of the comments and questions takes place on the company's page and 28% takes place on their personal page. At the same time, others will use Twitter and YouTube to express their feelings about a product or service.

In 2013, the QS Global Universities conducted a survey covering 26 countries across Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. The survey established that, in every region, more than 50% of the respondents said they used five key networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Pinterest) all the time. It was also revealed in the survey that, younger respondents were more likely to report high usage of YouTube and Pinterest, while older respondents were more likely to report frequent use of LinkedIn. At the same time, African respondents largely reported lower levels of social network usage compared to other regions with the exception of Facebook. The survey indicated that the main motivation for social media usage in all regions was keeping up to date, except Latin America where "interest" was the key driver. However, respondents in Asia and Africa indicated to value the chance to 'Have a say'.

The Consumer Network survey of 2013 in Kenya revealed that 87% of Kenyan youths use the internet to access social media while 57% use the internet to download music and 55% to send emails. Higher education institutions are already experimenting with social media marketing. However, the number of studies on social media marketing and their effectiveness is limited and very little is known about the suitability of social media as tools for higher education marketing (Constantinides & Stagno, 2011).

The lack of suitable higher education social media platforms can be the reason for the low availability of contributed content. This leads to the question of how do university marketers energize present and future students to contribute to content, preferably content that is also beneficial to their institutions (Constantinides & Stagno, 2011). “We argue that university marketers should approach social media in a proactive manner because the simple presence in the social media space is not enough for successful higher education marketing” Shah, (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p.20).

2.14 Theoretical framework

Cresswell (2015) defines a theoretical framework as a summary of the theory regarding a particular problem that is developed through a review of previously tested knowledge of the variables involved. It identifies a plan for investigation and interpretation of the findings. Although there are several theories that can be applied to this trend analysis, the researcher considered only one theory. This study used the social network theory which is a term comprising of all social factors which are involved in the communication processes such as social influence, Kelman, (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.28), social identity and capital, and social interaction and ties, Chang & Chuang (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.28).

This theory has been used to study users’ attitudes, influence, intentions and actions in relation to their adoption and use of social media. Because of its relevance in explaining the assessment of social media, which is the focus of this study, the researcher, therefore, employed this theory to assess the use of social media by the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC).

The social network theory emphasizes how people, organisations and groups interact with others who are part of their network (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). An understanding of the theory is easier when one conducts an examination of the individual pieces starting with the largest element – networks - and working down to the smallest element - the actors. The theory further elaborates that in some ways, networks can be considered as a neighbourhood because they are comprised of the actors and the relationships between those actors (Ryan, 2015). Commonly referred to as nodes, these actors can be individuals, organisations or even companies. Regardless of what they are, they are always the smallest single unit inside a network. For instance; if the (NBC) is viewed as a social network, the NBC audience would be considered a node or actor inside the network.

Matali and Mwilima (2017), note that social scientists believe that there exist three types of social networks; ego-centric networks, socio-centric networks, and open-system networks. In open-system networks, the boundary lines are not visibly defined. Socio-centric networks are closed networks by default. Children in a classroom or workers inside an organisation are the two commonly used examples of this social network. Whereas ego-centric networks are joined with a single node or individual. Namibia's elite class, connections between companies, or the chain of influencers of a particular decision are some of the examples in the Namibian context. This type of social network is considered difficult to study due to the lack of visibly defined boundaries.

Where networks are just a list of close friends or the people one works with, there would be nothing to study. Hence, social scientists are concerned with the connections between each of the members of the network. These connections, happens to be at the heart of what social scientists pursue to study and understand. Why do individuals interact, how do they interact and what is the level of

interaction. The social network theory further states that although, there are many types of relationships, including reciprocal, directional and others, each of the types can be reduced to either a strong or weak tie (Ryan, 2015).

Taprial and Kanwar (2012) suggest that networks that can be considered as strong are those close enough to such an extent that one has their contact numbers whereas weak network ties are those that would be surprised when communicated with. However, research shows that the weak ties within networks are in some ways valuable. Matali and Mwilima (2017, p. 30) opine that a study conducted by Johns Hopkins University determined individuals who sought employment most often received more quality job leads from weak links than from strong ties. Inside this part, which is the smallest part of the social network puzzle, is where scientists, marketers try to analyse the ties a node has with the other members of the network. Members of an association like a church can be considered as an example in this case. Despite the fact that all of them are joined by the overall network, not all the individuals are connected with the same degrees of closeness. It is these varying degrees of closeness, or connectedness that determine the value of that node to the network (Ryan, 2015).

An actor's position inside the social network can be a pointer of the strength of the ties associated with them. An individual close to the centre of the network often has more ties or links between himself or herself and the other actors, as opposed to someone on the outer fringes of a network (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012). A person on the outer reaches of the network could be connected to the network by only one link.

The most captivating aspect of social network theory is the six degrees of separation concept. This concept was the outcome of a late 1960s social experiment called The Small World Problem, conducted by Stanley Milgram, in which 100 letters were sent to randomly chosen individuals with a set of instructions to get the letter to a specific individual who lived in Sharon, Massachusetts. Conversely, a couple of specifications determined how the letter could reach the Sharon, MA target (Ryan, 2015):

- a) First, recipients of the letter could only send the letter to someone they knew first-hand, but that person should be someone they thought may know someone who knew the target; and
- b) Second, if the recipient knew the target, they to directly post the letter to the target.

During the experiment, Milgram determined that there were, on average, six steps between the initial recipient who received the letter and the Sharon, MA target. The theory also led to the creation of common trivia game (Taprial & Kanwar, 2012).

Due to the complexity of any social network, using the theory to understand actors and the relationships between them is crucial to the social scientists, theorists, politicians, and even marketers. Many of the researchers often try to glean a better understanding of the inner workings of a network so they can further their cause or simply sell a product (Taprial and Kanwar, 2012). The theory though, does have some strength and weakness characteristics.

The strength of this theory is that it provides an explanation for how random people are connected is useful in the study of large groups and understanding how their members relate to others in the group. It offers insight into viral phenomena, such as viral content, the spread of diseases like Zika

virus, Ebola, the Arab uprising and many more. Whereas, its weakness is that it is difficult to scientifically replicate and interpreting relationships/connections can be subjective (Ryan, 2015).

The social network theory is used to understand everything from high employee turnover to the intricate webs associated with terrorist networks. Meaning, it is the formula behind social network theory that explains how a piece of social media content goes viral in a relatively short time (Ryan, 2015). This math power functions, shows how a small change in one area can have a huge impact in the overall network. When a change is initiated at the node level, the change moves first from the node, along its ties to the various connected relationships, before being pushed out to additional nodes and their relationships, creating a change through the entire social network.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methods that the researcher used in the study to collect, analyse and present data. This includes the research design, methodology, population, sampling techniques, data collection procedures used, as well as ethical procedures that were taken into consideration. This chapter is relevant in research as it proves the researcher's ability to carry out an academic research using different methods. The researcher used quantitative research method because it provided the opportunity to establish statistically significant conclusions about the NBC population by studying the chosen representative samples of the study population. In this regard, a mixed method approach of both quantitative and qualitative approach was used. The quantitative research approach established the relationship between cause and effect because of established measurements, protocols, reliability, validity, and research controls. Whereas quantitative research seeks to validate a theory by conducting an experiment and analyzing the results numerically, the qualitative aspect sought to arrive at a theory that explains the behavior observed.

Quantitative research methods were used to collect data. To this end, the quantitative methods employed in the study sought to focus on the objective measurements and the statistical and numerical analysis of data collected through surveys developed by the researcher. Quantitative research methods are also initiated using pre-existing statistical data using varying types of computational methods. Quantitative research methods, as demonstrated in this thesis focuses on gathering and analysing numerical data and generalising it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon (Bobbie, et., al, 2010).

3.2 Research design

A research design is a blueprint designed to answer the research question and therefore answers the research question (Burns & Grove 2003, p.195). The researcher chose the descriptive research design for the purposes it served for this study. These include describing systematically and accurately the facts and characteristics of the research population, to accurately portray a particular situation, describing what exists and the frequency it occurs (Burns & Grove 2003, p.195). The choice of which method to employ was dependent upon the nature of the research problem. Morgan and Smircich (1980) and Noor (2008) argue that the actual suitability of a research method is derived from the nature of the social phenomena to be explored.

A research design is a framework or plan that is used as a guide in collecting and analysing the data for the study (Baridam, 1995, p. 49). The study employed a descriptive research design in the form of qualitative research method which is explorative in nature. The advantages of using a descriptive research design are that the researcher is given an opportunity to collect in-depth information on a particular case. It also allows for large amount of data collection Bernard (as cited in Matali & Mwilima, 2017, p.33). Yin (as cited in Sewe, 2014) states that the design is the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusions. The research assessed the use of social media as a corporate communication tool by the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC).

The goals of the study were to assess social media platforms used by the NBC as a corporate communication tool, examine the extent to which NBC has adopted social media and determine how these social media platforms are being used, and to appraise the quality and effectiveness of

engagement with audience using these social media platforms. Glass and Hopkins (as cited in Sewe, 2014, p.29) describe descriptive research design as involving the gathering of data that describes events and then organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection.

3.3 Population

Cresswell (2015) defines population as a total number of individuals with common characteristics and are of particular interest to the researcher. Therefore, the population of this study was confined to the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) employees from different departments composed of TV and radio sections. In addition, radio is composed of eight radio stations, National FM, Kaisames FM, Nwanyi FM, Wato FM, Kati FM, Funkhaus FM, Omurari FM and Hartklop FM. This study only concentrated on NBC TV and National Radio as units of analysis from which the researcher derived the sample. The target population was identified because it constituted decision makers and implementers of decisions who were assumed to have an understanding behind the adoption of social media networks by the NBC.

3.4 Sample

Sampling is defined as the process of choosing a small group of respondents from a larger group, assuming that the results obtained from the small group allow the researcher to make conclusions concerning the larger group (McHale, 2019). This study employed a purposive sampling method as it allows the researcher to classify the sample according to their roles and it gives an advantage of an in-depth understanding of the subject by way of obtaining answers from participants who are assumed to have in-depth knowledge of the subject under investigation.

The total sample size is 17 participants comprising of five (5) executive managers of the NBC, who are decision makers. The researcher believes that they could shed more light on why such platforms were adopted. Twelve (12) are middle managers, who are implementers of policies and decisions. The researcher believed that they could share insights on some challenges and successes experienced when implementing the use of social media platforms. Participants were purposefully chosen to ensure inclusivity and horizontal coverage of all departments. Executive managers comprised part of the sample because the researcher needed to understand why and how the NBC resorted to using social media as a communication tool. Heads of department are the implementers of the executive decisions, therefore they are seen to be in a better position to narrate their experience in terms of how when it comes to the use of social media.

3.5 Research instruments

Due to the nature of the research objectives and the research method used which is qualitative in nature; the study used interview guides with semi-structured questions as the data collecting instruments. Interview guides were prepared by the researcher in line with the main research objectives as stated in chapter one for primary data collection from participants which data collected was recorded using a voice recorder. Semi-structured interviews offer a versatile way of collecting data and can be used with all age groups (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). The researcher proposed note taking to the participants in case a participant was not willing to be recorded. A general interview guides which is more of structured questions was used to obtain information from executive managers whereas, a formal conversational interview guide which allowed the researcher to ask specific questions to participants was employed to get information from middle managers.

3.6 Procedure

Initially the researcher applied for an ethical clearance from UNAM, and when it was obtained, official contacts with all respondents was made to seek their permission to participate in the study, as well as to schedule appointments. The researcher sought permission from the NBC management as well as participants to carry out the study. Participants were given the opportunity to choose their preferred venues where they could be interviewed. Interview questions were sent via email to those respondents who could not make it for face to face interview sessions due to various reasons. The researcher followed up with respondents for clarity in case of vague responses. To this end, four face to face interviews were conducted with executive managers and six face to face interviews were conducted with heads of departments at different times and places.

3.7 Data analysis

Cooper and Schindler (2006) indicated that data analysis usually involve reducing accumulated data to a manageable size, developing summaries, looking for patterns, and applying statistical techniques. A descriptive content analysis of all social media platforms used by the NBC was used to have an insight of what was happening and to compare with what the participants alluded to and what was on the ground.

Executive and middle level managers from the NBC were interviewed separately because the questions were different for each level. To analyse data, the researcher used the constant comparative method and coding, whereby distinct concepts (master headings) and categories (sub-headings) were highlighted with one colour code for concepts, and another colour code for categories. The data was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

software for further analysis. For identification purposes of the position levels, responses from executive managers were coded as 1 and middle level managers were coded 2. Findings from both executive managers and middle managers were presented through descriptions.

3.8 Validity and reliability

In order to ensure validity of the research, the researcher purposively selected a sample population that is capable of providing the needed responses. All interview participants were given the opportunity to ask for clarification of questions they did not clearly understand. The researcher further used triangulation to increase validity of findings as it involves deliberate efforts to seek evidence from a wide range of sources and comparing findings from different sources. Notes were also taken during the interviews. Directly after the interviews, information from the interviews was incorporated into the interview instruments to complement missing but important information. Some of the findings were also presented to respondents to see if the answers were interpreted correctly.

3.9 Research ethics

The researcher complied with the code of ethics of the University of Namibia and obtained a clearance certificate from UNAM Research Ethics Committee. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and that participation was voluntary. Written informed consent prior to the commencement of the study was obtained and the data collected was used merely for the purposes of this study.

To ensure confidentiality, information collected was not to be divulged to third parties except the University of Namibia. Participants were informed of their rights for participating in the research or opting out should they wish to do so. Participation was voluntary and respondents could withdraw at any time with no negative consequences.

Prior to using the voice recorder, the researcher sought permission from each participant to be recorded. Recorded information was saved on an external hard drive in case of a technical fault on the voice recorder afterwards. The participants were not guided by the researcher's knowledge of the subject under investigation, but by their own experiences. Collected information was stored and disposed of according to the University of Namibia regulations. Participants in this research were kept anonymous by not linking their identity with the personal responses they provided.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the analytical part of the study and it presents the data analysis of the findings on the data collected from participants at NBC on how the NBC uses social media to communicate with its publics. The discussion of the findings will be presented in the next chapter. The sample target was the executive management and heads of departments at NBC. The researcher used interviews to obtain responses from different levels at the executive management level and heads of departments who were believed to be the implementers of decisions and policies at NBC.

The chapter demonstrated all the major findings as shown by the analysis of collected data using explanations of the findings. The data was analysed as per the research objectives of the study.

Seventeen (17) participants were selected as a sample for the study which comprised of five (5) executive managers and twelve (12) heads of departments at NBC. Executive managers constituted part of the sample because the researcher needed to have a deeper understanding from the executive level on why NBC resorted to using social media as a communication tool. Heads of departments are the implementers of the executive decisions; therefore, they are seen to be in a better position to narrate their experiences when it comes to the use of social media in their organisation.

Data analysis involves reducing accumulated data to a manageable size, developing summaries, looking for patterns, and applying statistical techniques (Cooper et al., 2006). To analyse data, the

researcher used the descriptive analysis. Distinct concepts (master headings) and categories (sub-headings) were highlighted with one colour code for concepts and another colour code for categories. The researcher explored the relationship between concepts and categories into information tables which allowed an opportunity for assessment to ensure all data collected was taken into account. To ensure that any reader wishing to gain understanding into the use of social media as a communication tool, simplified explanations of findings were used.

4.2 SECTION A: Demographic information

The researcher had chosen seventeen participants to participate in the study and all targeted participants had agreed to participate in the study, but only ten eventually participated in the interview. The interview guide was designed in a simple way to the extent that respondents did not experience any challenges in answering questions.

Out of the ten participants in the study, the results presented shows that four of the participants from the middle management were between the ages of 36 – 45 years and the other four, one from middle management and three from executive management were above 46 years old. Only two of the participants, one from middle management level and one from the executive management level were between the ages of 25 – 35 years old. From these results, it cannot be deduced that the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation has an equal representation of the age groups of 36 to 45 and 46 and older at the management levels. Few of them fall in the category of youths. It was established from the results that six of the participants were females, three from the executive and the other three from middle management and four were males with a representation of two from the executive and the other two from middle management. From the population sample of

participants, it emerged that eight of the participants were holders of post graduate qualifications, of which four were executive managers and the other four were middle managers whereas two middle managers were in possession of undergraduate qualifications.

The researcher conducted a 30-minute interview with executive managers who formed part of the key informants. One of the responsibilities of these executives was to make decisions that would steer the NBC in the right direction. One of the objectives was to establish the reason why NBC engaged its publics through social media.

4.3 SECTION B: NBC on social media

4.3.1 Executive management perspective

Executive managers shared their perspectives when it comes to social media and alluded to the point that new technology has brought significant changes in the spheres of communication. They view social media as an effective tool for communication as information is disseminated timely. Given that the broadcasting industry in which the NBC find itself in which requires timely delivery of information, social media becomes a handy tool of engagement. As the executive management is responsible for policy formulation, it was decided to adopt social media platforms for communication purposes. A social media policy was therefore developed to serve as a guide on which platforms to adopt and how these were going to be utilized. The policy is still at a draft stage.

Participants pointed out that social media afford an opportunity to reach a large audience and provides opportunity to have a direct connection with audience. They were of the opinion that

social media can help build an organisation's brand and if consistently used it helps drive traffic to the NBC website. At the same time, social media afford an opportunity to evaluate their performance through feedback received from the audience. Participants noted that although social media is good and effective when it comes to communication, but on the other hand, it opens up opportunity for embarrassments as it requires skilled personnel to manage it because if not handled well it can cause reputation damage. This is because as an institution they have no control over what the public post on their pages. Therefore, when developing a social media policy such elements must be considered to curter for these unforeseen circumstances. The policy must state as to who must manage these platforms and what qualifications must the person poses.

4.3.1.1 Audience engagement

From the responses, it emerged that all the executive management participants interviewed were of the view that a decision was reached in order to improve information dissemination. They believed that through social media; the NBC could disseminate as much information as they could and in different formats. Three of the total four executive participants alluded to the point that the NBC decided to engage the public through these platforms because they wanted to reach a wide audience in terms of coverage. They believed that it was wise to make use of social media because most of their target audiences were consumers of social media. Two of the executive participants expressed their views that such a decision was necessary because the only way for NBC to stay afloat with its audience was by engaging in effective communication. Thus, they believed that social media was an effective communication tool which NBC could use to effectively communicate their messages to the public. One of the participants at this level indicated that information dissemination was part of the NBC's mandate, as such; a decision was reached to

engage the public through social media to inform them of their different activities. One of the participants believed as decision-makers, they had to wisely come up with ideas of how they could fulfill their mandate of educating the public. Therefore, the use of social media was one of the available platforms to engage the public.

On the question of how do they ensure that NBC's social media brand succeeds; similar frequencies were recorded among the executive participants who indicated that NBC's social media brand succeeds by ensuring that accurate information was posted on these platforms. Seventy-five per cent were also of the view that the NBC social media brand succeeded by providing timely information, informative information and educative information whereas fifty per cent was of the opinion that the brand succeeded because they ensured that these social media platforms were interactive.

The researcher wanted to know whether it makes strategic sense for the NBC to be involved in the use of social media as a broadcaster. The four participants agreed that it made strategic sense for the NBC to make use of social media considering a large number of the population that the NBC had to cater for. In a world where communication is now digital, it gave NBC an opportunity to reach as many audiences as they could through social media. Participants emphasised that it was important to keep up with current trends in their industry or else they would lose out on these opportunities which offered timely information dissemination, and at the same time, it was a cost-cutting measure. (Respondent, June 12, 2019) pointed that "as an institution we have to strategically equip ourselves with new technology as an institution in order to educate the public and spread the message widely."

When NBC adopted the use of social media, certain goals were put in place to be reached. It emerged from the results that one of the participants believed access to information was one of the goals towards which the NBC engaged in social media. “We looked at how we can reach out to our people with information, hence we decided to employ such platforms so that people can have easy access to information” (Respondent, personal communication, June 13, 2019) the participant alluded. It was aimed at allowing the public to have access to information. Three of the participants stated that one of the goals was to widely disseminate information to the public whereas another similar number of the total participants from the executive level revealed that entertaining the public was one of the goals of NBC’s social media strategy. Two participants from the same group level responded by saying that informing the public through social media was part of the goals identified. Another participant stated, “our goals are to inform, educate and at the same time entertain our audience and to also reach a wide audience, not only within Namibia but also outside the country” (Respondent, personal communication, June 12, 2019).

When probed whether there are measurable objectives in place as far as social media is concerned at the NBC; one of the participants revealed that the objectives set by the NBC as far as social media interaction with the public was concerned were to allow public participation in the NBC programs. Three participants indicated that reaching a wide audience was another objective aimed at and again one of them was of the view that timely dissemination of information was also one critical objective which the NBC wanted to achieve as a result of using social media. “The Namibian population has increased so NBC as a broadcasting institution must not only rely on radio but also engage into social media in order to spread the message quickly. So that is one of the objectives we looked at” (Respondent, personal communication, June 12, 2019).

All four participants from the executive management revealed that all communications on NBC's social media platforms were geared towards external audiences. Therefore, the communications on these platforms were a reflection of other communication platforms such as radio and television of NBC. Participants gave an example of news stories broadcast on radio or television that were similar stories that were found on their Facebook page. One of the participants alluded that "our social media platforms are aimed at external communication but not separate from other forms of communication like radio. What is broadcast on TV or radio is the same content that is posted on our social media platforms" (Respondent, personal communication, June 13, 2019).

Participants revealed that there were minimal guidelines on how to use NBC social media platforms. There were principles in place to guide users. These principles were determined by the communication policy of the NBC. Participants further narrated that all communication activities on social media were guided by NBC's communication policy. The policy entailed how all communications had to be handled and such communications had to be within the confines of NBC's mandate.

4.3.1.2 Quality of engagement

All the four participants indicated that news stories, events, announcements of changes to NBC programs were what were mostly posted on the social networks of the NBC. They were of the view that content was created bearing in mind the mandate of the NBC, which was to educate, inform and entertain the public. Therefore, content was created within the confines of the NBC's mandate. They all indicated that content was disseminated on time to the public, which made NBC's social media remain a popular communication alternative for the audience. It also emerged from a content analysis carried out by the researcher that indeed the content on these platforms are mainly news stories, announcements and changes to NBC programs.

The purpose of employing social media platforms as part of the communication efforts in an institution is to enhance communication. The researcher inquired how social media had enhanced NBC communication with the public as a communication tool. All four participants opined that social media had improved communication between NBC and the public by disseminating information quickly. Three of the participants highlighted that information was disseminated on a wide scale as a result of social media compared to the past when people only relied on radio and television and one of the participants was of the view that social media had enhanced the institution's communication as it provided an opportunity for instant feedback to both the NBC and the public. The four participants at the executive level stated that social media had brought about the interaction between NBC and the public, which made the public feel part of the organisation. All four participants reasoned that as a result of social media the NBC's communication had been enhanced by providing the public with access to information as a result.

The researcher probed to find out how participants evaluated the levels of the NBC's social media engagement with the public. From the responses, all the four participants alluded to the point that the NBC's social media platforms were monitored internally and also by means of the third party on a monthly basis. Participants revealed that social media evaluation allowed the broadcaster to keep track of trends that related to their posts. The success of live streams was also monitored by keeping track of views, likes and engagements after each broadcast of events. Responses from participants revealed that the corporate communication division is responsible for the evaluation of NBC social media platforms and thereafter compile a report for management review. This finding is supported by Gomez (2011) who emphasised the necessity of evaluating social media platforms in order to assess the effectiveness of such platforms.

The researcher further explored to know as to what type of content shared by the NBC receives higher interaction from the public when posted. According to the feedback received from the participants, news content and events content received the highest rate of interaction when posted as it was revealed by all the four executives in their responses. Participants specified that interaction was mostly observed especially on breaking news stories and developmental topics of concern to the nation. Three of the participants also indicated that announcement posts and entertainment posts also received interactions from the public when posted.

Social media as a communication tool comes with challenges which the researcher was determined to find out from the participants. Three of the executive participants pointed out that account hacking was one of the challenges experienced. Unknown members of the public would hack NBC accounts and post false information on the platforms. In addition to the challenges, other three

participants voiced out similar sentiments that members of the public would post negative comments on these platforms which created a negative impression about the NBC and one of the participants revealed that another challenge was the use of foul language by the members of the public. The NBC did not have control over what was said on these platforms by members of the public. But when such things occur, the corporate communication division would normally handle it by deleting the comments.

4.3.2 Middle management perspective

Social media platforms are a very useful; especially because they provide access to information. Creating content for social media platforms requires creativity and discipline because one needs to get the message across with fewer words. However, social media can also be a challenge because there are a lot of fake accounts and in an effort to publish a message quickly, one might be inclined to neglect the necessity of checking the accuracy and correctness of that message. The other challenge pointed out is that the amount of news and content available, one's message might get lost due to the high level of noise. Participants alluded that they see social media as a digital platform that allows the NBC to engage users from all over the world, connecting people to their services and products and provides direct communication between users. Social media provides opportunity to the NBC to market their products. It is in their view that social media has an advantage of cost cutting because they can advertise their products and services online for free.

Middle managers feel social media has become relevant to the broadcaster as they can now reach a large audience. It has offered the NBC an opportunity to see what the public think of the institution through comments posted on the platforms used by the NBC.

In order to thoroughly understand how NBC was using social media as a communication tool from the implementers' perspective, the researcher developed key informant questions different from those that were used for the executive level. Thus, the data analysis discussed below is comprised of responses from heads of departments and the actual participants in this group were only six as alluded to earlier in this chapter.

4.3.2.1 Audience engagement

The researcher wanted to know if the sampled participants had active social media accounts for the purpose of work.

When asked whether the middle manager's departments had active social media accounts that they made use of in communicating their messages, five of the total six participants indicated that they had accounts where they posted different information regarding their work-related activities. Participants mentioned Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as the social media platforms in place. On the other hand, one of the participants indicated that they did not have any social media accounts in their department; however they made use of the platforms under the management of the Corporate Communication Division of the NBC.

As previously mentioned, the objective of this study was to assess the use of social media as a tool of corporate communication at the NBC, it was therefore important to establish the participant's social media background before proceeding with further interrogations.

To establish the above, the researcher wanted to know if the chosen sample was in a position of managing social media accounts of the NBC. It appeared from the participants, as revealed in the responses that only two of the participants had access to managing social media accounts and that these were from the Corporate Communication Division. The other four participants indicated that although they had active accounts of their respective departments, they did not manage them but instead created content for these pages and forwarded it to the Corporate Communication Division for posting on the different social media pages.

Like the above point, the researcher wanted to establish the perception of participants towards social media. Their knowledge of social media was imperative to reach the conclusion of this study.

In order to understand participants' perception of social media as a communication tool, the researcher probed participants to share their views on the subject. The responses showed that two of the participants believed that social media connects people to services and products at different places and levels. It enables people to share information of interest online. People are able to communicate via social media without physical interaction.

A total of three participants from the selected heads of departments endorsed social media as having improved organisational communication of many institutions that subscribe to it. Two of the selected heads of departments who participated in the study revealed that social media creates direct communication between users which makes users feel more engaged. Three of the participants felt that social media had brought about the interaction between people and service

providers. Five believed that social media platforms were effective communication tools to rely on as it provides organisations with an opportunity to widely disseminate information in a quick manner. They reiterated that organisations could now communicate directly to their different stakeholders through social media.

In order to determine whether social media was indeed an effective communication tool, one had to measure the frequency of its usage and thus the researcher attempted to establish that from the participants. Heads of department were probed about how frequently the sampled representative used social media to communicate their messages to their audience. The following responses were established from the participants; five of the participants made use of social media on a daily basis whereas only one made use of social media on a monthly basis citing the reason that they did not manage any accounts.

Heads of departments were asked in what capacity they made use of social media, and it was figured out from the responses that all six made use of social media for both work and personal capacity. They made use of it to communicate information regarding the NBC activities and to connect with their friends on a personal level.

Participants were asked how frequently departments they headed made use of social media as a means of communication.

When asked how often the departments of the participants used social media, the following findings surfaced that three of the participants responded that their departments made use of social

media very often as it led to effective communication. Two of the sampled representatives said their departments engaged in social media often as a means to disseminating information and only one was of the view that their department did not often use social media.

To determine the most useful and effective social media platforms among those being used by the NBC, the researcher probed the participants to share their views. It was discovered from the responses that all six participants mostly used Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in their respective departments, whereas two indicated to be using WhatsApp as a means of communication and one of them attributed to the use of YouTube, while none of them used LinkedIn.

4.3.2.2 Quality of engagement

The study also inquired about the type of information posted on NBC's social media pages. The purpose was to establish whether the information posted contains content that reflects the mandate of the NBC. From the responses, two participants believed that information about events is posted on these platforms. Two of the participants were of the view that the NBC posts information regarding its services to the public and four pointed out 'news' to be among the content posted on these social media pages. It was further revealed by one of the participants that advertising information formed part of the content posted to the public.

As mentioned previously, social media is regarded as an interactive tool that interacts service providers with their target audience at different places and at different levels. Thus, to solidify this sentiment, it was important to find out from participants whether this interaction between the NBC

and the public existed. Therefore, the researcher inquired on the type of information members of the public posted on NBC pages as a way of interaction and communication.

It was established that indeed there was an interaction between the NBC and the public as members of the public posted on NBC pages. Three of the six participants at middle management level were of the view that members of the public posted concerns regarding NBC TV and radio programming services that they were either satisfied with or not satisfied with. Two of the participants reiterated that members of the public usually posted queries concerning TV licenses. “They would ask how much they have to pay or when is the due date for payments”, (Respondent, personal communication, June 14, 2019). On the other hand, all six middle managers who participated revealed that members of the public posted information that was mostly general depending on the topic at hand or they posted reacting to a post by the NBC and one participant was not able to specify as to what they thought public members placed on NBC pages.

A question was asked during the key informant interviews with the middle managers of the NBC to establish whether they experienced any challenges in using social media. Results indicated that indeed all participants experienced challenges when engaging the public on social media. The challenges varied from one challenge to another. But the most prevalent was that of negative comments about the NBC and the use of foul language. What made it more challenging is that the NBC has no control over what was posted by members of the public.

All six participants alluded to the fact that most responses were based on a question and answer basis. This meant that they responded according to what had been asked on the platform. Responses were usually provided in a more professional and constructive manner. Queries were

welcomed as they provided an opportunity for the NBC to clarify matters and they always tried to respond to queries as quickly as possible.

All six participants pointed out that although some of them did not have social media accounts for their departments, evaluation of these platforms remained the duty of the Corporate Communications Department of the NBC. NBC's social media platforms are monitored internally and also by means of the third party on a monthly basis. Social media monitoring by means of evaluations and surveys allow the broadcaster to keep track of trends that relate to posts. The success of live streams was also monitored by keeping track of views, likes, and engagements after each broadcast.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the conducted research. It is a review of the results presented in the previous chapter and what they entail in relation to the use of social media as a corporate communication tool by the NBC.

5.2 Discussion

From the results presented above, it was noted that not all sampled representatives took part in the study due to unforeseen circumstances. Only ten of the seventeen sampled population participated in the study. The actual study participants were (6-4) by more heads of departments compared to executive managers. Those who participated in the study were mostly between the ages of 36-45 and above 46 years of age.

This means a conclusion cannot be made that management positions at the NBC are mostly occupied by individuals falling within these age categories because only a few participants took part in the study for the purpose of the study. The results further indicate more females than male took part in the study.

Education is believed to play a very pivotal role in decision making at workplaces and in personal lives. Considering this as a fact, one would agree as to why the NBC made a decision to engage in using social media as a communication tool. This is so because the results of the study showed most participants in this study were holders of post graduate degrees, therefore, they have the

knowledge and a good understating of what social media is, its benefits and challenges. One would believe that such a decision was carefully considered. The participants understood the new trends in the industry due to their levels of education and therefore seem confident to embrace social media use.

Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) discovered that through social media platforms such as Facebook, companies can disseminate information quickly and widely in a short period of time. This can be proven by the results of the study which gave an indication that all the executive participants at the NBC believed that as a broadcaster, the NBC had to bolster its communication efforts by engaging in social media use if it had to fulfill its mandate of informing and widely disseminating news. Most of the executive participants, with a representation of three out of four indicated that social media was an excellent communication platform to reach a large audience in real time. The researcher agreed with these results as it was figured out from an analysis done on Facebook and Twitter pages of the NBC that news was being disseminated every hour.

Participants alluded to the point that for social media brands to succeed, content uploaded on these platforms must be informative, educative, accurate and timely. This concurs with the findings of Gomez (2011, p.169) who revealed that for social media to succeed, the interaction must be the order of the day. This again is a reality with the NBC pages being active at all times as it was learnt by the researcher during a content analysis of the NBC social media pages.

Social media pages must be live at all times by posting relevant and accurate information. Keeping social media pages active at all times will encourage followers to heavily rely on what they are fed with, which creates a huge impact on their minds of not forgetting a brand. “By avoiding the place where the conversation is happening, the company is missing the opportunity to be heard and understood” (Burson-Marsteller, 2010, p.2). Through content analysis, the researcher established that NBC’s social media platforms were indeed active at all times making them effective communication tools and therefore concurs with available literature of Burson-Marsteller (2010).

The NBC as a broadcaster is tasked with the responsibilities of keeping the public informed of the happenings of both inside and outside the country. This is done through news broadcast, events coverage and announcements. At the same time, the shared information should be educative and entertaining. Equally, the results of this study show that indeed the content posted on NBC's’ social networks is informative and educative as all executive participants indicated during an interview that the most content found on NBC's’ social networks is news and announcements, which are either aimed at informing or educating the public.

The broadcasting industry has fallen under a spotlight since the arrival of social media. The introduction of social media has brought about an advantage of constant virtual connection and sharing information, ideas, and opinions which helps to display a collective opinion that has not been experienced before in the traditional media. Thus all four executive participants in this study believed that the NBC as a broadcaster had to shift from traditional ways of disseminating information and move towards digital communication. Strategically, this move positions the NBC in a more competitive advantage because it can help build a good reputation of the institution.

Earlier studies point out that companies using social media are on the increase (Carim & Warwick, 2013), with Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube being the popular platforms (Macnamara, 2010). These social media platforms are being used to supplement traditional communication platforms to enable organisations to maintain and keep a strong relationship with stakeholders. It can be seen from the results that since the adoption of social media platforms, the NBC has seen an enhancement in its communication efforts with the public.

As it can be seen from the results of this study with all the four executive participants indicating that information is disseminated quickly, access to information has improved and information is widely disseminated compared to the time before they had engaged in social media communication. The researcher shares the same sentiments with these findings because according to the findings in the study of Gomez (2011) on the Puerto Rican companies, the functions of social media is being understood by the NBC as the focus seems to be disseminating information. Giving access to information also seems to be the main use of social media for the NBC. Social media platforms are created for collaboration, participation, learning, sharing, and it is conceived as a two-way communication process. Whereas in the case of the NBC, an analysis from the platforms shows that, the NBC only posts information without participating in conversations. Which the researcher feels creates a gap in building a strong relationship with the audience and only creates a one way communication process.

In any given institution, goals are vital when coming up with any communication model to reach the audience. The NBC cannot be excluded from this in setting up their different modes of communication. The NBC made a decision to engage their audience through social media, hence

they decided on using social media by looking at attaining certain goals in the long run. A majority of the sampled population with all four executive representatives emphasised that educating, entertaining and information dissemination on a wider scale are some of the critical goals that the NBC would like to attain by engaging in social media use.

On the other hand, two of the executive participants noted that one of the goals the NBC decided to engage in social media was that of informing the audience through these platforms. Whereas one of them highlighted the fact that access to information is crucial to citizens if they have to make informed decisions in their lives. This implies that it is important to make information accessible to everyone. The researcher therefore foresees that engaging in social media was one way the NBC could provide access to information to the public. Participants highlighted that almost everyone in Namibia has access to social media since mobile phones are found in the hands of every citizen and internet connection around the country affords each citizen to connect to these different social networks, therefore there is a need for the provision of information to the audience through social media.

On the measurable objectives of the NBCs' social media platforms, it was revealed from the results that reaching out to a wide audience was a core objective the NBC considered in engaging the public through social media. This was revealed by three of the executive participants in this study who indicated that among other objectives set, reaching a large number of people was core to their business. Only one of the executive participants agreed that timely information dissemination was also part of the objectives and also believed public participation in the NBC programs influenced the broadcaster to engage in social media.

The researcher's conclusion on these findings is that the NBC only intended to reach a wide number of audience but did not engage in collaborative and participative conversations that can lead to more followers as suggested in the study of Sweetser (2010) who opines that social media are places to build relationships with stakeholders and engage in meaningful dialogue with them. Taking this into consideration, one can conclude that active audience participation through the NBC social media is minimal and still requires aggressive implementation by the corporation.

On whether the NBCs' social media communications were separate from other communication methods of the NBC, all four executive participants pointed out that the messages communicated on social media are not separate from those that are communicated either on television or radio but are similar messages. This is meant to avoid dissemination of different messages which may lead to confusion among the audience.

NBC posts different content on their different social media pages on a daily basis. From all the content, the news and events content received the highest attention from members of the public when posted on social media. According to the results of the study, all four Executive participants indicated this finding. One Executive Manager of the NBC cited, "immediately when the news is posted on our Facebook page, people will start liking the story, asking questions of concern to the topic in a quest to get more information" (Respondent, personal communication, June 12, 2019). This is then followed by announcements and entertainment content as revealed by the results of the study with three of the executive participants sharing the same sentiment. As alluded to earlier, social media should be treated as a two-way communication.

However, it seems it is not the case with the NBC because they only post news content whereby people will be asking questions but there is no participation from the NBC side responding to these questions. It is the researcher's opinion that the NBC should engage in fruitful conversations with its audience to build a strong relationship and create a two way communication.

Participants at the executive level in this study cited challenges experienced when engaging the public through social media. The most critical challenge the NBC has encountered in the use of social media was that of their accounts being hacked. Three participants related that at most times, the Facebook and Twitter accounts of the NBC were hacked in by unknown people to spread false information. In some cases, the participants mutually agreed that members of the public would post negative comments on NBC platforms that are likely to negatively impact the image of the NBC.

Foul language is also another challenge experienced on these platforms as revealed by one of the participants. The researcher agrees with these results as it was established by the researcher especially on the Facebook account of the NBC that a lot of fake news had been posted by unknown people, which later the NBC had to put on a stamp sign indicating faked news. The recent example was observed on NBC News – 8 where a post was made reading “President Geingob calls on voters to give Dr Iitula more years to lead” and another one on the same page which read “Iitula announces to his followers that he is mentally sick” (NBC News, 2019). Such challenges can have a very damaging impact to the image of the company therefore should be handled carefully and measures should be put in place to avoid such incidences.

To further balance the results of the study, different heads of departments were also interviewed to get their views on the use of social media as a corporate communication tool.

On the ownership of social media accounts by the different departmental heads, the findings of this study correlate with Lenhart et al., (2007) who found that seventy two per cent (72%) of all college students had social media profiles with 45 per cent of the students using social media at least once a day. The findings of this study revealed that an overwhelming eighty three per cent (83%) of Heads of departments interviewed had and used social media and only seventeen per cent did not have and use social media, however, they did indirectly through the Corporate Communication Division used NBC social media platforms to communicate their messages. It can be noted from these findings that only some departments had social media pages and others did not have. It is therefore advisable that NBC should have social media accounts controlled at one central point.

The findings of this study revealed that an overwhelming sixty seven per cent (67%) of the participants in this category managed professional accounts of their departments and thirty three per cent (33%) cited that they did not manage their accounts but instead, their accounts were managed by the Corporate Communication Division. With these findings, a conclusion can be made that social media is a reliable tool for organisations to disseminate information to its publics. This is due to the fact that information is timely, and it can reach a large number of people.

It can also be argued based on these findings that the majority of people understand how social media works, hence they are able to create and manage their accounts without difficulties. Though

from the findings, it is indicative that some participants manage their departmental accounts but on the other hand, one would ask who is really in charge of these accounts.

The findings of Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) suggest that public relations or communications practitioners should be in charge of the social media sites. This is because they possess the know-how in handling and employing social media tools for a two-way communication. But this is not the case with the NBC as it was observed from the findings that some Departmental Heads managed their own social media sites instead of the Communications Department. Conversations on these platforms should be interactive and have a human voice, at the same time embracing openness, thus the NBC needed to have dedicated professionals to handle its social media accounts.

Findings on the overall perception of social media indicate that an overwhelming majority of the participants believed that social media was an effective communication tool that had improved organisational communication and at the same time it allowed interaction between the NBC and its publics. The way we communicate through the internet has changed and social media has become a central tool for organisations (Kim et al., 2013). Given these findings, institutions such as the NBC should aggressively use social media in communicating with the audience.

It was observed from the NBC's social media sites that interaction does not exist between the NBC and its audience. Content was posted but when public members ask questions there was no feedback from the NBC's side. From the researcher's perspective, this dissonance is due to the

fact that the NBC's social media sites were not being managed at one central point. The NBC social media policy should therefore pronounce itself and encourage two way communications.

Results in this study indicate that the majority of participants (Heads of Departments) made use of social media on a daily basis. They cited that social media had become a useful tool of communication and information reached a wide audience on time. One Head of Department said, "It is only wise to invest in these platforms if organisations have to be effective in their communication" (P. Denk, personal communication, June 14, 2019). Only seventeen per cent (17%) of the participants used social media on a monthly basis which was a worrisome situation because as a broadcaster, social media remained one of the core areas which the NBC should have focused on in disseminating information. Moreover, it was noted from the findings that the NBC only concentrated on using social media sites for disseminating information, especially news on a daily basis but failed to create and promote effective communication processes that could lead to fruitful discussions and relationships with different publics.

It is revealed in the findings of this study that all of the participants at this level made use of social media in both their personal capacity and also for work purposes. These findings are an indicator of the success for the NBC as it entails that NBC has shifted from traditional ways of communicating and moving towards digital communication. In the study carried out by Matthews (2010), the way companies were responding to the social media revolution was an indicator of success. The study indicated that companies that were too slow to adopt these new technologies and practices were going to be left behind. This seemed not to be the case with the NBC as the results indicate an overwhelming majority of its departments and staff use of social media.

Hamat, Embi, and Hassan (2012) found that the most popular online network was Facebook. With one hundred per cent (100%) of the participants indicating that they used Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to communicate, it can be agreed that Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were very popular tools of communication by the NBC and other organisations of a similar nature could aggressively use it to disseminate information. Participants indicated they used these platforms to share information with the public. It can further be established that the NBC had a strong presence on these platforms based on the findings of the research. According to the head of the department at NBC, “Facebook and Twitter are the best social media platforms to reach a large number of people instantly. If your company or brand is not present on Facebook and Twitter then you are hidden, so don’t expect any miracles to your brand, while other companies are shining.” (Respondent, personal communication, June 14, 2019).

Although the findings show otherwise, the researcher suggests that the NBC needs to increase its presence on YouTube and LinkedIn as these platforms are underutilised in the sense that little content is being shared on these platforms. .

Most of the information posted to the public by NBC is news and announcements. Sixty-seven per cent (67%) of information shared on social media was on events and services of the company, thirty three per cent (33%) on advertisements whilst any other information constitutes about seventeen per cent (17%). One of the Heads of Departments among the participants cited that, “social media provides an opportunity for us to share any kind of news, information and reports on a wide scale and instantly.” (Respondent, personal communication, June 14, 2019).

While one executive at the corporation cautioned, “the information shared on social media has to be crafted in a careful manner, as any simple mistake can lead to a bad reputation of the company,” (Respondent, personal communication, June 13, 2019). Findings showed that the NBC was making efforts to inform its publics by disseminating news and announcements through its different social media sites. It looks like the aim of using social media channels was basically for information dissemination intentions, and not for corporate communications purposes. The research findings was that social media was not employed for communicating important company messages, such as corporate news, annual reports, corporate social responsibility among others. Moreover, the NBC did not employ social media to provide feedback nor to promote conversations with its publics.

It was established from the findings that a majority of the participants was of the view that, public members posted general concerns regarding the NBC TV and radio programming services that they were not satisfied with. It was noted from the results that members of the public usually posted queries concerning TV licenses. They would ask how much they had to pay or when was the due date for payments. Again, this brings an impression that to some extent the NBC’s social media sites were not interactive. Therefore, it means there was no room to create a conversation that would lead to a strong relationship between the broadcaster and its publics; hence compromising the corporate image of the institution.

Participants were asked to share how they responded to queries received via social media and results from the study showed that the NBC does not respond to queries posted on their platforms using the same platforms but instead they address the issue raised outside the platforms. Responses

were usually provided in a more professional and constructive manner. Queries are welcomed as they provided an opportunity for the NBC to clarify matters and they always tried to respond to queries as quickly as possible.

However considering that social media should be interactive and after going through the Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram sites of the NBC, the findings presented a different view that at no point did the NBC come forth to respond to queries posted by members of the public. With this finding at hand, the researcher was able to conclude that the NBC did not use social media to facilitate communication but instead used social media only to disseminate information and is therefore underutilized as an effective engagement communication tool. The findings of Gomez (2011) in the Puerto Rican companies study revealed that if a company decides to have a Facebook or Twitter account, it is expected (following the meaning of social media and web 2.0 platforms) that the organisation should actively engage and contribute to the conversations. This seems not to be the case at NBC as only information was being disseminated.

The success of social media in any organisation can be revealed by evaluating these platforms. Thus, the findings of this study revealed that a majority of the participants alluded to the point that the evaluation of these platforms remains the duty of the Corporate Communications Department of the NBC. The NBC's social media platforms are monitored internally and also by means of the third party on a monthly basis. Social media monitoring by means of evaluations and surveys allows the broadcaster to keep track of trends that relate to posts.

Contrary to these findings is the fact that different departments had their own social media sites, meaning that they did their own monitoring instead of the communication department. It can be deduced from the findings that this is a challenging task for those Heads of Departments who are not trained to monitor these platforms to make these evaluations. Therefore, it is advisable for the NBC to centralize this task to the communication department with trained officials to facilitate this monitoring process. Burson-Masteller (2012) opines that companies should monitor their own social media presence to ensure a consistent brand message and to measure the impact of their social media engagement. Being present on social media requires planning, preparation and training. Therefore, it is more than just opening an account and leaving it in anyone's hand.

5.3 Conclusion

From the results in this study, it is evident that the NBC employed social media platforms to communicate its messages to the public but not as a corporate, collaborative communication tool. Therefore, social media has not yet been fully conceived as a corporate, collaborative communication tool at NBC. This means that the NBC has failed to create and promote effective communication processes that can lead to fruitful discussions and relationships with its different publics. Social media as a corporate communication tool should present messages such as annual reports, achievements and other corporate information. Thus, social media is a communication tool that companies use for different purposes in order to achieve corporate goals or objectives. The findings revealed that social media is a tremendous resource for enhancing communication and disseminating information to stakeholders or the public.

The NBC made a decision and adopted different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, with a purpose to reach as many audiences as they could. From all these social networks employed by the NBC, it emerged from the results that Facebook and Twitter remain the top platforms mostly used by the NBC in communicating information. Social media is used as an important tool for strategic corporate communication (Breakenridge, 2012). The emergence of social media has established a new style of communication pattern between a company and its customers, giving customers the power to give instant feedback and ideas.

This is so true with the NBC considering the findings of this research which indicates that the NBC employed social media to increasingly disseminate information on a wider scale and in return, the audience of the NBC normally give feedback by commenting on the posts posted by the NBC. Research suggests that people can learn through social media, hence the NBC adopted social media to educate and inform the public through social networks.

Other researchers highlighted that for social media brands to succeed as a means of communication, the content shared on these platforms must be informative, accurate, timely and educative. These conclusions can be linked to the findings of this study which revealed that the majority of participants were of similar sentiments. From the results, it is agreeable that the NBC adopted social media with the aim of fulfilling its mandate of educating, informing and entertaining the public. Social media has helped the NBC to reach a large number of people instantly.

Today an active social media account is far more valuable and significant than an inactive account. An inactive social media account will only create negative publicity for the company by showing its incapacity to update the activities of the company, which is equivalent to not having a unique identity on social media and will ultimately lead to tarnishing the online image of the company. This is not the case with the NBC as their accounts are being updated on a daily basis making them active at all times, and this depicts a positive image for the institution.

The study found that most of the participants used social media for both work and personal use. However, it was noted from the findings that the NBC only used social media sites to disseminate information other than for corporate communication as none of their social media sites carried corporate information such as the mission, vision and mandate statements. Research findings points out that for social media to be used as a corporate communication tool it must carry corporate information or messages.

However, these benefits of social media do not come without challenges. The majority of participants in this study agreed to this fact as they provided various challenges. The most usual challenge experienced when engaging the public through social media was that its accounts were being hacked. Unknown people would hack the NBC accounts and post false information which creates negative publicity for the broadcaster. Foul language was one challenge that the NBC had to deal with from time to time.

The findings as discussed in this chapter suggest that social media at the NBC is merely employed for information dissemination and not as a corporate communication tool. Institutions such as the

NBC and others can take advantage of these platforms if they have to be effective in their communication efforts. Social media will help them stay in touch with their stakeholders if they utilise it as a corporate communication tool.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings and recommendations of the study. As mentioned in chapter two of the literature review section, social media is deemed to be a strong tool of communication in various sectors that touch on the social, economic, and political welfare of a society. This study set out to assess the use of social media as a corporate communication tool by the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC). The study also set out to examine the extent to which the NBC had adopted social media as a communication tool as well as to examine the quality and effectiveness of these platforms.

6.2 Summary of findings

NBC has included social media in the everyday activities of the company, and they are mainly used for effective dissemination of information. Facebook and Twitter appear as the most popular social media among the NBC leadership. However, the NBC does not use the social media in such a manner that the special character of social media has been recognised correctly. Especially the potential of social media as a corporate communication tool has been neglected. It is neglected in the sense that the NBC do not share corporate information using social media. The NBC social media platforms were supposed to carry corporate information such as the mission, vision and annual reports. In the absence of this the NBC misses an opportunity of educating the public on their mission.

The majority of the public use social media to seek assistance by posting inquiries on various issues of concern to the NBC. Participants believed social media had enhanced the NBC

communication efforts since its adoption. The majority of the sampled population believed that educating, entertaining and information dissemination on a wider scale were some of the critical goals the NBC would like to attain by engaging in social media use.

It was established from the study that the NBC has an existing social media policy which was however still at a draft stage. The policy entails how social media should be used at the institution. The NBC has adopted social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to mainly disseminate information in order to reach a larger number of audiences. It was also noted from the results that the NBC used social media to only share information but does not interact with the public which makes their communication to be a one way communication. It was also figured from the results that the NBC does not have trained personnel to manage their social media accounts but instead each department has its own account

The messages or information broadcast on the NBC television and radio were similar to those that were posted on social media platforms. Almost every department at NBC had a social media account being managed by either the Heads of Department or the Corporate Communication division. Findings on the overall perception of social media indicate that an overwhelming majority of the respondents believed that social media was an effective communication tool that had improved organisational communication and at the same time allowed interaction among institutions and their publics.

Social media is being used on a daily basis to disseminate information and this can be attributed to the fact that access to the internet is readily available almost everywhere. The majority of

Namibian citizens own smartphones which allow them to connect and subscribe to social media. For social media to succeed as a communication tool organisations must keep their accounts active at all times and queries from public members on social media must be addressed in a more professional manner in order to maintain interaction. Although, the NBC monitors and evaluates social media engagement with the public, a lack of a centralised monitoring of the platforms raises more questions than answers and the effectiveness of this approach.

6.3 Recommendations

Following the findings of this study, several recommendations were drawn that could shed light on the best practices in using social media as a corporate communication tool.

As it was mentioned by other researchers that companies that are embracing social media have an advantage of building a good and strong relationship with their clients, while those not engaging in social media are on the disadvantage side. It is wise and beneficial for the NBC to adopt other social media platforms as a communication tool as it will help them reach their clients faster and get instant feedback on their services.

Institutions such as the NBC in the broadcasting industry should engage in social media as much as possible if they have to fulfil their mandates of informing, educating and entertaining. Social media will help them disseminate information quickly and reach a large number of audiences.

The NBC should ensure their activeness on social media if they want to succeed in their communication efforts. Just having an account on social media that is dormant all the time creates

a negative publicity of the institution. It is worse compared to not having an account because people will take it as the company lacks some knowledge on how to operate that account. Active accounts create a favourable perception in the eyes of the public.

It was figured out from the findings that the NBC social media accounts are managed by people who are not fully trained as social media professionals. Therefore, the NBC should employ full-time employees specifically for the purpose of managing social media. Managing social media needs a dedicated individual with skills and available all the time to respond to queries from the public. Social media training can be difficult to take on board large amounts of new information, much of it technical, and then be able to go away and apply it. A coaching approach is often the preferred option: finding someone who can work with you from your current abilities and help you to progress over time, all within a strategic framework. If you know why you want to use social media and are approaching it in a human way, you will find it easier to identify the gaps in your knowledge and be able to find a trainer who helps you with a real need. Setting out to learn all the technology first is likely to leave you overwhelmed rather than empowered (Bradley, 2012).

The NBC need to monitor and evaluate the performance of their social media activities. Although the NBCs' social media activities were monitored at the corporate level, they were not evaluated at departmental levels. This leaves a gap in measuring the effectiveness of the NBCs' social media activities. Ideally, there should be a synergy between social media activities at the corporate level down to individual units and departments.

The NBC social media policy should pronounce itself on how these platforms should be used. It should promote participative engagement with the public in order to create a two way communication process.

The NBC should increase its presence on YouTube and other social media networks apart from the existing ones. Research indicates that almost every citizen of Namibia owns a smartphone and therefore they can access social media, but it still remains the NBCs' responsibility to encourage more people to engage through social media in accessing information. It is also possible to conduct a social media campaign on websites or on the existing social media platforms.

Social media host companies need to improve internet security of their servers and software operating systems, for instance, installing firewalls that prevent hacking of accounts as it has been experienced with the NBC.

NBC needs to have one central point in managing their social media to limit or avoid having different messages on different platforms.

This research study had a limited scope as stated in the previous chapters. The study only focused on the NBC in Windhoek head office. There is a lot of research to be done in order to understand the uses of social media in various institutions. In conclusion, therefore, possibilities for future research on social media as a corporate communication tool could include other NBC regional branches or include other corporate organisations. Further studies could also focus on how social media has enhanced the communication efforts of those engaging in its use.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Ethical Clearance Reference Number: FHSS /475/2019

Date: 24 July, 2019

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Research Ethics Committee (UREC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee sitting with the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Title of Project: 4 Assessment Of The Use Of Social Media As A Corporate Communication Tool By The Namibian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)-

Student: MASTER M. PENNA

Student Number: 200216783

Supervisors: *Dr Fred Mwilima*

Take note of the following:

- (a) Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the UREC. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
- (b) Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the UREC.
- (c) The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the UREC (through the Chairperson of the Faculty/Centre/Campus Research & Publications Committee) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by UREC.
- (d) The UREC retains the right to:
 - (i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
 - (ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

UREC wishes you the best in your research.

Dr. J.E. de Villiers: UREC Chairperson

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.E. de Villiers", written over a horizontal line.

Ms. P. Claassen: UREC Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Claassen", written over a horizontal line.

APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH PERMISSION LETTER



3 December 2019

Attention: Dr. FJ Mwilima

HOD: Information and Communication Studies
Faculty of Humanities and Social Studies
University of Namibia
Windhoek
Namibia

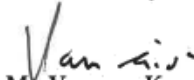
Tel: 061-2072344

CONSENT TO CONDUCTING OF RESEARCH: MR. MASTER PENA

The letter serves to confirm that Mr. Master Pena, Student number 200216783 was granted permission to conduct research at the NBC relating to his studies toward a MA Degree in Media Studies.

We trust this will be in order with you and for any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact myself (Mr. Vezenga Kauraisa) at 0811415472 or 2913138.

Yours sincerely,


Mr. Vezenga Kauraisa
Chief HR Officer

It's Ours

P.O. Box 321 • Windhoek - Namibia • Tel +264 61 291 3111 • Website: www.nbc.na

Directors

Stanley B Similo
Director General

Sven Thierne
Chairperson

Wilhelmus Ultras
Deputy Chairperson

Imanga Mungu
Director

Moses Matiyari
Director

Andrew Karime
Director

APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant

I am a student pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Media Studies at the University of Namibia.

As part of my course requirements, I am conducting an academic research project titled: **ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A CORPORATE COMMUNICATION TOOL BY THE NAMIBIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION (NBC)**. With regard to this, you are hereby requested to support this research by providing information to the questions.

Please note that your participation in this project is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time should you wish to do so without any harm. Your responses will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality. Your effort to answer all the questions comprehensively and to the best of your knowledge will be highly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Yours faithfully

Master Penna

Email: nanvula.penna@gmail.com

APPENDIX 4: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE NBC EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT

1. As part of the NBC executive management, why did you decide to engage the public through social media?
2. How do you ensure that the NBC's social media brand succeeds?
3. What type of content do you share and how do you create it to ensure that your social media brand becomes and remains a popular communication alternative for your audience?
4. Does it make strategic sense for the NBC to be involved with social media?
5. How do social media enhance your communication with the publics?
6. What is the main goal of the NBC's social media strategy?
7. Have you set a measurable objective as far as social media interaction with the public is concerned? What are these measurable objectives?
8. Is the NBC's social media communications separate from your other forms of communications or it is a reflection of the messages from other communications platforms? Any examples?
9. How do you evaluate the levels of the NBC's social media engagement with the public? Specifically for your posts-how do you monitor shares, comments, social tags? Do you use a specific monitoring tool for this?
10. What type of content receives higher rates of interaction when posted on the NBC's media pages?
11. How have you incorporated NBC's social media policy into the entire NBC's marketing and communication policy?

12. What are some of the challenges you encounter when using social media to communicate with your audience (public)?

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE NBC MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

1. Does your department have any active social media account?
2. Do you manage a professional social media account for your department or the NBC?
3. What is your overall perception of social media?
4. How often do you use social media as a communication tool for your department or the NBC?
5. Do you use social media for personal use or NBC's use?
6. To the best of your knowledge, how often does your department use each of the social media platforms employed by the NBC?
7. What social media platform is prescribed by the NBC?
8. Which of the social media platforms subscribed to by the NBC do you mostly use and why?
9. What is the level of engagement of your audience to NBC social media platforms?
10. What kind of information do you post to the public on the NBC's social media accounts?
11. What kind of information does members of the public post on your social media pages?
12. Do you encounter any challenges while engaging with members of the public on social media? What are these challenges if any?
13. How you respond to remarks posted on your department or NBC' social media pages by members of the public?
14. Do you evaluate the success levels of your department's social media communication with the public? If yes, how and when do you do this?