UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

The effect of Twitter as a social blog on corporate reputation management in the telecommunication industry in Zimbabwe

by

Tabani Moyo

218081273

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Business Administration

Graduate School of Business and Leadership

College of Law and Management Studies

Supervisors: Prof. Cecile Gerwel Proches,

Prof. Emmanuel Mutambara, and Dr. Upasana Singh

2022

DECLARATION

I, Tabani Moyo, declare that

(i) The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.

(ii) This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

(iii)The thesis does not contain other person's data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

(iv)This thesis does not contain other person's writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers.

Where other written sources have been quoted, then:

a) their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced;

b) where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.

(v) Where I have produced a publication of which I am author, co-author or editor, I have indicated in detail which part of the publication was actually written by myself alone and have fully referenced such publications.

(vi)This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References sections.

Signed:………………………….

DEDICATION

This research would not have been possible without the support of my two sons, Tawonashe Seth Moyo and Tabani Moyo Jnr, and my wife, Rumbidzai Tendai Moyo, and is dedicated to them. I also dedicate this academic work to my mother, Musasiyashe Maronge Moyo, and father, Phone Moyo, for their understanding of the value of education as a transformative force for good and for granting me that very same education they themselves did not have the opportunity to obtain.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The successful completion of this study is a culmination of collective support from many people. My profound gratitude must be extended to:

- My supervisors for grooming me into the realm of scholarly work. Special appreciation goes to Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches for accompanying me on this PhD journey. I also pay tribute to my co-supervisors, starting with Professor Emmanuel Mutambara and later Dr. Upasana Singh, for the support and advice in dealing with the academic drill;

- Dr. Farai Chigora for opening his doors and allowing me to tap into his vast knowledge and experience, and for critiquing my ideas from the beginning to end;

- The late Mathias Mangwanya, a friend and teacher of marketing practice in Zimbabwe, who could not witness the outcome of the process that he influenced so greatly;

- Tamuka Chirimambowa, for encouraging me to enrol for the DBA programme and sharing insights on the process;

- Charles Avutia, for imparting to me the foundational knowledge on Corporate Reputation Management.

In addition, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the following organisations for their priceless assistance with information:

- The Zimbabwean Ministry of Information Technology and Courier Services;

- The Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe;

- The telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe;

- All the organisations and persons who agreed to participate in the study, directly or indirectly;

- The Media Institute of Southern Africa for affording me the space to undertake this study;

- The University of KwaZulu-Natal, through the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, for granting me both the financial support through the scholarship and for guiding me through the epistemological journey involved in undertaking this study;

My gratitude is also extended to my peers, who accompanied me during my PhD journey, and who in their various ways, improved my thinking and propositions by challenging me out of my academic comfort zones.

Above all, a special thank you must go out to my immediate and extended family members and friends for their support and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to determine how Twitter can be used as a social blog to improve the corporate reputation of organisations operating in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry. This was undertaken guided by the broader objective of developing insights on how the telecommunications industry is responding to shifts from traditional to contemporary approaches in corporate reputation being driven by social blogs. Analysis was made of the views of the internal stakeholders namely employees, operational and top-level managers, who are pivotal in the engagement of stakeholders including customers online. In that regard, the study tested the main relationship (H1), which was to understand whether Twitter has a direct influence on the corporate reputation of telecommunication companies operating in Zimbabwe. Since the study positions Twitter between the traditional corporate reputation guides (top-level managers, operation managers, general employees, and customers) and the contemporary methods (boundary theory, social cognitive, social blogs and social exchange), these became the intermediate variables (H2) for the research. The fact that Twitter is not the only social blog in the landscape resulted in comparison with other equal alternative types (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube) to assess their effect on corporate reputation against that of Twitter (H3). The study, therefore, confirmed the relationships and proposed a framework that guides contemporary approaches towards the management of corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry. For this reason, the study gave back new knowledge to the research community and practical frameworks on how to manage reputation in contemporary times, wherein social blogs are central in the shaping of reputations. A mixed-method approach was therefore employed in the study, where both quantitative and qualitative research designs were drawn upon in the data collection and analysis. A stratified random sampling process was employed in selecting respondents from whom to elicit the quantitative data, and purposive judgmental sampling was used to select participants from whom to obtain the qualitative data. A total of 369 survey questionnaires were distributed to the targeted sample with a response rate of 90%, as 332 employees in the telecommunications industry returned completed questionnaires. Eighteen (18) interviews were conducted, with key interview informants in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry, thereby allowing for triangulation of the data obtained from the quantitative survey with the insights from the qualitative interviews. The results show that social blogs, specifically Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, have a direct impact

on the management of positive corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry as they contribute to the social capital of the organisation leading to the contemporary management of reputation. A framework on the effect of social blog platforms on positive corporate reputation management in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry was developed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CFI -   Comparative Fit Index
CEO -   Chief Executive Officer
eWOM -   Electronic Word of Mouth
GDP -   Gross Domestic Product
ICT -   Information and Communication Technology
ISP -   Internet Service Provider
ITU -   International Telecommunications Union
MNO -   Mobile Network Operator
OTT -   Over The Top
POTRAZ-   Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
PTC -   Posts and Telecommunications Corporation
RMSEA -   Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SADC -   Southern African Development Community
SNS -   Social Networking Sites
SPSS -   Statistical Product and Service Solutions
SRMR -   Standard Root Mean Square Residual
UKZN -   University of KwaZulu-Natal
USA -   United States of America

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Corporate reputation, from a conceptual perspective, has been viewed as an intangible or soft asset, which refers to something that cannot be measured or systematically managed (Aggerholm et al., 2011; Balmer, 2017; Swoboda & Hirschmann, 2017; Thiessen & Ingenhoff, 2011). According to Deephouse (2000), an establishment's reputation is constituted by a collective assessment of its own standing from a three-tier position of affect, esteem, and knowledge. This suggests that the organisation's position is a creation of individual stakeholders' lived experience, as well as their perception of this lived experience. This is a departure point from Fombrun's (1996) definition, which brought shape and form to the concept. He defined corporate reputation as "the overall estimation in which a company is held by its constituents" (Fombrun, 1996: 9). However, there is no single precise definition that is conventionally accepted as all-encompassing, since the discipline of corporate reputation management is still developing. Accordingly, Van Riel and Fombrun (2007: 43) define corporate reputation as "the overall assessments of organizations [sic] by their stakeholders". Corporate reputation refers to the general perceptions that stakeholders may have in terms of "an organisation's ability to fulfil their expectations, whether those stakeholders are interested in buying the company's products, are interested in working for the company, or are considering investing in the company" (Verčič, Verčič & Žnidar, 2016: 29).

However, Etter et al. (2018) note another critical shift from traditional evaluations and formation of reputation to new media-centric processes, such as co-production and interconnected narratives. Intertwined with the foregoing is the imperative of the social blogs' unlimited reach to people around the world, which empowers both message generators and recipients to engage in the co-production of these judgements (Etter et al., 2018). This stands a sharp contrast to the vertical communications approach of an all-powerful sender and a docile receiver of the communications. By way of conceptual contrast, the blogosphere empowers users to be active participants in the flow of information in multiple directions, through a highly interconnected community of users to which corporations find themselves accountable (Ellison & Boyd, 2013). Such interconnected networks are facilitated through numerous touchpoints for the generation and high-speed sharing of new content, which enables users to upscale gatekeeping barriers in the shaping of corporate reputation. This introduces a new dimension in the shaping of corporate reputation as the users,

be it customers, stakeholders or non-customers, are now involved in the co-production of corporate reputation (Pfeffer, Zorbach & Carley, 2014).

A new concept, 'networked narratives', has thus been borne out of the contestations between the interchange of roles between the sender and the receiver, and how they feed into a highly interconnected superstructure through the social blogosphere as powered by posts on social media, debate forums, sharing, liking and re-tweeting, amongst others (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki & Wilner, 2010). The common thread amongst these interconnected discussions and engagements will be, by extension, "re-sequenced, altered, customized [sic] or re-narrated" (Cover, 2006: 141) as users communicate. In addition, the minimum distinction is made between the sender and recipient, as social blogs enable the consolidation of the co-production process through linkages that empower users with unlimited access to the entire chain of content on online platforms (Etter & Vestergaard, 2015).

Further literature review defines social capital as follows: "…Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them […] The difference is that 'social capital' calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital" (Carroll, 2013:281).

Existing literature reveals major areas of research on the concept's linkages with increased investments and lower costs on transactions in investments (Fukuyama, 1995), reduced criminal engagements and rates (Putnam, 2000), sustainable mental health (Hyyppä & Mäki, 2001), better child welfare support and coping mechanisms (Cote & Healy, 2001), rise in the educational success stories and broader sense of achievement (Coleman, 1988), and a more responsive and equitable income distribution by both the government and private sector (Kawachi *et al.*, 1997; Wilkinson, 1996). Accordingly, the World Bank defines the concept of social capital, building on Putnam (2000), as follows: "Social capital refers to the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions […] Social capital is not just the sum of the institutions which underpin a society – it is the glue that holds them together" (World Bank, 2000: 222).

The research investigated the way in which Twitter, as a dominant social network in Zimbabwe, impacts the management of corporate reputation in Zimbabwe's telecommunications. This was done by attending to

the shifts from traditional approaches in corporate reputation that mainly focused on how internal stakeholders shaped reputation through top-level, operational managers and employees defining the corporate's reputation, by interlinking it with how the social blogs contribute new approaches and contemporary view to social capital, and ultimately the contemporary management of corporate reputation.

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) defines telecommunications as the transmission of information through electronic signals via copper wires, co-axial cables, fibre optic strands, or airwaves, among other platforms (Geradin & Kerf, 2003). The telecommunications industry is a capital-intensive industry that few private players can afford to join (Prosser, 2003). The Zimbabwean telecommunications industry has grown from a state-run monopoly established in the 1970s, to an intensely competitive environment, propelled by the entry of private players who took advantage of transformative changes in regulated terrain, which weakened barriers to entry into the industry. Initially, the telecommunications industry took shape in 1890, when Southern Rhodesia, as Zimbabwe was then known, opened its first post office, which facilitated traditional means of communications such as letters and the handling of parcels (Fisher, 2010). The services were rendered through the British South African Company, an entity that self-regulated as a subsidiary under the Postal and Telecommunications Ministry. The Postal and Telecommunications Act, which came into effect on 1 July 1973, established the Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (PTC) as a state-owned company, whose mandate was the provision of postal, courier, telecommunications, and communication services (Nyamadzawo, 2011). The Act granted the PTC the "…exclusive privilege of establishing, maintaining and working telecommunication services within, into and from Zimbabwe" (ITU, 2017: 23) and thus perpetuated the existence of a monopoly, which spanned the better part of the pre-independence period and for almost two decades post the 18 April 1980 achievement of independence. This was to be the longest stretch in the provision of telecommunication services through a state-controlled monopoly in Zimbabwe (Baudrier, 2001).

According to Chakauya (2016), the 1996 Supreme Court ruling in the case of T.S. Masiyiwa Holdings and Anor versus the Information Ministry marked an end to the State monopoly on telecommunications services. The landmark ruling is hailed as the turning point in the accelerated growth of telecommunications business operations in Zimbabwe. The ruling entailed the repeal of the original Postal and Telecommunications Act, and the enactment of the revised Postal and Telecommunications Act [12:05] (2000), which established the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ). Another outcome of the Supreme Court ruling was the unbundling of PTC into three state-owned companies. These companies are: the Post Office; the fixed communications company, TelOne; and Zimbabwe's first mobile telephony

company, NetOne. In addition, two private mobile telephony companies were licensed, namely Econet Zimbabwe, and Telecel Zimbabwe (Lewis & Abrahams, 2013).

These constituted the first steps towards changing the country's communication from traditional means towards online communications services. While the companies increased and transformed the structure of the communication and telephony industries in Zimbabwe, these drastic changes presented numerous challenges, especially those related to corporate reputation management. The changes are further reflected by the fact that revenue in the telecommunications industry is today driven by mobile internet and a high mobile penetration, compared to fixed line services and bulk handling facilities, which were in demand from the 1970s until the early 2000s (Lewis & Abrahams, 2013). The introduction of Next Generation Networks, coupled with innovations and advances in new technologies, has transformed the face of telecommunications. According to POTRAZ (2017), the penetration rate of mobile phones in Zimbabwe in 2017 exceeded 100%, where the total number of people in the country was less than the number of active mobile lines. This indicates that the bulk of the populace is currently connected, and can easily influence one another, for example in terms of brand preferences, and can thus also collaborate in the shaping of telecommunications companies' reputations (TechZim, 2021). This is augmented by internet penetration, which stands at 63.2% of the nation's population. Traditional ways of communicating, such as letters, have been rendered obsolete, leaving the Post Office bulk handing centres as proverbial white elephants (POTRAZ, 2021).

This chapter seeks to highlight the purpose of the research and how it will be achieved, by providing an overview of the topic under investigation and defining the research problem. The research questions and sub-questions, the key objectives of study, the significance of the inquiry and the underpinning assumptions of the research will be outlined in the sections to follow. This chapter will also provide insights regarding both the delimitations and limitations of the study, and how the study dealt with these. Finally, the structure of the dissertation and the topics to be covered in the subsequent chapters will be presented.

1.2 Background of the study

The telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe is subdivided into five (5) markets, namely: postal services; fixed telephone services; courier services; mobile cellular services; and internet access providers, which have become the focal area of this inquiry, as these are directly related to the evolution of social blogs. These telecommunications markets and the operators in each market are outlined in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1. 1: The telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe

Stages in Industry Development	Market	Service description	Licensed operator
1	Postal services	Postal service	1. Zimpost
2	Fixed Voice & Fixed Internet Services	Fixed Voice & Fixed Internet Services	1. TelOne
3	Courier Services	Domestic and International	1. DHL 2. FEDEX 3. Unifreight/Swift 4. Innscor Transport t/s Overnight Express 5. United Parcel Services 6. Courier Connect 7. Skynet
4	Mobile Cellular Service	Mobile Voice & Internet	1. Econet 2. NetOne 3. Telecel
5	Internet Access Provider (Class A)	Data & Internet Service	1. Africom 2. Dandemutande 3. Liquid 4. Powertel 5. Telecontract 6. Transmedia
6	Internet Access Providers (Class B)		1. CommIT 2. NetOne
Total			**19 Companies**

(Source: POTRAZ, 2019)

The growth of the telecommunications industry has evolved in stages, the first of which emerged through the postal services, which established the backbone of the industry's development. This entrenched the initial government monopoly through Zimpost. This was followed by the establishment of fixed telephone services, provided through the government's TelOne monopoly, for fixed voice and fixed internet services

(Nyamadzawo, 2011). The third stage in the construction of the industry entailed the formation of courier services, with seven (7) players facilitating the growth of the industry through both indigenous and global stakeholders. The fourth stage, according to Nyamadzawo (2011), involved the birth of mobile cellular services, with three (3) players providing these services, namely Econet, Telecel, and NetOne. The last two stages comprised the further expansion and development of these internet service providers, with seven (7) key players now offering data and internet services in Zimbabwe. Compared to the State monopoly of PTC in the early years after independence, the country now has nineteen (19) players in the telecommunications industry (POTRAZ, 2018). At each stage of development, a drift from traditional communications towards the utilisation of the internet and web-based platforms in general was evident, particularly the use of social blogs as a result of high mobile penetration. As the telecommunications industry opened up from State monopoly to an intensely competitive environment, the need to manage corporate reputation, especially on these new platforms and specifically on Twitter, became apparent.

Due to the evolution in the industry, there has been a sharp growth in mobile subscriptions in Zimbabwe, especially during the period from 2008 to 2012, where the subscriptions rate curve was very steep, before undergoing a steadier rise from 2012 to 2017 (POTRAZ, 2017). There was a 9.4% growth rate in subscriptions between 2016 and 2017 alone, as subscriptions grew from 12.9 to 14 million active users, while total subscriptions rose from 20.6 to 21.6 million in the same period (POTRAZ, 2017). This represents a shift in market patterns since the industry's inception in the 1980s, demonstrating that customers and stakeholders are increasingly turning to online platforms, primarily through their mobile phones, to communicate (Kotler, Kartajaya & Iwan, 2017). This, therefore, suggests that there has been an increase in the perceived usefulness of social driven demand for telecommunications mechanisms in customer behaviour. However, in 2018, there was a drop in new subscriptions in Zimbabwe from the peak reached in 2017 to 12 million users (POTRAZ, 2018). The growth of active mobile users is illustrated in Figure 1.1 below.
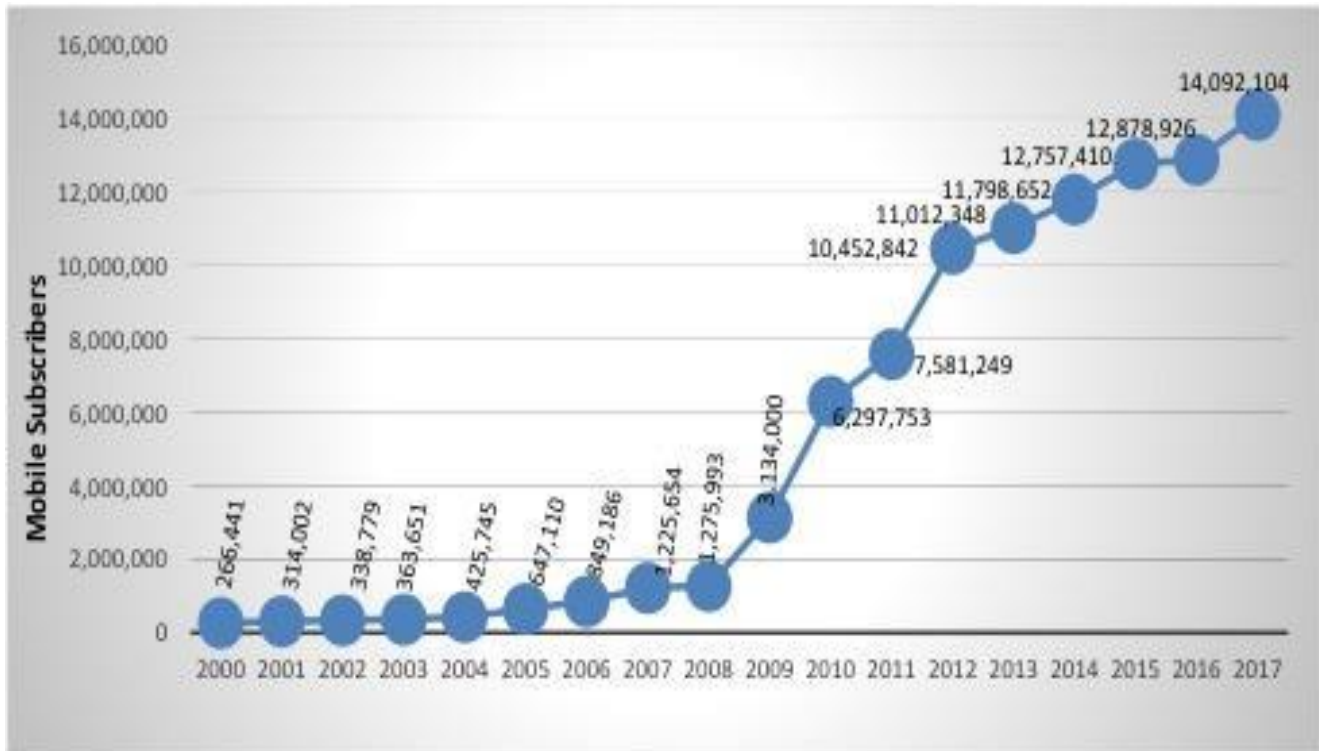
Figure 1. 1: Mobile subscriptions in Zimbabwe, 2000 – 2017

(Source: POTRAZ, 2017: 11)

Accordingly, Figure 1.1 above shows that the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe has undergone massive structural changes since the year 2000, when there was an average of only 266 000 mobile telephone users, since the sector was in its infancy. The industry was emerging from close to two decades of monopoly supply of telecommunications services. The development in the mobile telephony industry necessitated extensive investment in infrastructure and recruiting of customers. Mobile SIM cards were very expensive during the early years of mobile telephony in Zimbabwe, which posed a hindrance to mobile telecommunications use. For example, in 2008, which marked the last year before a rise in the use of mobile phones, a SIM card sold for US$90 (Chifamba, 2013), as compared to the current price of less than US$1 in 2020. The lower costs to access mobile services triggered a sharp rise in the demand for mobile phones from 2009 to 2017 (Hawkins & Pilling, 2017), showing an evolution towards more appreciation of mobile social interaction and connectivity.

Given the evolution that has taken place in the industry from traditional communication and reputation management, social blogs such as Twitter have become the dominant online platform, contributing to

contemporary perspectives in the management of reputation, which is driven by social capital of internal stakeholders, and gearing their engagement with the stakeholders online.

1.3 Evolution of social blogs and corporate reputation in telecommunications in Zimbabwe

There is a need to understand the background of socio-political and economic variables that the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe takes root in and how it is responding to these variables in terms of the management of reputation through social blogs broadly, and Twitter specifically. The industry is preceded by traditional approaches to corporate reputation that relied on traditional media and traditional internal management processes. The research shows how the telecommunications industry is responding to these developments and proposes a framework for social blogs and social capital management for an industry dominated by Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. However, the study was undertaken in the context of the country's economic structural changes, which can be tracked to the phases of the meltdown of the economy that sparked price instability. Hence there is a need for a comparative analysis of the period spanning between 1980, when the country attained its independence, and 2008, the peak of the country's hyperinflationary pressures. In the Globalisation and Monetary Policy Institute Annual Report, Koech (2011) asserts that at Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, the country's inflation rate sat at 5.4 percent. In 2008, the inflation rate was pegged at 2 600.2%, more than 231 000 000% on an annualised inflation rating basis. A report by the International Monetary Fund (2012) estimated the inflation rate in 2008 to be pegged at an all-time high of 489 billion percent. The broader structural dynamics in Zimbabwe were also changing at that time, and affecting the performance of the telecommunications industry (POTRAZ, 2018). It was only in 2009 that the country's economy stabilised, after the Government of National Unity was formed between the official opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change, and the ruling political party, ZANU-PF. The Government of National Unity adopted the US dollar (US$) as the main currency of exchange, and abandoned the Zimbabwean dollar, which was losing value daily due to runaway inflation (Ellyne & Daly, 2016). The economic stabilisation is shown in Figure 1.2 below, highlighting the economic performance of Zimbabwe in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) between 2000 and 2016.

Figure 1. 2: Zimbabwe's annual GDP performance, 2000 – 2016

(Source: World Bank, 2017)

It should therefore be noted that the exponential growth in mobile penetration, internet growth and growth of users has been triggered by the stability that was achieved after the economic dislocations of 2008 to 2009. From 2008 to 2017, the GDP in Zimbabwe never dropped below the levels of 2008 (Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index [BTI], 2020), which therefore allowed for citizens' changing behavioural patterns, especially in relation to data consumption, as they sought to be global citizens. The sharp rise in the economic growth curve tallies with that of the sharp rise in data consumption from 2009 to 2017, indicating a complementary relationship between the two variables of economic growth and increase in mobile and internet connectivity uptake (BTI, 2020; Kundishora, 2018; POTRAZ, 2017; World Bank, 2017).

1.4 Statement of problem

The telecommunication industry is vital for the exchange of information amongst key drivers of the national economy. For this reason, there are several players in this industry who also compete intensively for a better market share and revenue. This is because it is a business that depends daily on its number of customers and followers. There has been a growing negative perception that has labelled almost all telecommunications service providers in Zimbabwe (Chauke, 2012; Chapanga & Choto, 2015; Marumbwa, 2013; TechZim,

2021). Some of the larger companies like Telecel and Africom in Zimbabwe have downsized their operations, which has resulted in the closure of some of their subsidiaries nationwide (Telegeography, 2020). The developments within the industry have led to the rise of highly mobilised consumers in the form of subscribers who view telecommunications industry players as driven by greed for profit, which importantly, increases reputation risk factors for the industry (POTRAZ, 2018: 2). This has resulted in a rise in the unemployment rate emanating from this sector and reduced shareholder value. Hence, as a matter of urgency, there is a need to understand the effect of social blogs on the reputation and operation of telecommunication businesses, since the main problem seemed to be emanating from the negative perception that the customers have about their services (Freedom House, 2021). According to POTRAZ (2017), the main drivers for such a negative corporate reputation have been spearheaded by inefficiency in service delivery, accompanied by exorbitant rates, amongst other issues (Standard, 2017). It then calls for in-depth scrutiny of how matters of corporate reputation influence the operation of firms in the telecommunications industry (TechZim, 2021). This is supported by Zerfass and Viertmann (2017) who note that failure to effectively manage corporate reputation will result in reduced market share and a reduction in a business's competitiveness. There are existing corporate reputation measures that have been generalised to matters of business structure and guided by top-level management, operational staff, and general employees. These seem to be static, as the world is moving away from the traditional and unidirectional exchange, towards dynamic online engagement and sharing of information, which shapes corporate reputation management in new ways. The call, for now, is to align with the digitalised world, using social blog platforms (TechZim, 2019). This research concerns how social blogs influences and tap into the social capital of internal stakeholders and use it as a tool for improved corporate reputation. This is done by factoring in contemporary theories to the traditional approaches towards the management of reputation, thereby uniquely contributing to this new knowledge gap (Brodie et al., 2013; Davids & Brown, 2021). Even though Aggerholm, Andersen and Thomsen (2011) postulate that corporate reputation can be improved through effective communication, the authors do not elaborate on how such effective communication could be realised. Little was done to understand the mode of communication that is applicable, especially in the telecommunications industry. In addition, Huang-Horowitz and Freberg (2016) have noted that Facebook is an effective tool for improving corporate reputation. This study prioritised Twitter from a generalised perspective, in terms of the way in which it seems to be used as a channel for exchanging various socio-economic and political discussions. This might work in transforming a good positive corporate reputation for firms in the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry. This is supported by Greyser (2016), who noted that Twitter is vital in linking customers with products and services globally.

This study then investigated the effectiveness of Twitter as a contemporary social blog in improving corporate reputation for the telecommunication industry in Zimbabwe. That is, through comparing Twitter with other social blogs for improved social capital. The reason for choosing Twitter, specifically, is because it is the fastest growing social blog in terms of use and is currently the most used commanding 43.62% as of October 2021 (Stratcounter, 2021), while Facebook is ranked second, at 35.86 percent. An understanding of Twitter in particular will provide for generalisations towards practice and theory in its use and contribution to new knowledge.

1.5 Research aim and objectives

Main objective

- To examine the relationship between Twitter usage and corporate reputation management by telecommunication businesses in Zimbabwe

Specific objectives

- To determine the key roles of Twitter as a social capital driver for top-level managers in managing corporate reputation for the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry.
- To establish the operational effects of Twitter in managing the corporate reputation of the telecommunication businesses in Zimbabwe.
- To understand how the employees influence and were also influenced by Twitter in their execution for a positive corporate reputation.
- To evaluate Twitter and other social blogs according to its dominance to manage contemporary corporate reputation matters.
- To compare Twitter with other existing social blogs on the key elements expected in global communication for positive corporate reputation.
- To determine and understand the internal views by managers and employees on the appreciation of Twitter as a social exchange tool in consuming telecommunications services in Zimbabwe.
- To develop a framework for social blogs and corporate reputation driven by Twitter as a tool for improved reputation in the telecommunications business.

Research Questions

- What are the key roles of Twitter as a social driver for top-level managers towards corporate reputation management in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry?

26

- What are the effects of Twitter in managing corporate reputation in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry?

- How are employees influenced or influence Twitter use in the execution of a positive reputation?

- Which social blogs are most effective in managing corporate reputation compared to Twitter?

- Which are the alternative social blogs that are more effective in the management of corporate reputation than Twitter in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry.

- What are the internal stakeholder's views pertaining to the levels of customer engagement with companies in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry?

Research Assumptions

- Participants of the study have a good understanding of Twitter and other social blogs and their impact on corporate reputation management.

- Twitter can be used to manage and improve corporate reputation in Zimbabwe's telecommunication industry.

- Twitter can bridge communication gaps between an organisation and various stakeholders.

1.6 Conceptual framework

In response to the problem statement outlined above, this study will be guided by a conceptual framework, which seeks to assess the variables in the topic under investigation. The Twitter microblog platform is the independent variable, while corporate reputation management is the dependent variable in this study, as shown in Figure 1.3 below.
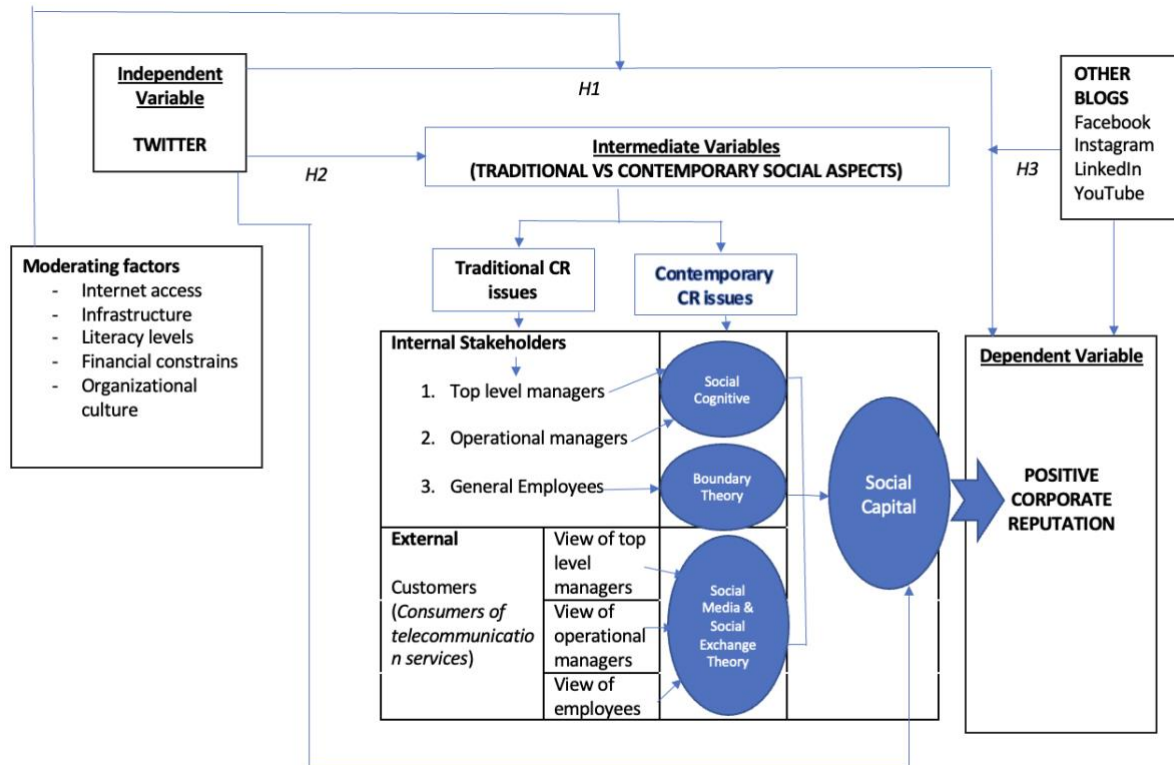
Figure 1. 3: Research conceptual framework

(Source: Researcher's own construction)

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1.3 above tested the main relationship (H1) for the study, which was to understand whether Twitter usage has a positive effect on the corporate reputation of telecommunication companies operating in Zimbabwe. Since the study was to position Twitter between the traditional corporate reputation guides (top-level managers, operation managers, general employees, and customers) and the contemporary methods (boundary theory, social cognitive, social media, and social exchange), these became the intermediate variables for (H2) for the research. In this regard (H2) tastes the hypothesis Twitter usage has a positive impact on the shift from traditional to contemporary approaches and social capital in building corporate reputation in Zimbabwe's telecommunications Industry. The fact that Twitter is not the only social blog in the landscape resulted in the study inviting other equal alternative types (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube) as a comparison to assess their effect on corporate reputation against Twitter, which therefore leads to (H3) Other blogs affects how Twitter, moderating factors and themselves shape corporate reputation management.   The use and application of social blog platforms are also affected by certain impeding factors as presented in the framework, which includes internet access,

28

infrastructure, literacy levels, financial constraints, and organisational culture. Of greater significance guiding the main gap of the study is that traditional corporate reputation factors link with contemporary issues and if well-managed, can construct social capital of the telecommunication businesses, to ultimately develop a positive corporate reputation. The hypotheses were developed through the directional hypothesis. This is defined as the process of making a prediction about the expected outcome, basing this prediction on prior literature and studies on the topic that suggest a potential outcome (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:189). This is because of the research approach of Quan-Qual mixed methods where the researcher seeks to contribute to know knowledge by further developing the known while moving to the unknown (Saunders et al., 2017).

1.7 Significance of the study

The study fills in the knowledge gap conceptually, as well as in practice. It addresses the knowledge gap of how the telecommunications companies bridge the gap of traditional approaches to corporate reputation with the contemporary theoretical propositions on how the social blogs with a specific focus on Twitter contribute to the social capital of companies in the industry and shape the contemporary methods of improving corporate reputation. This study then investigated the effectiveness of Twitter as a contemporary social blog in improving corporate reputation for the telecommunication industry in Zimbabwe, that is, through comparing Twitter with other social blogs for improved social capital. The reason for choosing Twitter, specifically, is because it is the fastest growing social blog in terms of use, and is currently the most used, commanding 43.62% as of October 2021 (Stratcounter, 2021), while Facebook is ranked second at 35.86 percent. An understanding of Twitter specifically will provide for generalisations towards practise and theory in its use and contribution to new knowledge.

This study is practical in the sense that it addresses the day-to-day issues that are faced by users of telecommunications services and products in Zimbabwe. Various media outlets (Newsday, 2018; The Daily News, 2017; The Herald, 2017) have reported on telecommunication malpractice in the country. Concerns have regularly been raised about poor customer service by the operators, where a theoretical and conceptual presentation related to the area of research interest will be established by the study. This was achieved through investigating the issues that participants identify in relation to the reputation performance of the selected telecommunications companies. In addition, the study will assist in exposing the strengths and weaknesses of Twitter as a means of improved corporate management as highlighted in the conceptual framework. Furthermore, the significance of the study is premised on the impact it will have on its key

beneficiaries, identified mainly as: government/policymakers; the telecommunications industry itself; investors; customers; the international community; and boards of academic knowledge, among others.

With regard to the identified stakeholders, firstly, this research will be critical for the government of Zimbabwe, as it enhances the scientific measurement of the performance of the telecommunications industry and the contribution of corporate reputation as a derivative of social media. The findings of the study will therefore contribute towards informed policy propositions, aimed at promoting the growth and regulation of the industry through competitive policies. Secondly, the findings will also be critical for investors, who would need to consider the strategic nature with which the industry employs Twitter, and the resultant shaping of a positive reputation for improved performance, customer loyalty, and employee retention. However, the major beneficiary of the study will be the telecommunications industry itself, since one of the main objectives is to develop a framework as a strategic tool to improve reputation management in the industry. Customers will ultimately be the major beneficiaries, as improved usage of Twitter to manage reputation will better serve customers and employees as the key stakeholders under study. In addition, the study will be beneficial to the international community. An international readership will benefit from a comparative analysis of trends and patterns relevant in the region pertaining to Twitter use in managing corporate reputation, while baseline information will be added to the existing body of knowledge related to the research topic, which may inform future studies.

In summary, this study makes a unique contribution to the current body of knowledge on the topic of social blogs' use in corporate reputation management. It facilitates new ways of understanding the implications of the social blogosphere, Twitter, and corporate reputation for the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. A blogosphere can be defined as a powerful social network comprising all the blogs on the internet, or a particular post-based messaging platform (Del Vecchio, Laubacher, Ndou & Passiante, 2011), such as Twitter. Currently, there is no study of this nature that has been conducted in Zimbabwe. This study is therefore likely to increase the understanding and success of corporate reputation managers in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. The study also contributes towards responding to the conceptual and theoretical gap pertaining to the impact of social blogs such as Twitter contributing to the organisational social capital and contemporary perspectives on corporate reputation management. In addition, the research seeks to explore the uncharted territory of proposing a framework to be used in managing corporate reputation in the blogosphere, which will influence future research on the subject, and add to the existing body of knowledge.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

This study was carried out in Zimbabwe, focusing on the telecommunications industry. The study deliberately limits its stakeholder focus to internal stakeholders, as guided by the corporate reputation chain model adopted by Davies, Chun, Da Silva and Roper (2003), who then drive the reputation of the corporate to the stakeholders. This further allowed the study to develop an in-depth and survey-based inquiry by means of which to better understand how the employees help to create the social capital key for the development of new perspectives to corporate reputation evolving from traditional approaches towards online reputation management (Brodie et al., 2013). This is further supported through the social blogs and social exchange theory, which argues that one can understand how the organisation might engage its online stakeholders through developing insight as to how internal stakeholders are conditioned for such engagement (Davids & Brown, 2021).

1.9 Limitations of the research

There were various limitations faced in conducting the research, which had to be managed in order to mitigate the impact on the results. The main limitation encountered is related to the sensitivity of data. Industry players, that is, the Key Interview Informants (KII)s of the telecommunications organisations, would withhold information due to the fear that the organisation they worked for would be compromised if the information revealed in the study fell into the hands of competitors. In addressing this limitation, the researcher signed non-disclosure agreements with the identified companies and KII as a means to mitigate this limitation and abide by the conditions stipulated by the companies. Another limitation encountered concerned the limited amounts of literature specifically focused on Africa and Zimbabwe, related to the area of study. In response to this limitation, the researcher utilised patterns in previously conducted global studies and localised the patterns found in these prior studies, which helped to frame the questions and the engagement with the respondents. A further limitation was related to the methodological gap pertaining to the proposed research area since this study constitutes pioneering research within the country. In response to this limitation, the research was underpinned by a pragmatic philosophy and mixed methods approach, to allow for a better understanding of the dynamics and trends at play. Lastly, the researcher had no control over the central independent variable, viz. Twitter, hence there was limited space for controlled experiments. In this regard, the study relied on a mixed methods approach, where data gained through quantitative methods was probed further through a qualitative mode of investigation.

1.10 Structure of the dissertation

The study is organised and arranged in ten chapters as outlined in Table 1.2.

Table 1. 2: Research structure

Chapter	Headline	Focus
1	Introduction	➢ Background of the study ➢ Statement of the problem ➢ Research objectives ➢ Research questions ➢ Research Assumptions ➢ Conceptual framework ➢ Significance of the study ➢ Delimitations ➢ Limitations of the study ➢ Research structure ➢ Conclusion
2	Social blogs and corporate reputation management in Zimbabwe's Telecommunications Industry	➢ Introduction ➢ Global trends on usage of social media ➢ African trends on the use of the internet ➢ Usage of internet in Zimbabwe ➢ Growth of social blogs use in Zimbabwe vis-à-vis corporate reputation management ➢ Types of social blogs ➢ Dominant social blogs in Zimbabwe ➢ Benefits of using social blogs in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe ➢ The relationship between social blogs and corporate reputation management

		➢ Challenges of using social blogs in the telecommunications industry ➢ Twitter as a driver of corporate reputation management in Zimbabwe ➢ Contribution by authors on social blogs use in Zimbabwe and gap analysis (tabular format)
3	Theories in corporate reputation management	➢ Introduction ➢ Traditional approaches and theories to corporate reputation ➢ Contemporary theories on social blogs and corporate reputation management ➢ Towards building a conceptual framework for corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry ➢ The research conceptual framework ➢ Conclusion
4	Methodology	➢ Research type ➢ Research philosophy ➢ Research paradigm ➢ Research design ➢ Research population ➢ Research sample ➢ Research instruments ➢ Data collection procedure ➢ Data analysis ➢ Reliability and validity
5	Presentation and Discussion of results by objective	➢ Introduction ➢ Objective no. 1: To develop key roles of Twitter as a social capital driver for

		top-level managers in managing corporate reputation for the Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry
		➤ Objective no. 2: To establish the operational effects of Twitter in managing corporate reputation of telecommunications businesses in Zimbabwe
		➤ Objective no. 3: To understand the employees' influence and also being influence by Twitter in their management of positive reputation for their companies
		➤ Objective no. 4: To compare Twitter with other existing social blogs on the key elements expected in global communication for positive corporate reputation
		➤ Objective no. 5: To evaluate twitter and other social blogs on its dominance to manage contemporary corporate reputation matters
		➤ Objective no. 6: To determine and understand the internal views by managers and employees on the appreciation of twitter as a social exchange tool in consuming telecommunications services in Zimbabwe

		➤ Framework for Social and Corporate Reputation for Improved Reputation in Telecommunications business
		➤ Conclusion
6	Conclusions and recommendations	➤ Conclusions,
		➤ Recommendations by objectives

1.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, the critical components of the research were clearly established and the objectives and questions guiding the research were elaborated upon. In this regard, the chapter provided a brief background of the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe, which forms the context in which the independent and dependent variables of Twitter, and corporate reputation, are respectively examined. The research questions and objectives guiding the study were outlined, and the conceptual framework that will be employed to interpret the results of the study was highlighted. The limitations encountered in the study were identified. and explanation was provided as to how these were overcome. Finally, the overall structure of the dissertation, from Chapter One to Chapter Six and the key issues, which are examined and addressed within each chapter was presented. The following chapter provides a review of the literature related to the use of social in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry.

CHAPTER 2

SOCIAL BLOGS AND CORPORATE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT IN ZIMBABWE'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY

2.1 Introduction

This survey extant literature, identifying relevant gaps. While there is a dearth of literature in the areas of the impact of corporate reputation management and the use of social blogs (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016; Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Bagozzi, 2016; Cha, Yi & Deephouse, 2000; Rindova et al., 2005), what exists predominantly explores the interplay of these two variables within the traditional approach of corporate reputation, rather than embracing the contemporary views of the management of corporate reputation within the spheres of the social blogs (Carlson et al. 2016; Davids & Brown, 2021; Moqbel & Kock, 2018; Papadopoulos et al., (2013). The study also analyses the impact of these social blogs, specifically Twitter, and how it contributes to the social capital of the corporates and shape new approaches and perspectives in the improvement of corporate reputation (Farzanah, 2021).

For this reason, the relationship between the two variables, namely social blogs and corporate reputation management, has been approached from the general perspective of management of particular corporates guarding against risk. However, research on the need for enhancing brand openness, responsiveness, and accountability to the multiplicity of an organisation's stakeholders is limited. Further to this, the bulk of the research studies have been undertaken in the Americas, Europe and Asia, where internet growth first takes root, while the African context remains underexplored (Bahia & Suardi, 2019; Economist, 2019; GSMA Intelligence, 2020; Kemp, 2019). These studies show that Africa is the next frontier in terms of internet growth and use, driving the need to examine how such growth in internet uptake will contribute to the area of inquiry around the impact of social blogs on corporate reputation management in the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry. The contribution to new knowledge will be derived through addressing such gaps by examining the practicalities of this phenomenon in the African and Zimbabwean contexts, and how the contemporary views on the interplay of social blogs and corporate reputation relate in practical and conceptual terms. However, broader trends are first identified from a review of the literature undertaken from the global, continental, and Zimbabwean contexts.

2.2 Global trends on the usage of social blogs

There has been a surge in the number of people in the world accessing the internet in recent years. In the year 2021, the total number of users was around 4.88 billion, representing an aggregate 9% increase from the previous year (Kemp, 2021). This growth is mainly attributed to the number of developing countries that are investing in the expansion of internet use. For example, India recorded a steep rise in the uptake of internet use, exceeding 100 million users in a record period of one year from 2018 to 2019, while a region like South Asia recorded an increase from 31% to 41% in internet use during the same period (Kemp, 2021). The number of social blog users worldwide is also on the rise, with a positive growth of 9% from 2020 to 2021, reaching an all-time high of 4.88 billion users, while the number of people accessing social blogs on mobile devices rose by 10% to 4.5 billion people in the same period (Kemp, 2021). The growth trends on the digital statistical indicators are shown in Figure 2.1 below.
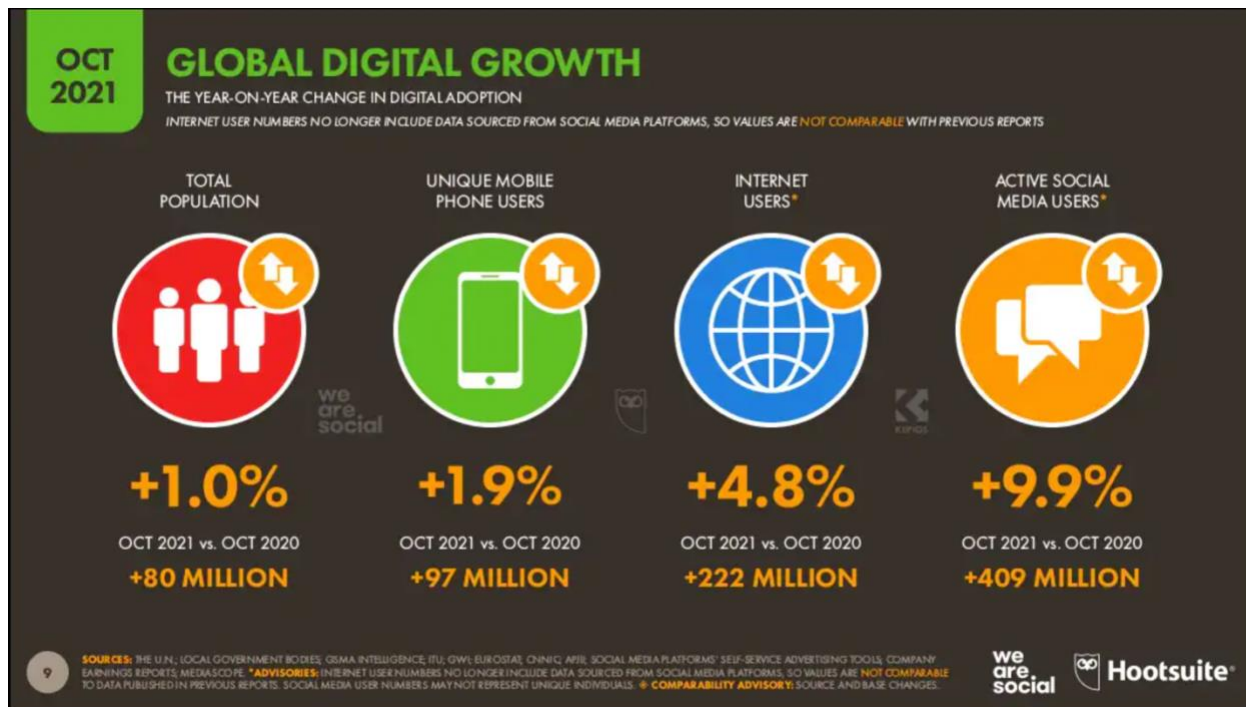
Figure 2. 1: Trends in the growth of internet usage

(Source: Kemp, 2021)

The global trends noted above show a growth trajectory on all five key indicators related to growth in internet usage. The data indicate that the world is becoming increasingly mobile, which reveals the growing importance of social blogs as a key human behaviour component in the current era. In a bid to make a comparative analysis, the trends captured during the period 2012 to 2021 can be used to mark the shifts in

the global population's tastes and communications approaches. In the year 2012, global internet use was measured at 2.07 billion users compared to the 4.88 billion users in 2021 (Kemp, 2021), which shows an almost doubling in numbers of internet users in a period of nine years. Social blogs use grew from 1.5 billion users to 4.5 billion users in the same period (Kemp, 2021). This indicates a global citizenry that is highly mobile and connected, more so than at any given time in the history of human existence. The global statistical figures of worldwide internet users are shown in Figure 2.2 below.
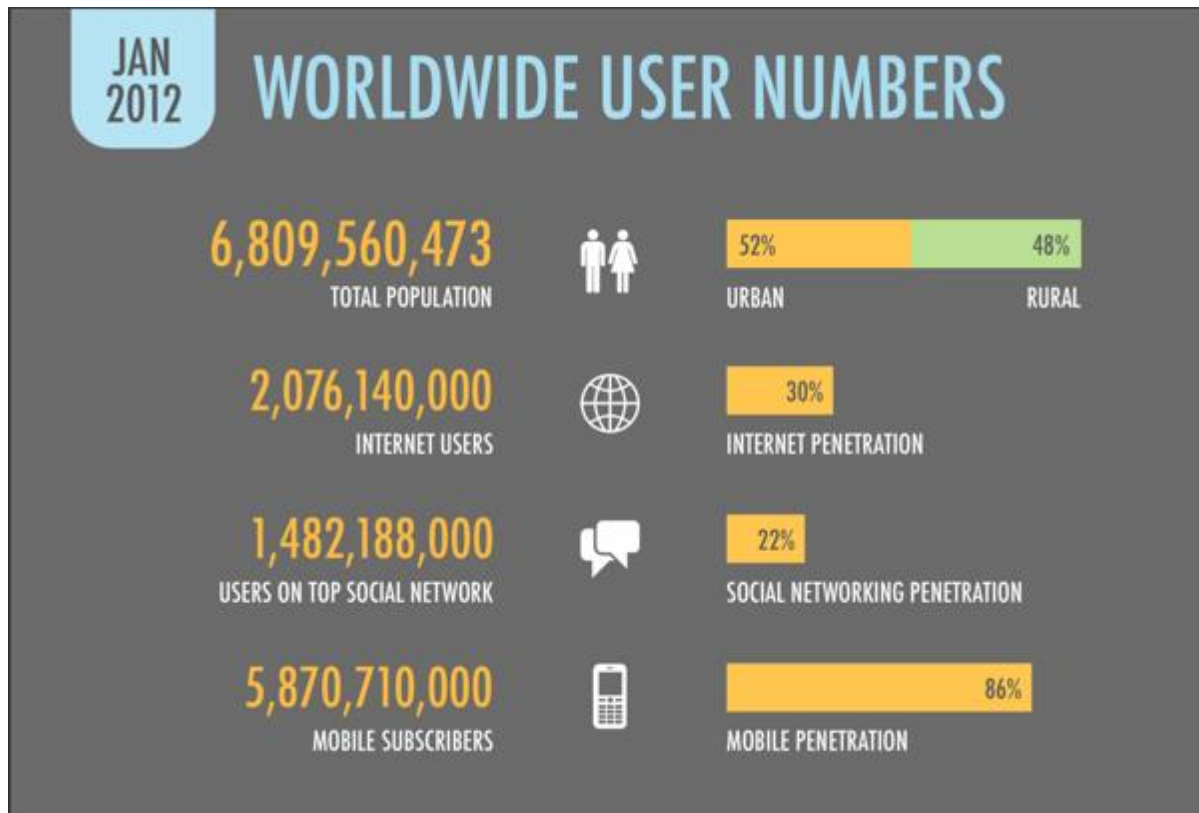
Figure 2. 2: Worldwide internet user numbers

(Source: Kemp, 2019)

It is important to note that in 2017, over two-thirds of the global population were active users of mobile devices as a means of accessing information online (Bahia & Suardi, 2019), a number which has undoubtedly grown in the last four years. However, the growth trajectory has of late been subdued and has slowed, as it took a staggering four years for the shift from four billion to five billion internet users, from 2015 to 2019 (Bahia & Suardi, 2019). According to The Economist (2019), the next wave of internet growth, which will be mainly from developing countries, will involve users accessing the Internet through mobile devices. These new users, as opposed to the first half of the global population accessing the internet, will be

driven by the need for leisure and business opportunities (Kemp, 2021). This is a critical observation, as it points to the growing focus on the African continent's uses of the Internet and social media, and how this affects various facets of life including the scope of the reach around corporate reputation management and the local jurisdictions. The growth curve of internet users for the period 2001 to 2020 is outlined in Figure 2.3 below, which shows the evolution of mobile subscriber penetration in the world.
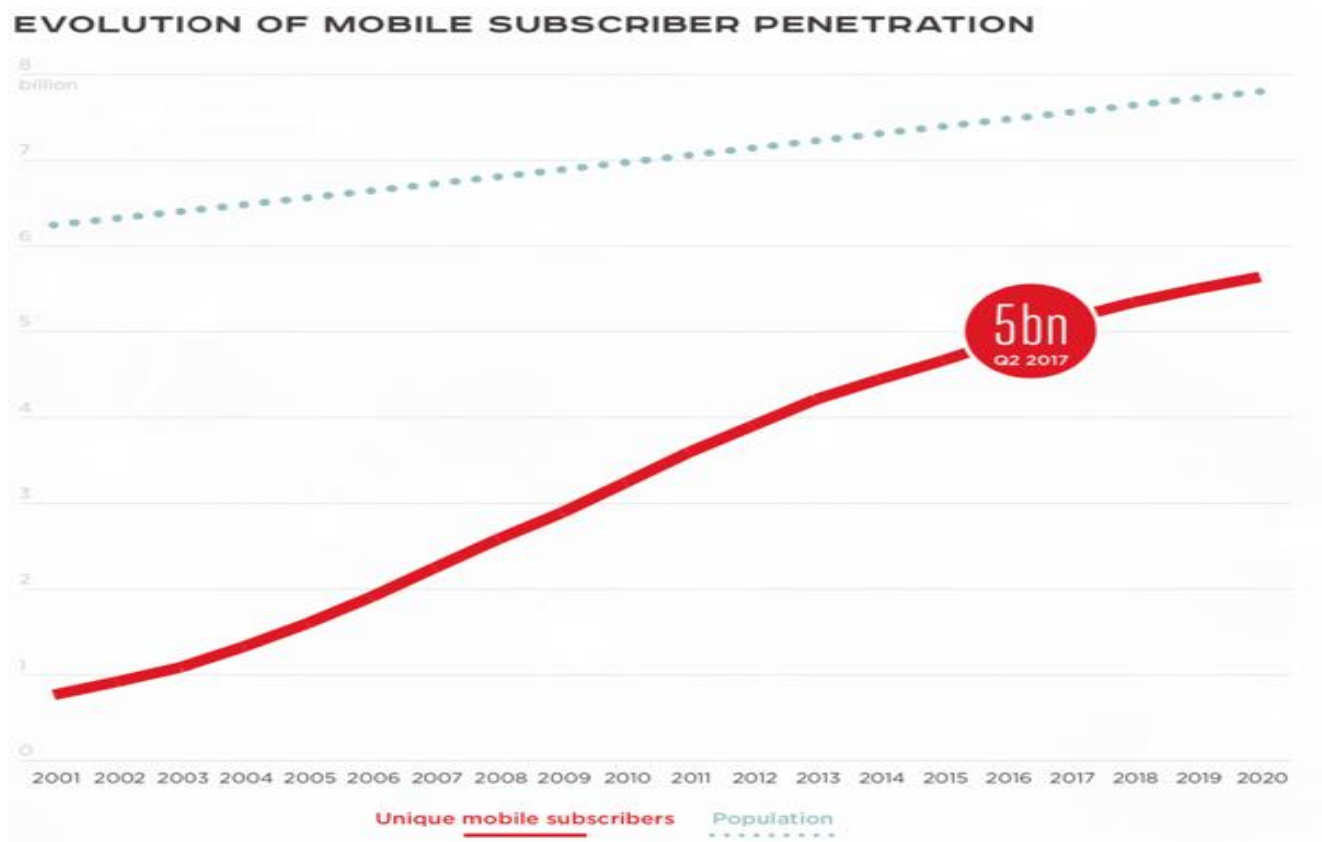
Figure 2. 3: Evolution of mobile subscribers

(Source: Global System for Mobile Communications [GSMA] Intelligence, 2020: 24)

As noted in Figure 2.3 above, there was a steep rise in mobile subscriptions from 2003 to 2013, which was a decade characterised by a mobile subscription boom, as compared to the period 2013 to 2020. However, notwithstanding the recent slower pace of growth, mobile technology is the most ubiquitous technology on earth, competing only with radio (Kemp, 2019). The smartphone is located at the intersection of internet growth and mobile user subscriptions globally, as smartphones currently account for virtually half of the aggregate internet connections. Accordingly, one billion more people were utilising mobile phones to access the internet by the beginning of 2020 (GSMA Intelligence, 2020). According to Bahia and Suardi (2019), as of 2018, an estimated 5.1 billion persons globally had subscribed to mobile networks, which at that time

amounted to approximately 67% of the world's population. New global subscriptions only grew by an additional one billion users from 2013 to 2018, which accounts for a 5% growth in five years (The Economist, 2019). The growth rate during this period by all measures can be considered very slow and rather subdued compared to the preceding five-year period from 2008 to 2013. At a projected 1.9% growth rate per annum from 2018 to 2025, it is anticipated that user subscriptions will be pegged at 5.8 billion by 2025, which will amount to almost three-quarters of the world's population (The Economist, 2019).

Of the 710 million people projected to make subscriptions to mobile services as first-time users in the period from 2018 to 2025, almost half will emerge from the Asia Pacific region, while a quarter of this total population is expected to be from Sub-Saharan Africa. The connectivity gap is narrowing, as a projected 1.4 billion people are expected to use the mobile internet for the first time, leapfrogging the total mobile internet subscribers globally to five billion by the year 2025, which will comprise above 60% of the global population (GSMA Intelligence, 2020). This growth in connectivity alters overall human behaviour and tastes, and more specifically, customer buyer behaviour, among other variables (GSMA Intelligence, 2020). Figure 2.4 below outlines the global mobile unique subscribers and market penetration rate.

Figure 2. 4: Global unique subscribers and penetration rate

(Source: GSMA Intelligence, 2020: 9)

The above figures show the dominance of the Internet as a new platform for communication, which by extension enables the utilisation of social blogs in companies for a range of both strategic and operational issues. Social blogs and corporate reputation management is a key area impacted by this growth trajectory

in the use of both the internet and social media. Hence, there is a need to analyse and examine the interplay of these variables within the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry, from both a conceptual point of view, as well as considering the contextual factors that affect the industry, with the aim of replicating frameworks developed within the industries and those outside the case of inquiry.

2.3 African trends on the use of the internet

In the next 10-year period, there will be an unprecedented growth of internet use and a shift from offline to an online existence, which will present complexity in the regulation of the "digital complexity ecosystem" (Abrahams, 2017: 93). Africans generally, and Southern Africans specifically, have entered the complex digital economy of this disruptive ecosystem, which is characterised by high mobile penetration and the "internet of things, which refers to the billions of physical devices around the world that are now connected to the internet, all collecting and sharing data" (Patel & Patel, 2016: 26). Accordingly, scholars argue that there is no longer concern about the estimated 78% of Southern African Development Community (SADC) inhabitants yet to join the internet, but rather, the focus has shifted to an interest in what the opportunities and key challenges will be when they do join (Mothobi, Chair & Rademan, 2017). This, therefore, locates the key issues of management of corporate reputation within the identified digital economy, as one of the key factors that require investigation and the postulation of solutions, to include frameworks upon which the process of corporate reputation might be managed.

To understand the state of Southern Africa, the state of the digital economy of the region needs to be considered. As of 2016, an estimated 333 million inhabitants were domiciled in SADC (African Development Bank [AFDB] Group, 2018), of which 44%, translating to 147 million people, had mobile subscriptions, while 34%, or 113 million people, had access to smartphones. An estimated 22%, which translates to 72 million people, had access to the internet (Internet World Stats, 2017; GSMA Intelligence, 2017). Accordingly, it is estimated that the mobile broadband and mobile industry, in general, will contribute US$214 billion to the continent's annual GDP by 2020 (GSMA Intelligence, 2019). However, SADC is not homogenous when it comes to mobile penetration rates, as these differ from one country to another, due to varying peculiarities evident at any given time. The top tier rate of mobile penetration, as seen in Table 2.1 below, is 60% and upwards, namely in Lesotho, South Africa, Tanzania, Mauritius, and Botswana. The second-tier ranges between 50% to 59% penetration rates in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The third category ranges from 40%-49%, which includes Mozambique and Namibia, while the last tier at the lower level includes Angola, Malawi, and Madagascar with a recorded

penetration of 34%, 35% and 23%, respectively (GSMA Intelligence, 2019). These comparative figures show that there is a need to further interrogate the variables under examination and propose a framework that can lead to a competitive process of management of corporate reputation, which is alive to the environmental factors aforestated.

Table 2. 1: African trends in internet usage

Country	Population 2016 (millions)	GDP 2016 (USD billions)	Agriculture as % GDP	Manufacturing # as % GDP	Services as % GDP	Internet penetration %
Angola	28.8	89.6	10.1*	5.5*	46.5*	22.3
Botswana	2.2	15.2	2.4*	6.4*	64.3*	39.4
Democratic Republic of Congo	78.7	34.9	21.1	17.5	64.3	6.2
Lesotho	2.2	2.1	5.7*	10.7*	62.3*	27.4
Madagascar	24.8	9.9	24.4	13.8	56.5	5.1
Malawi	18.0	5.4	28.3	10.4	55.8	9.6
Mauritius	1.2	12.1	3.5	13.9	74.8*	62.7
Mozambique	28.8	11.0	24.8	9.5	53.6	17.5
Namibia	2.4	10.2	6.7*	9.1*	62.3*	31.0
Seychelles	0.094	1.4	2.6**	8.5**	83.0**	56.5
South Africa	55.9	294.8	2.4	13.4	68.6	54.0
Swaziland	1.3	3.7	9.9*	33.5*	52.2*	33.0
Tanzania	55.5	47.4	31.1	5.9	41.8	13.0
Zambia	16.5	19.5	5.3*	7.9*	59.4*	30.1
Zimbabwe	16.1	16.2	11.2	9.9	64.5	41.1
Total	332.5	573.4				

(Source: GSMA Intelligence, 2019)

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the continent's internet penetration rate was estimated at 45% as of 2018, with a projection that this would reach 51% by 2025 (GSMA Intelligence, 2019). There is also growing evidence of a high adoption rate of mobile subscriptions in Africa, which has been estimated to reach 60% by 2020 (GSMA Intelligence, 2019; Mothobi & Rademan, 2017).

This brings to the fore the argument that Africa has, through the development of certain trends, entered the digital economy, which in itself requires a digital transformation process as part of the broader development strategy utilising ICTs (Adam, 2019). The digital ecosystem is defined as "the entirety of sectors that operate using Internet Protocol (IP)-enabled communications" (Internet Society [ISOC], 2015: 5). The digital economy is anchored on network interconnectivity, and what Hanna (2016) refers to as 'interoperability' of

converging services among the digital platforms across these economies and societies. It, therefore, follows that the realisation of the digital economy and its evolution, including growth, relies on the interface of the key concepts of interconnectivity and interoperability (Lovelock, 2018). The term interconnectivity is defined as the ability "that traffic can travel across and between networks. This allows for economies of scale since fixed costs of infrastructure rollout extended a greater level of output bringing about a fall in unit price costs" (Adam, 2019: 240). On the other hand, interoperability of digital space is a process whereby "traffic can run effectively across different types such as telecommunications, to banking, to educational, to health networks and other sectors, which allows for economies of scope, since fixed costs are spread across a broader range of the output of different products and services" (Adam, 2019: 240).

It is within this developmental paradigm that the African context is establishing its communications tastes, as users of ICTs are on the rise, and showing that they are poised for a stretch of growth right up to 2025 (GSMA Intelligence, 2019). Accordingly, in measuring information society, the ITU posits that Africa is lagging in the ICT Development Index. This is notable by the continent's average performance on the ICT Development Index 2017 in terms of measured internet usage, as outlined in Table 2.2 below, where the African group of countries is at 2.64 points, compared to the world average of 5.11 (ITU, 2017).

Table 2. 2: Global internet usage index

Global IDI and Sub-Indices values	Africa	Developed	Developing	World
IDI 2017 Value	2.64	7.52	4.26	5.11
IDI 2016 Value	2.48	7.4	4.07	4.94
IDI ACCESS SUB-INDEX	**3.28**	**7.83**	**4.8**	**5.59**
Fixed-telephone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	1	38.07	8.54	13.57
Mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	74.6	127.27	96.25	101.53
International internet bandwidth perInternet user (Bit/s)	51000	140000	53000	74464
Percentage of households withcomputer	9.6	81.53	34.35	46.61
Percentage of households with Internetaccess	16.3	82.85	40.43	51.46
IDI USE SUB-INDEX	**1.74**	**6.91**	**3.32**	**4.26**
Percentage of individuals using theInternet	19.9	79.55	38.98	45.91
Fixed (wired)-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	0.4	30.31	8.71	12.39
Active mobile-broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	22.9	94.39	43.58	52.23
IDI SKILLS SUB-INDEX	**3.16**	**8.12**	**5.05**	**5.85**
Mean years of schooling	5.24	11.67	7.4	8.52
Secondary gross enrolment ratio	50.48	109.79	74.88	84
Tertiary gross enrolment ratio	9.49	68.18	28.25	38.69

(Source: Adam, 2019: 246)

The index in Table 2.2 was developed in 2008 to measure developments in ICTs between nations over a specific period with three key sub-indices. The first is the 'Access' sub-index, which outlines ICTs readiness and articulates the infrastructure and access indicators. The indicators are the access sub-index, which focuses on the infrastructure access indicators (Adam, 2019). The second is the 'User' sub-index, which articulates and illustrates the ICT intensity and outlines the triple intensity and use indicators such as individuals making use of the web; subscriptions based on fixed broadband; and mobile broadband

subscriptions. The third and last category measures the 'Skills' sub-index, which outlines the capabilities that are critical for ICTs. This is defined by three indicators: average years of schooling; secondary advancement; and gross tertiary enrolment (Adam, 2019). These indices have allowed scholars to examine the relationships between internet use and behavioural changes, as the data can be used to make generalisations on patterns and use.

These instruments and tools have allowed for a standard measurement of Internet and ICT usage in Africa, compared to other continents, in a more systematic way than ever before. In the indices outlined above, Africa has shown unprecedented improvement compared to the world trends on three key sub-indices, averaging 6.5% aggregate and 17.6% on the internet use sub-index, which evaluates ICT usage and intensity indicators, namely: subscriptions in the mobile category of broadband; subscriptions in the fixed broadband; and internet use by individuals (ITU, 2017). Accelerated growth is also recorded in the ICT composite sub-index of the African Development Bank indicators for the period between 2003 and 2018. The specific ICT composite index value multiplied to 338.3 times in 2018, compared to the value assessed in 2003, as noted in Figure 2.5 below, which outlines the growth of Africa ICT infrastructure index.
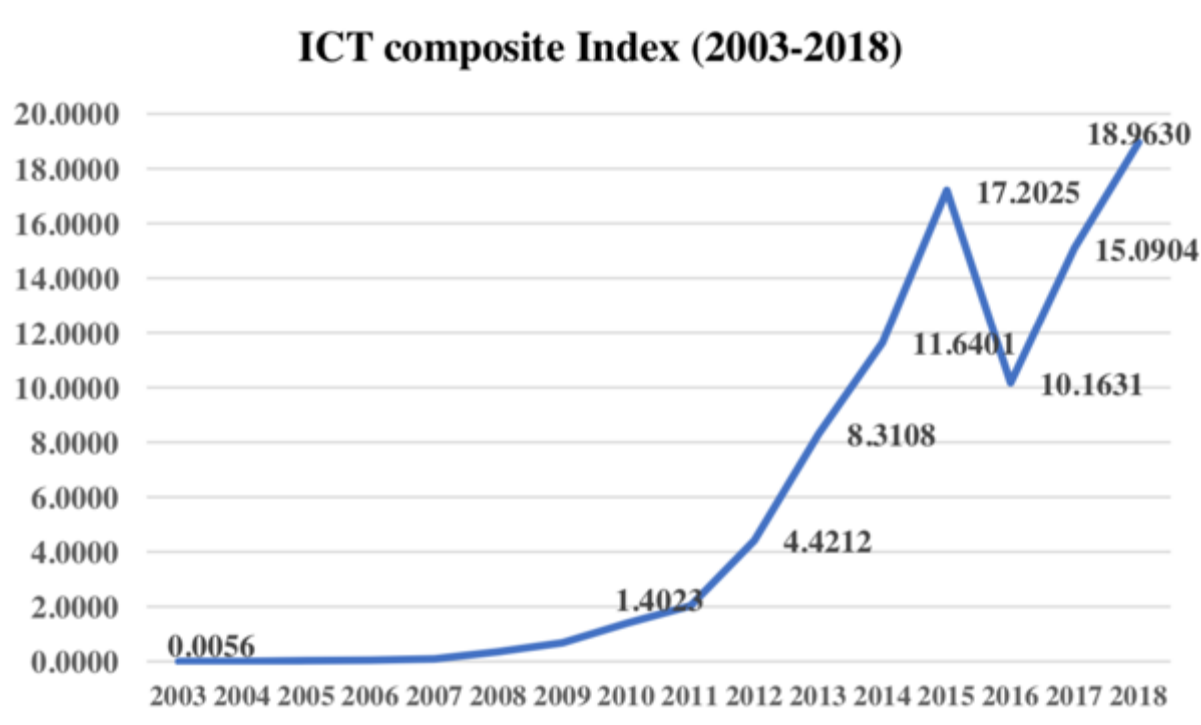
Figure 2. 5: ICT composite index, 2003-2018

(Source: AFDB Group, 2018: 17)

In addition, there is growing evidence of the increase in the number of users per 100 persons in the continent from 2000 to 2019, showing a sharp increase from 0.5 users per 100 in 2000 to 36.8 users in 2019 (Adam, 2019; AFDB Group, 2018; Lovelock, 2018; GSMA Intelligence, 2019; ITU, 2017). This growth paradigm is annexed to the steep growth in the mobile market and the rapid expansion of the optic fibre network (GSMA Intelligence, 2019).

The accelerated growth in internet usage in Africa can be attributed to incremental investments in undersea fibre optic cables. The most historic development in this regard is the establishment of the South Atlantic Cable System, which broke the barriers of connectivity and links Africa and South America for the first time (Madory, 2018). The ecosystem of internet connectivity is achieved through a mix of different initiatives by smaller companies, which led to the establishment of Cap Amílcar Cabral of Ceiba-2 (Business Ghana, 2018), METISS and Ultramar-GE (Submarine Telecoms Forum, 2018). The jostling towards connecting the global South by the developed world shows that the initial target market is nearing saturation, where companies are looking towards the 'unconnected' markets that were left out in the first lap of connectivity (Song, 2019). The GLO project has contributed immensely to the development of West Africa through its 850km undersea cable which contributes an additional 12Tbps capacity in internet accessibility (Okonji, 2018), while the strategic partnership between MainOne and Orange significantly increased the quantities of landing ports in Senegal and Ivory Coast, respectively (Kelly, 2018). Critical developments in the undersea cables also include the building of PEACE (Huawei Marine, 2018) and SAIL (Maidment, 2018) which are part of China's broader geopolitical strategy of the belt and road, which links China, Africa and South America (Shenggao, 2018). These developments are projected to continue with companies seeking to gain an edge in the untapped markets such as Africa through investment in undersea cables (Lovelock, 2018; ISOC, 2015; ITU, 2017;). These developments are illustrated in Figure 2.6 below which shows the telecommunications infrastructure in Africa.
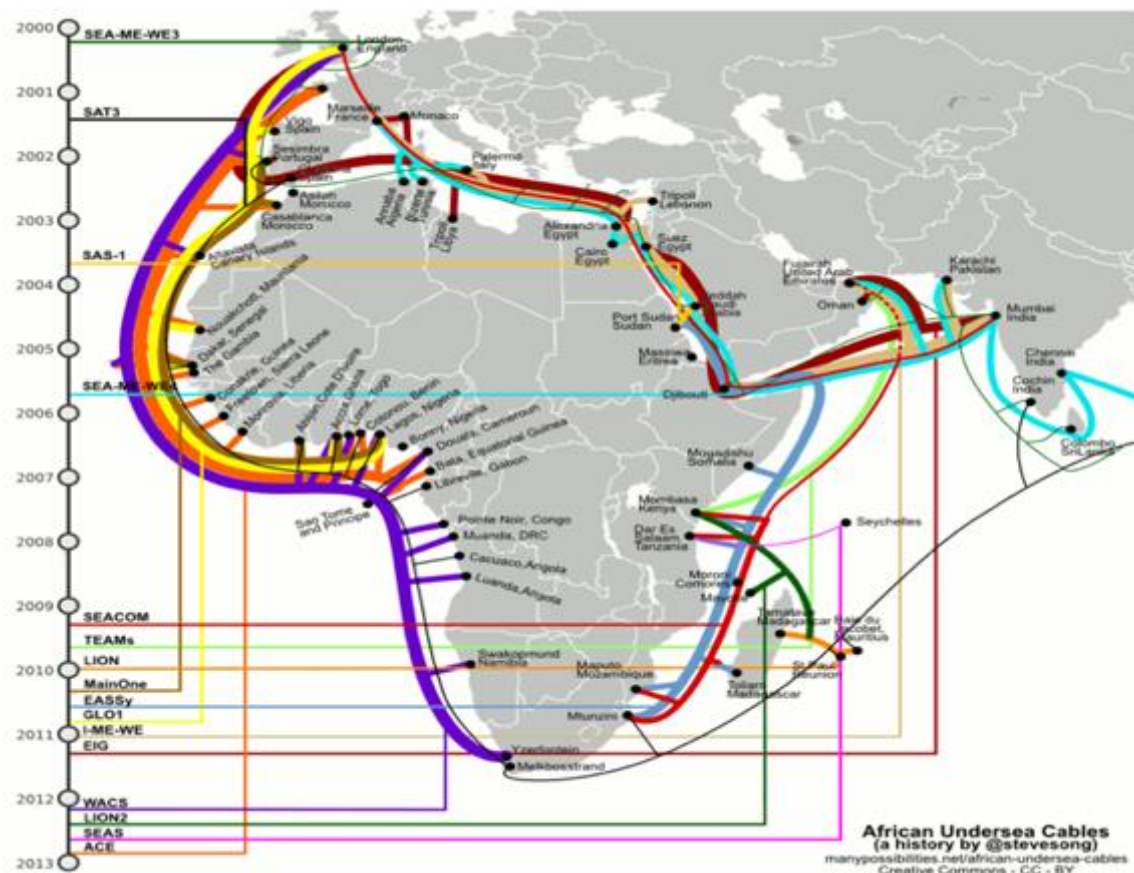
Figure 2. 6: Telecommunications infrastructure in Africa

(Source: Song, 2019: 82)

Liquid Telecommunications has stimulated intra-Africa connectivity more than any other notable investor. This has been achieved through investment in terrestrial fibre, leading to historic connectivity capabilities being achieved from Cape to Cairo (Chetty, 2018). This has led to the intra-Africa connectivity increasing, as now both landlocked countries and also those countries with access to seaports have connectivity running across them.

2.4 Usage of internet in Zimbabwe

Internet services were first introduced in Zimbabwe in 1991, for primarily academic purposes (AFDB Group, 2019). This gave rise to commercial services through leased lines that provided signals from South Africa. As of the year 1997, the government monopoly in the telecommunications industry, PTC, introduced the inaugural Internet hub, which connected to the United States of America (USA) directly (AFDB Group, 2019). A significant development was when the national internet backbone was expanded in 1998 to 11Mbps from the initial 2Mbps capacity (AFDB Group, 2019). This led to the formation and shaping of the

Internet Service Provider (ISP) market through both intensity of competition and attempts towards consolidation of the industry, through players buying and merging in the industry (ITU, 2017). As of 2009, the main players in the industry became M-Web (a subsidiary of MIH, South Africa), Zimbabwe Online, Africa Online, ComOne (operated by TelOne), and Econet's Ecoweb. The upsurge in the providers of broadband and internet led to the development of cyber cafes, also known as internet cafes. However, the growth of the user base has for a long time been hindered by a lack of access to broadband itself (ITU, 2017).

The continental developments discussed above instruct the developmental journey of broadband in Zimbabwe as this extends the connectivity of the regional state members. Zimbabwe's integration and connectivity remain restricted, as a reflection of its weak national backbone network (AFDB Group, 2019). Zimbabwe, as a land-locked country, relies on the integration of the regional countries with access to the seashores, which have established landing points in strategic areas. As such, the industry players in Zimbabwe access international connectivity through strategic fibre landing ports in South Africa and Mozambique (Mandiwanzira, 2016). For this reason, Zimbabwe is in a disadvantageous position because of its landlocked position, along with the fact that it must therefore contractually engage in the development of broadband access to internet connections through other countries.

Due to the 'importation' of the connectivity capabilities and infrastructure, Zimbabwe's cost to access the internet is very high compared to that of other countries in the region, which are all somehow linked to oceans (POTRAZ, 2018). In this regard, the country accesses its internet broadband through its local industry players, who in turn procure it through the following companies: Seacom, Liquid International, WIOCC, BOFINET, Telkom Namibia, and Telkom South Africa, among others. Equipped incoming international Internet connectivity grew from just 6, 200Mb/s in 2012 to reach 21,700 Mbps in 2016, as demand for Internet significantly increased in the country (Mandiwanzira, 2016). The growth trajectory of the optic fibre network is illustrated in the current Zimbabwe National Fibre Backbone structure in the country as shown in Figure 2.7 below.
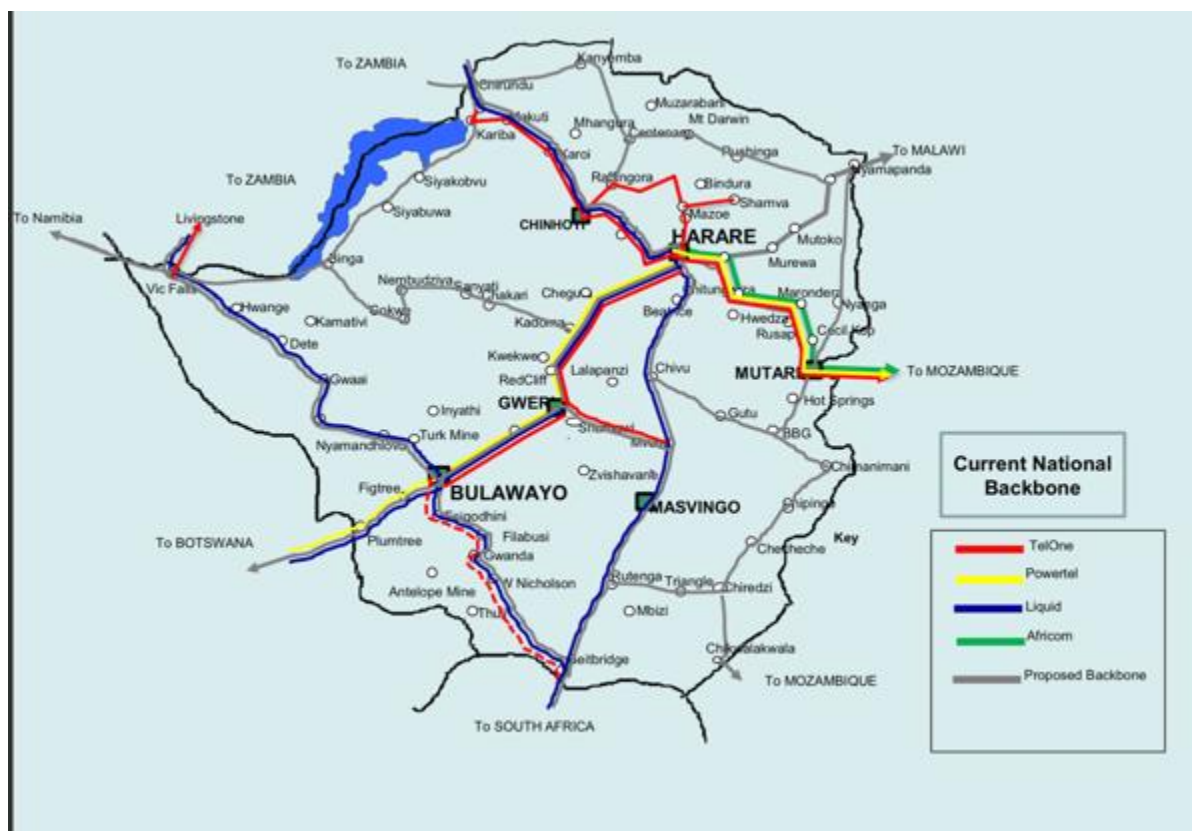
Figure 2. 7: Zimbabwe's national fibre backbone

(Source: Mandiwanzira, 2016: 10)

Infrastructure is a critical element in the development of the telecommunications industry to enable the fast growth of Internet use via low-cost structures. Zimbabwe, unfortunately, is still trailing behind the rest of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. There is therefore a need to expedite the stimulation of infrastructure sharing and liberalising the telecommunications industry to create an effective and efficient national network, which is currently only skeletal, and needs to be developed much more fully (AFDB Group, 2019; Gambanga, 2015; Mandiwanzira, 2016; POTRAZ, 2018). This requires that the government and stakeholders consolidate the growth trajectory of internet use through moving towards low-cost international access to telecommunications infrastructure; revising the telecommunications regulatory framework; reforming state enterprises that are part of the industry service provision; and reforming the radio frequency allocation and uptake of satellite technology, among others (ITU, 2017).

Currently, Zimbabwe is connected to the world through poor quality service providers and expensive connections. Satellite connections only allow quite restricted capacity, while its domestic connection through TelOne is inefficient and intermittent most of the time (Mandiwanzira, 2016). So slow is the internet

capacity compared to other countries that Zimbabwe can be considered at the infancy level of telecommunications infrastructure development. For example, international bandwidth available for a single user in the country was pegged at 42b/sec, as opposed to 810b/sec per person in the Republic of Botswana, while the figure multiplies to 55 000 b/sec per user in England and above 62 000 b/sec in Sweden. This reflects a telecommunications system that is severely hindered by obsolete approaches towards the development of the industry (AFDB Group, 2019). Accordingly, Mandiwanzira (2016) notes that for the telecommunications industry to gain competitive traction and to increase uptake of access to the Internet, there is a need to attend to three critical challenges in Zimbabwe. Firstly, the fragmented regulatory approach towards the spectrum and the telecommunications industry must be addressed in broader terms. Secondly, there must be increasing competition and consolidation of infrastructure development to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the industry, which is currently a preserve of private players. Finally, there is need to develop the national network so that it covers the entire country. These are defining barriers to effective access and use of the technologies outlined by the people of Zimbabwe, hence the need to understand these factors in the development of a framework on social blogs use in the management of corporate reputation in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry.

2.5 Growth of social blogs use in Zimbabwe vis-à-vis corporate reputation management

Social blogs have generally been defined as "the vast range of internet-based and mobile services that allow users to engage in social exchange, contribute user-generated content and affiliate with online communities" (Dewing, 2012: 18). The networked architecture of the digital web, according to Benkler (2016), simplifies how people communicate globally, enabling them to rebel or act with speed, and allowing them to easily bypass the monitored and hierarchical structures of power. Aitchison and Peters (2011) and Mutsvairo and Sirks (2015) concur that social blogs give citizens the tools to act outside the traditional and established power structures. This is especially true in the case of the use of Facebook and Twitter as part of the popular blogosphere in Zimbabwe.

One of the three mobile telecommunications companies, Econet Zimbabwe, is highly celebrated for its leadership role in innovations, which has seen the company rolling out mobile broadband services to the bulk of its subscribers, making the internet accessible to the bulk of users in 2008 to 2009 (Musanhu, 2016). The revolution was further strengthened by NetOne and Telecel following suit in 2010 due to a convergence of factors including the dollarisation of the national economy, whereby a migration from the hyper-inflationary Zimbabwean dollar era occurred that saw mobile phones with internet capabilities being sold

and becoming more affordable. In addition, there was an influx in the China-Zimbabwe trade of mobile phones, which enabled the bulk of citizens the capacity to buy smartphones (Madamombe, 2017). Between the years 2008 and 2021, there was a sharp rise both in the utilisation of internet access and mobile telephony uptake, which enabled subscribers to access the internet and social blogs through applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr, Instagram, among others (POTRAZ, 2019; Kemp 2021).

Considering the above, citizens have been given the means and tools to access the Internet and the ecosystem of social blogs and to engage on topical issues affecting them in their daily lives, more so than in any previous era in the history of human development (MISA, 2018). This is also the era in which the world, the African continent, and Zimbabwe specifically, has drifted away from traditional media approaches of communication towards a greater degree of audience involvement in the shaping of narratives and messaging through 'electronic word of mouth' (eWOM) (Kotler et al., 2017; Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021). Therefore, with these shifts in the power dynamics in communications, customers are more empowered through social blogs to shape any narrative in the country, industry, or subject matter (Lund, Cohen, & Scarles, 2018). Social network applications in the mould of Facebook and Twitter specifically have enhanced the capacity of both consumers and companies to establish groups or accounts that shape their respective opinions and brands (Mpondi, 2018). Chitanana and Mutsvairo (2019) believe that the citizens of Zimbabwe have since discovered the power and impact of social blogs as it has revolutionised the way in which customers and stakeholders engage with brands, thereby shaping their reputations. Li, Berens and De Maertelaere (2019) argue that there is thus an urgent need to answer the key question of how the social blogosphere impacts and influences the shaping of the corporates' reputation at both a micro and macro level.

It is critical to note that social blogs have evolved in Zimbabwe to become a fundamental network of ideas, thereby developing into the critical social platform, which essentially shapes power and defines influence. In this regard, the country has in the recent past seen the rise of the hashtag (#Tag) campaigns that were launched and coordinated on social blogs to shape and mobilise national opinion on topical issues. In certain instances, ahead of elections and critical national processes such as referenda, protests and demonstrations, social media was used as a tool to mediate citizens' agency in expressing themselves (Gukurume, 2017). In 2016, the impact of social media was highly evident, after church leaders and youth coordinated a national two-day stay-away, using WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter (Tinhu, 2016). On 6 July, an online campaign was launched on Twitter, #ShutDownZim2016, which spread to Facebook and Twitter and mutated into other campaigns namely #Tajamuka and #ThisFlag. In reaction, the government of Zimbabwe shut down

social blogs from 09h00 to 13h00, accusing Western nations of sponsoring unrest in the country (Tinhu, 2016). A similar situation occurred in 2016 in Zimbabwe, when consumers of pork pies produced by Colcom Foods mounted a campaign, #ThisPorkPie, on social media platforms expressing anger at the apparent shrinking size of the pie, by tagging the company's Facebook and Twitter accounts. The company buckled under the pressure and issued a statement apologising to the consumers for its practices, noting that they would revert to the original product quality (OfZimba, 2016). When protests broke out in Harare over the increases in fuel prices on 14 January 2019, the government of Zimbabwe moved with speed to shut down the internet, arguing that it was being used to coordinate the protesters through the three major social media platforms, namely WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter (Tazvivinga, 2019). This resulted in the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Zimbabwe challenging the six-day shut down at the High Court, resulting in the restoration of internet services back to normalcy (MISA, 2019a).

The developments show the competitive nature of social media networks since mobile networks started providing broadband which escalated the uptake of social blog applications in 2008. The social blogosphere has contributed to the shaping of new communication structures in Zimbabwe and has influenced the ability of audiences to be agents in the negotiation of messages that shape opinions and reputation in Zimbabwean industries. However, research on the impact of social blogs, such as Twitter on corporate reputation, specifically in the industry of telecommunications, is extremely limited.

2.6 Types of social blogs

Defining social networking or social blogs is a problematic proposition, which generally divides opinion within the academic sphere along the lines of their utility value, vis-à-vis the pitfalls that social blogs present to society (Musungwini, Zhou, Zhou & Ruvinga, 2015). Most of the existing scholarship considers the revolutionary nature of the phenomenon of social blogs, and how it is thus able to alter communication from vertical to horizontal flows and exchanges of information (Kotler et al., 2017). A general definition of social blogs is the application of internet-based and mobile-based technological capabilities to enhance communication and exchange of information to anchor interactive debates (Madziwa & Sibanda, 2018). Statistics show that almost half of the global population, which is 4.5 billion users, is actively engaged on social media, which constitutes a 45 percent ratio of the global population. The bulk of this population, 3.429 billion users, accesses social blogs through mobile phones (Datareportal, 2021).

In this regard, social blogs have drastically and revolutionarily altered the communications between and among persons and established brands (Dijkmans, Kerkhof & Beukeboom, 2015). This is mainly the case

due to social media's ability to facilitate access to the media, which has been aided by a rise in the use of smartphones as almost every person can engage with a global audience that is highly connected (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011; Kietzmann, 2017). A shift has been noted in consumer/audience tastes and behaviour, from reliance on companies' advertising and messaging towards eWOM, which relies on the social blogs network (social networking). This is a pragmatic shift from the offline reliance on information churned out by companies towards online mechanisms (Dijkmans et al., 2015). Consumers and stakeholders are increasingly reliant on peer opinions before making decisions, which pinpoints the permeating impact of the blogosphere in enhancing the decision-making process. A report by the Nielsen Company (2012) showed that, in a global survey of 28 000 participants, 46% of the participants trust traditional advertising by companies, while 92% indicated that they trusted eWOM from friends and family, with an estimated 70% noting that they trust online consumer reviews. Realising such a utility value of social blogs, 87% of the Fortune 100 companies are highly engaged on social media, with 74% utilising Facebook and 82% utilising Twitter (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour, 2011).

Around the turn of the new millennium, there was a boom in the growth of social blogs through the emergence of social networking sites, which bridged the gap in communication and interaction among people across global boundaries, with the main substance of connectivity being education, movies, entertainment and dating, among a set of common interests. Studying the impact of social blogs on communication and human behaviour can be a daunting task without defining social networking. Social networking is defined by Kotler et al. (2017: 36) as "communication with people who share your interests using a website or other services on the internet". Social blogs refer to "forms of electronic communications through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages or other content such as videos" (Aaker, 2018: 86). Many scholars (Kietzmann, 2017; Boyd & Ellison, 2018; Aaker, 2018; Clement, 2020) propose that social blogs and social networking are inextricably intertwined concepts. Social blogs fall in the realm of strategy and broadcasting of messaging, while social networking can be thought of as enabling tools that can be utilised to connect with a wide audience (Stokes, 2013). Other scholars argue that social blogs specifically share information with diverse audiences, while social networking is an act of engagement and building of relations among a wide range of people (Edosomwan et al., 2011). The general interpretation is that social blogs refer to the communication channel itself, while social networking is the act of communication that strengthens relations which, by extension, shows that it is a function of social blogs (Bedell, 2010; Hartshorn, 2010).

The ecosystem of social blogs emerged in the early 1990s. The initial movers included, but were not limited to, Six Degrees, Asian Avenue, Black Planet and MoveOn, among others (Edosomwan et al., 2011). It was in the new millennium that the social blogs' structure and texture changed drastically, with a rapid increase in the number and use of social blogging platforms, which connected the global audience in conversations of mutual interest (Hanna et al., 2011; Kietzmann, 2017). Among the platforms that emerged at the turn of the new millennium and during the early 2000s were Friendster, Sky Blog, Six Degrees, Wikipedia, MySpace, LinkedIn, Hi5, LastFM, Facebook, Skype, Mixi, YouTube, Yahoo!360 and BlackPlanet (Boyd & Ellison, 2018). The evolution of social blogs in terms of their launch dates is outlined in Figure 2.8 below.
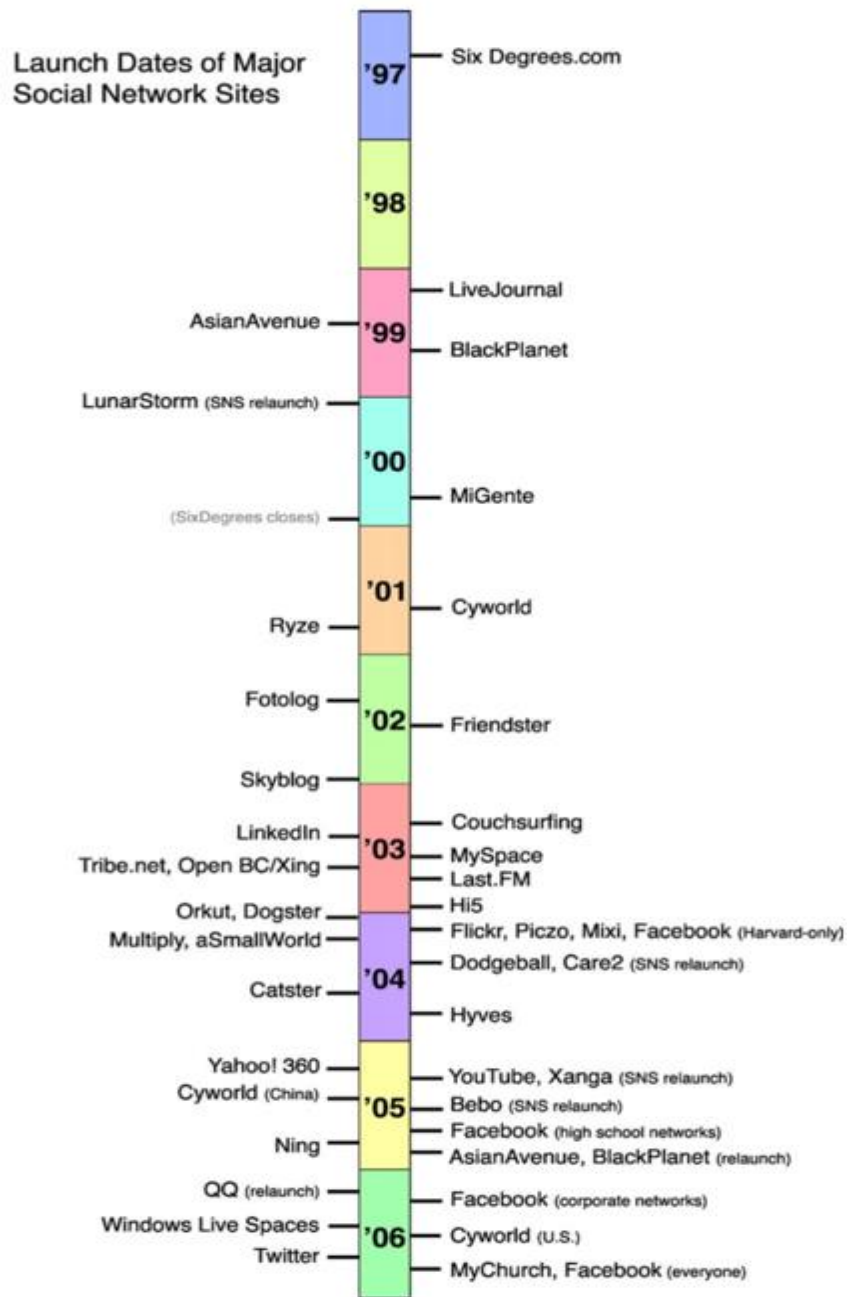
Figure 2. 8: Timeline of the launch of social blogs

(Source: Boyd & Ellison, 2018: 39)

In business terms, social blogs become a forum that can be considered a platform to better express and share the organisational reputation facets through transparency and engagement with a multiple layer of communities (Hollier, 2009; Kaul & Chaudhri, 2015; King, 2014). The scholarly work reviewed in this study shows that the use of social blogs has the following utility value:

➢ enhances transparency and open communication among the organisation's shareholders;
➢ democratises the sharing of projects knowledge and work-plan flow among teams and employees; and
➢ enhances organisational responsiveness through the stakeholders' feedback mechanisms and additional support mechanisms (Hollier, 2009).

The golden thread is that social blogs mainly play an enabling role in bridging offline developments to the online (Boyd & Ellison, 2018). Those who generally connect online are those who have a relationship, one way or the other, offline (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). Recent global research indicates that the bulk of Facebook users do search for persons whom they have a relationship with offline, rather than searching for complete strangers. These developments have shaped the development of social blogs' consumption patterns in Zimbabwe and how telecommunications companies manage their reputation within this new ecosystem of communications.

2.7 Dominant social blogs in Zimbabwe

The most used social blogs in Zimbabwe as of October 2021, according to Statcounter (2021) gauged by an active number of users per annum are:

- Twitter 43.62%
- Facebook 35.86%
- Pinterest 12.53%
- YouTube 4.27%
- Instagram 2.08%
- Tumblr 0.64%

The usage patterns are elaborated in Figure 2. 9 below highlighting the trends of usage throughout the year:

StatCounter Global Stats
Social Media Stats Zimbabwe from Oct 2020 - Oct 2021

○ Twitter ○ Facebook ○ Pinterest ○ YouTube ○ Instagram ○ Tumblr ○ LinkedIn — Other (dotted)
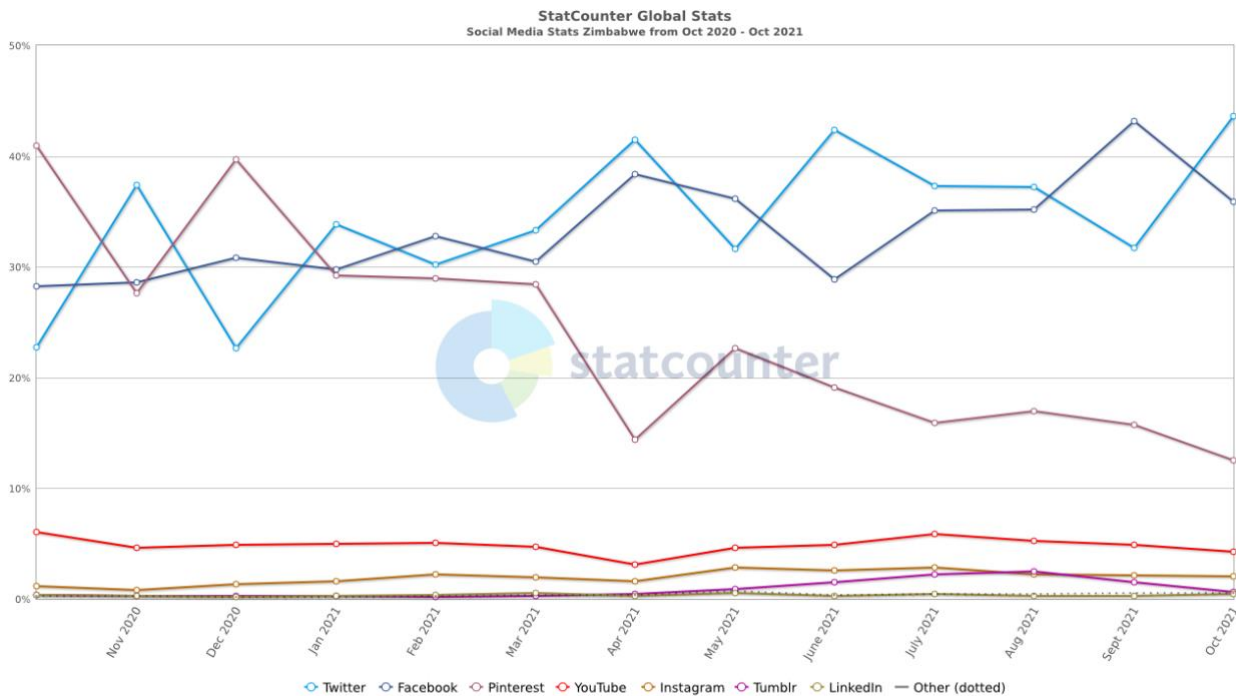
Figure 2. 9: Top six most used social blogs in Zimbabwe, October 2020 – October 2021

(Source: Statcounter, 2021)

These statistics prove Twitter to be one of those social blogs with an impact on corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. In October 2020, the social platform's usage was noted to be 25% usage, compared to Pinterest, which was pegged at 42%, yet in a space of only a year gained more than 18% to dislodge Pinterest as the most used social platform in the country. In broader African trends, the most used social platform under the same period of review is Facebook at 73.88%, followed by YouTube at 10.96%, while Twitter commands a 7.12% following. Yet globally, the pattens show Facebook at 72.22%, followed by Twitter at 8.77%, and Pinterest at 8.37 percent. What this shows is that Zimbabwean social platform behaviours are different when compared to regional and global patterns. Facebook use is at 35.86% in second place, yet a comparative analysis shows the social blog dominating use in the previous decade as a monopoly in the country. A drastic shift in social blogs' use occurred between 2015 and 2019 in Zimbabwe, as indicated in Figure 2.10 below, which shows social blogs' use in Zimbabwe between May 2015 and August 2019.
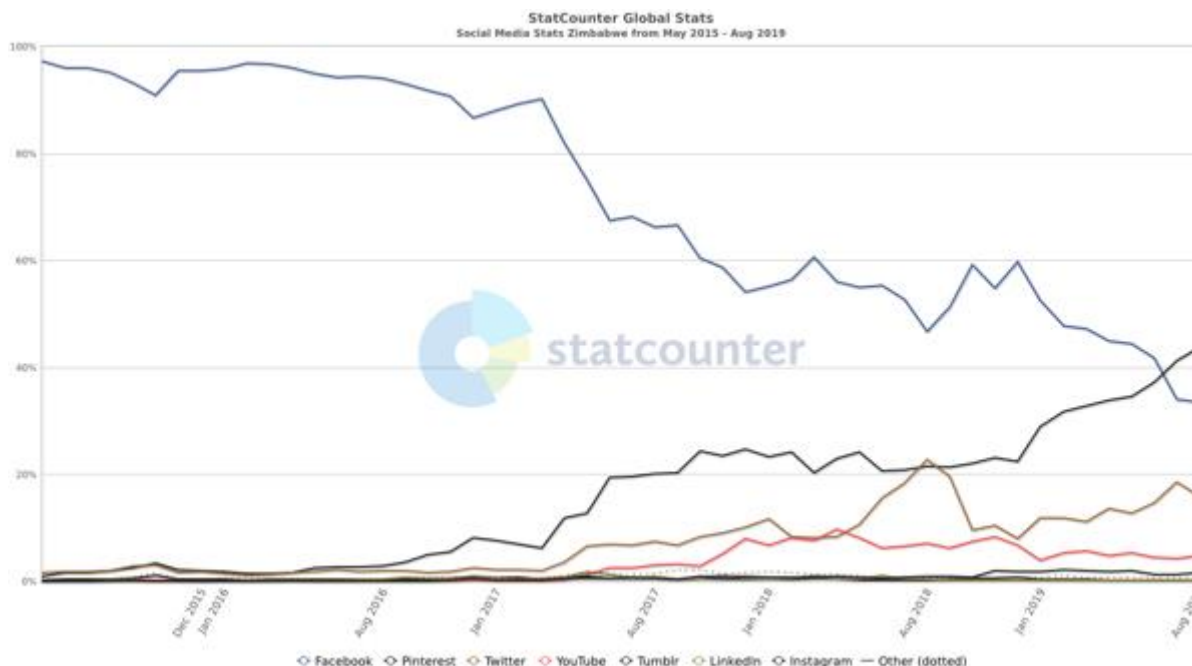
Figure 2. 10: Social blogs use in Zimbabwe, May 2015 – August 2019

(Source: Statcounter, 2019)

In 2015, Facebook was the monopoly social blog of choice, commanding a firm majority 97.1% use in the country. Four years later in 2019, it was trailing behind Pinterest, which was the most used social blog in the country at 41.3%, with Facebook coming in second at 34% (Statcounter, 2019). This shows that Facebook usage in Zimbabwe dropped by a staggering 63.1% in four years. The remaining five platforms gained traction and ate into Facebook's market, save for Tumblr, which lost 0.05 percent. The biggest move, which turned the tables in social blogs use, was Pinterest, which was at 0.9% of users in 2015, but rose to 41.3% by 2019, gaining 40.4 percent. On the other hand, Twitter gained 17% from 1.5% to 18.5% between 2015 and 2019 (Statcounter, 2019). The total number of social blog users in Zimbabwe increased by an average of 20% between 2018 and 2019, which was a shift from 880 000 to 1.2 million users (Mudzingwa, 2019). The statistics showed the increased usage of Twitter, indicating that in the next five to ten years may lead to it becoming the dominant platform used in Zimbabwe. With this trend in mind, there is a need for corporates to strategically decide on the use of the platform in terms of reputation management. Scholars have noted critical strides in the Zimbabwean national economy towards the use and exploitation of the social blogs phenomenon, which has a global impact on outlook. While there is a general appreciation of social blogs within the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry, the examination of their impact is limited (Madziwa & Sibanda, 2018). Though the usage of social blogs in Zimbabwe is most evident when it comes

to political participation (Chatora, 2009; Mare, 2018; Matingwina, 2018), there is a slim body of scholarly literature on the implications of social blogs in influencing corporate reputation. The effect of social blogs in Zimbabwe and their ability to affect the political climate has been great, leading to the government shutting down the internet in January 2019 after protests broke out, which led to citizens being disconnected from the rest of the globe for a week (Marima, 2019; MISA, 2019a; Nanfuka, 2019). There are contested views among scholars regarding the effect of social blogs as a mobilisation tool. Some scholars maintain that social blogs do little to galvanise political participation (Mutsvairo & Sirks, 2015), while others posit that social blogs are potent tools that shape socio-political and economic activism, both online and offline (Gukurume, 2017).

Outside the political sphere, social platforms are being heavily used in other domains, such as public relations, destination tourism, enhancing business performance, the education sector, agriculture, and small to medium enterprises, among others (Chigora & Mutambara, 2019; Makura & Nyoni, 2017; Mhizha, Nyaruwata, Munyanyiwa & Mandebvu, 2015; Musungwini et al., 2015; Ngondo, 2019). A study by Ngondo (2019) found that the utilisation of social blogs and support ecosystem in public relations has scaled up exponentially in Zimbabwe. These professionals spent the bulk of their interventions on Facebook and Twitter (Ngondo, 2019). A twelve-year study conducted by Wright and Hinson (2017) showed similar results, where it was found that 99% of public relations professionals engage social blogs for different time periods in line with their goals and mandate of work. Furthermore, 52% of the public relations professionals in Ngondo's (2019) study spend more than half of their day attending to their professional activities on social media. An estimated 94% of the participants in the same study also spend their time on social blogs managing strategic communications, which therefore show the rapid growth of social blogs use by corporates, along with the direction that this growth is taking (Ngondo, 2019). There is also growing evidence that communication professionals prefer to engage with Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, among others, in Zimbabwe (Anderson & Jiang, 2018). It is therefore evident that Zimbabwe is reaping the globally shared advantages of engaging on social blogs. Harvard Business Review Analytic Services notes that "...the exponential growth of social media, from blogs, Facebook and Twitter to LinkedIn and YouTube, offers organisations the chance to join conversations with millions of customers around the globe, every day" (Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2010: 1).

In locating the turning point in the rapid growth of the social platforms' ecosystem and utilisation thereof in Zimbabwe, Musungwini et al. (2015) and Mare (2018) argue that the dominance of social platforms rose sharply during the 2013 general elections. This was triggered by the formation of the anonymous Facebook

pages under the names 'Baba Jukwa', and 'Mugrade Seven'. Both pages registered more than 200 000 followers within weeks of their establishment (Chibuwe & Ureke, 2016).

Accordingly, social blogs have been credited for the increasing attention on human rights abuses by the international community (Mhiripiri & Mutsvairo, 2013). This is further affirmed by Chigora and Mutambara (2019), who lament that social blogs contributed to the shaping of the Zimbabwean image through the coverage and framing of the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political crisis to international tourists. There is therefore a need to conduct further research and thereby expand beyond the scant literature available on the role of social blogs in Zimbabwe and their power in shaping consumer buyer behaviour, or the opinion of stakeholders around purchase decisions. Scholars in the West are already highly engaged in research examining the impact of social blogs on business and proposing models around efficient and effective use of the platforms for sustained competitive advantage within industries (Kotler et al., 2017).

2.8 Benefits of using social blogs in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwe All Media and Products Survey (ZAMPS) (2017) noted that Twitter is the most used news source among the total population with access to the internet. The survey noted that 34% of the population sample used Twitter while 17%, 10%, 8% and 29% used Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and Google, respectively, to access news. This would explain why the Twitter and WhatsApp promotional bundles offered by mobile networks are the most purchased bundles in the country. The mobile network providers in Zimbabwe have, however, not been immune from controversies that have dented their reputations. Three newspapers (NewsDay, 2019; The Daily News, 2019; The Herald, 2019) had cover page stories on the steep data and voice charges after a government-sanctioned floor price for mobile data was announced in January 2017. However, consumers mobilised through Twitter, even tagging the Minister of Information Communications and Courier Services and the telecommunications regulator. Within 24 hours, mobile data prices had been slashed back to their previous levels, and the floor price was withdrawn (MISA, 2019b).

Globally, a study on the top 100 companies on the Australian Stock Exchange showed that more than 60% of the companies integrated and positioned Twitter, the most prominent micro-blogging platform, as the key tool for engagement with customers and stakeholders on issues such as public relations, customer care, relationship engagement, market information, and enquiries (Xiong & Mackenzie, 2015). The same is true for American companies surveyed by Case and King (2011). The trend of businesses using Twitter to enhance business communication strategies is augmented by statistics from Statista.com, which show that an estimated 330 million people worldwide made use of Twitter monthly by the first quarter of 2019

(Clement, 2019). Companies like Dell Computers, for instance, attributed £1.9 million in sales and cost-cutting measures to the use of Twitter (Clement, 2020). The Economist (2019) ranks the micro-blogging platform as one of the most effective eWOM platforms in the world.

In establishing the benefits of utilisation of social blogs, an understanding that social blog use does not merely entail a simplistic approach of flooding online messaging. It comprises a strategy of deliberate structuring of key interventions which allow for the organisation/company to uniquely stand out from the rest in a cluttered online environment. Therefore, there is a need for companies to define a few touchpoints in the utilisation of social blogs, which have a direct bearing on the stakeholder's decision-making journey. This enables the companies in the telecommunications industry to effectively utilise the high connectivity of today's customers and establish and maintain advocacy ambassadors on social blogs. The platforms therefore aid in the process of tapping into the online peer-to-peer conversations among customers and stakeholders, with the ultimate goal being to influence debates and convert peers into becoming the company's brand ambassadors. This is achieved through satisfying the stakeholders so that they are converted into loyal advocates online, whose opinion is preferred by other peers, instead of brands seeking to communicate directly with the audience (Chigwende & Govender, 2020; Kotler et al., 2017, Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021)

Therefore, the benefits of companies in the telecommunications sector using social blogs ought to be understood from the connectivity perspective, referring to an era that has been arrived at through structured shifts from previous ones characterised by traditional communications. Based on these shifts, Kotler proposes a 'Five A' framework to define the customer pathway in the connected world (Kotler et al., 2017). This framework was developed out of the growing realisation that, prior to the age of connectivity, a customer defined his/her preferential attitude as an individual in relation to the brand at hand. However, in the age of connectivity, the individual is heavily reliant on the ecosystem of influence surrounding him or her, which shapes the initial appeal and ultimately influences the decision-making of the person in terms of brand preference. The key point to note is that decision-making has shifted from the individual to a social community of interests and preferences (Kotler et al., 2017).

The other noticeable pre-condition to Kotler's model is the changing form of loyalty. Prior to the age of connectivity, loyalty was measured through customer retention, and rate of repeat purchase. However, this has evolved in the age of connectivity, to where loyalty is now inclined towards the desire and acceptance to advocate for a preferred brand. This entails the satisfied customer recommending the preferred brand on

online platforms, thereby influencing the purchase or preference of a given brand within a community, where loyalty now extends beyond the individual (Kotler et al., 2017; Rucker, 2016). The last major notable shift is that in the new order, online customers make a deliberate effort to build relationships amongst themselves, whereby customers and stakeholders that are eager to understand a brand will engage through connecting to those that have used the same brand. These customers and stakeholders have an opinion, which influences the appeal of the brand in either a positive or negative way and enables fellow consumers to better make decisions on purchase and use of the brand (Clement, 2020). The afore stated is aptly captured in Kotler's proposed framework, illustrated in Figure 2.11 below, which shows three major shifts that define the connectivity age and the imperative advantages that arise in utilising connected platforms such as social blogs.
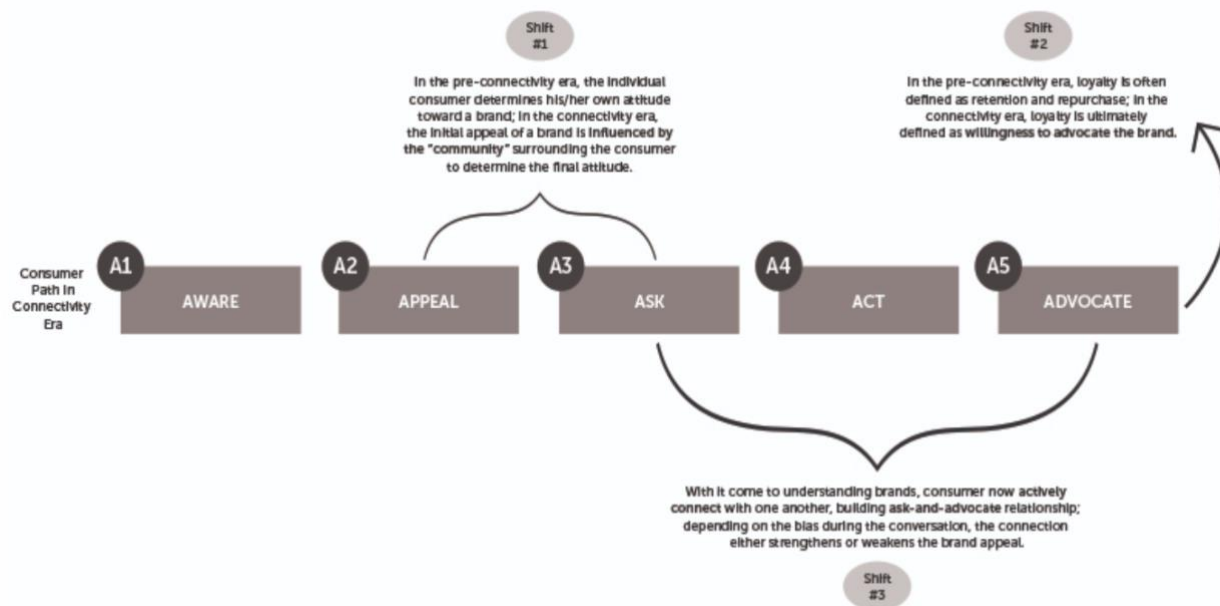
Figure 2. 11: The shifting path in the age of connectivity

(Source: Kotler et al., 2017: 62)

The Five A framework articulates a strategic process of understanding the benefits of social blogs for corporates and examining the pathways that define decision-making online processes. The five A's, namely 'awareness', 'appeal', 'ask', 'act' and 'advocate', as articulated in Figure 2.11 above, spell out a clear path starting with the 'awareness' stage. At this stage, customers are passively exposed to an endless chain of brands through communications marketing, public relations, advertising or past experiences and referrals

from other brand advocates. The 'appeal' stage is when a customer starts screening and establishing a shorter list of preferences. This leads to the third stage, 'ask', where customers are involved in the additional search for information from their communities, the media and any other forms of information (Kotler et al., 2017). In the current age of social blogs, customers, while trying to make decisions offline, are also actively searching for information online, seeking referrals and brand reviews. It is at this stage that decision-making changes from individual to community levels, as customers attempt to make the most competitive decisions out of the information clutter. The 'act' stage entails the entire journey the customer experiences through the decision-making pathway, based on the influencing community surrounding the customer. The 'advocate' stage is when the customer or stakeholder has entered the loyalty phase in recognition of the levels of satisfaction with the brand, which will trigger the customer to pass a positive eWOM recommendation and reviews of the brand to his or her online community, without which the brand would not have managed to penetrate markets using its usual communication channels (Clement, 2020; Kotler et al., 2017; Kaul & Chaudhri, 2019).

2.9 The relationship between social blogs and corporate reputation management

Suffice it to note that the formation and maintenance of reputation in the age of the blogosphere and its implications on the performance of organisations is a critical component of the global management of corporate reputation and the dynamics at hand in the 21st century (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2019: 24). It is a departure point from the age of traditional news media and its influence on summative evaluations and judgments. The influence of traditional news media is mainly a one-way and sender-dominated process, which influences reputation evaluation by persons and stakeholders who hinge their decisions on mainstream media coverage, without critiquing these messages that are generated and sponsored by companies (Etter et al., 2018). These messages go on to shape the aggregate notions, worldviews, and perceptions of stakeholders who receive the communications, without much space or with very limited means to differ with officialdom, due to the layers of gatekeeping of traditional communication channels (Kotler et al., 2017, Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021). This is highlighted in Figure 2.12 below, which outlines traditional media news coverage, and the way in which it impacts the formation of corporate reputation.
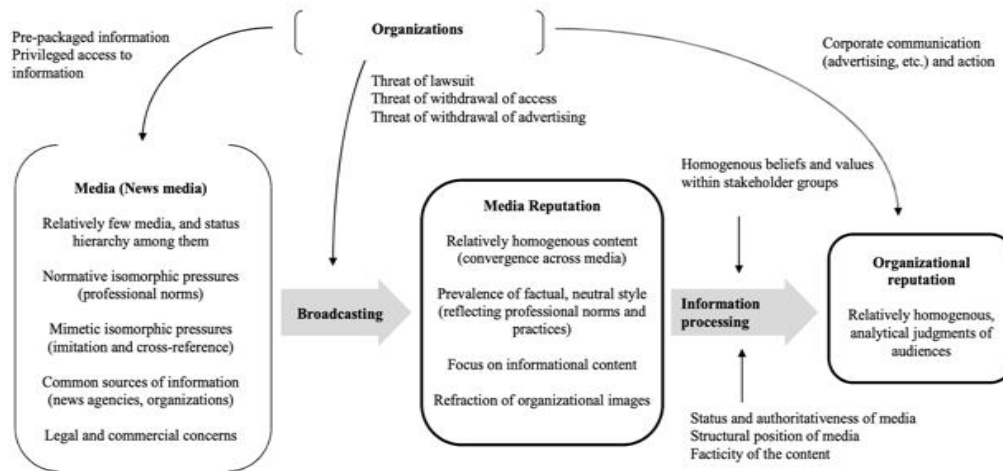
Figure 2. 12: Traditional communications/media and its influence on the formation of corporate reputation

(Source: Etter et al., 2018: 584)

I propose that the social blogs landscape has altered the traditional means of reputation formation, where there is a need to explore the extent of this shift and its current impacts and how these shifts are shaping practices and strategy in the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry. There is growing literature exploring the processes of how social blogs change the ways in which the audience evaluates companies within the public sphere, and how stakeholders access and share information within this evolving media sphere (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016; Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013; Davids & Brown 2021).

The forces of power are shifting, with a contentious discourse over whether traditional media structures have been made redundant, while other contemporary scholars argue that both traditional media and social blogs influence reputation in a hybrid manner (Ellison & Boyd, 2013; Etter and Nielsen, 2015; Jackson, 2009). Social blogs are shifting the forces of power related to corporate reputation management in a profound way and therefore, there is a need to fully understand the dynamics with the hope of proposing frameworks for effective corporate reputation management. The new media landscape has profoundly altered the way in which both persons and stakeholders engage and interact, processes that are contingent on the use of social media. This implies that the sharing of audience/stakeholder evaluations and judgements of a specific company is now carried out on social media, that is, more than in any other preceding time in history (Etter et al., 2018). This is articulated in Figure 2.13 below, which outlines the formation of reputation in the sphere of the new means of communications, such as social blogs, which indicate a significant break from the traditional approach.
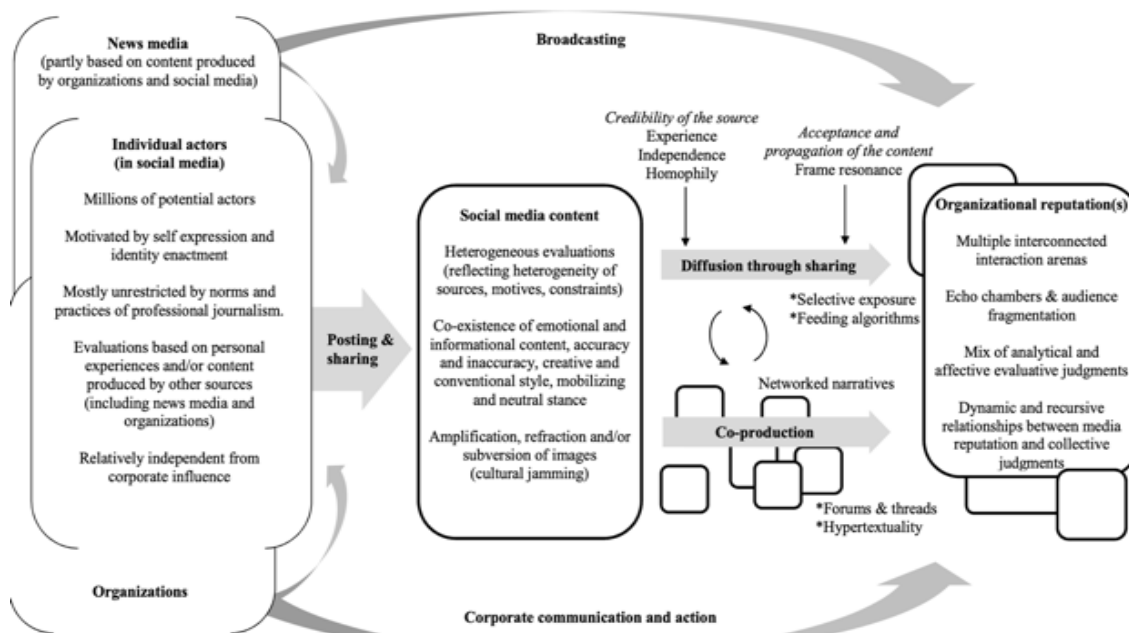
Figure 2. 13: Traditional & new communications/media – influence on the formation of corporate reputation

(Source: Etter et al., 2018: 585)

2.9.1 Understanding the shifts from vertical information flows to co-production

The illustration in Figure 2.13 above articulates the new information flow paradigms that have taken form and shape in the society. The social blogosphere is now an alternative avenue for the sharing of evaluations and judgements about a given company in the public sphere through a complex and dynamic mix of top-down communications, vertical flow of information, and one-to-multiplicity boomerang of information, which used to define the traditional news communication approaches. For example, through embedded platforms in new media, such as blogs and debate forums, online platform users are empowered and able to scrutinise in public the actions of organisations and can share, through their respective communities, comments that will remain permanently in the public domain (Brodie et al., 2013). Furthermore, scholars also argue that the space provides online platform users with the capacity to engage with and share information, perspectives, lived realities and experiential treatment, and to mobilise an unlimited audience on key issues (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). Online platforms become permanent records, which means

that the internet does not forget what companies have done. This may trigger co-production websites and blogs and may allow online users to perpetually discuss corporate character and its footprint, long after the relevant issues have actually occurred, or have been resolved (Etter & Nielsen, 2015).

Online platforms are, thus, key enablers for eWOM, as the reviews posted on various blogs are accessed by billions globally who share collective judgements and evaluations generated by fellow users. These evaluations shared on social blogs are founded on and are influential in terms of the strength of the number of followers within a set community, who are likely to access the reviews or the eWOM (Etter et al., 2018). In some situations, corporate reputation may be dependent on the reaction of other users through actions such as post sharing, re-tweeting, liking, commenting, and forwarding, among others (Barnett & Pollock, 2012). For this reason, in the new media landscape, individual evaluations of an organisation's services and products are crucial and can have a major influence on reputations through their influence on communities and social groups, thereby affecting the decisions of current and potential customers and employees (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014).

This reality has prompted scholars to assess the shifts from status and structural position vis-à-vis sharing. An individual's evaluation and judgement of a company's reputation can reach a multiplicity of audiences, irrespective of the individual's status or position in the societal power matrix. Reputation is thus no longer about the messenger, but more about the message (Cha, Yi & Bagozzi, 2016; Deephouse, 2000; Rindova et al., 2005). Scholars, therefore, argue that social blogs have broken the barriers for users as active players in the interaction between corporates and themselves, by allowing a platform for sharing evaluations and perceptions of the corporates that are bound to go viral through endorsements by other users (Benkler, 2006). The process of the audience sharing their views about a corporate's activities did not start with the growth of the internet, however, the internet has allowed for an increase in the pace and magnitude of consumers' actions (Castells, 2014; Papacharissi, 2015).

Etter et al. (2018) note another critical shift from traditional evaluations and the formation of reputation to new media-centric processes, such as co-production and interconnected narratives. Intertwined with the foregoing is the imperative of the social blogs' unlimited reach to people around the world, which empowers both message generators and recipients to dually engage in the co-production of these judgements (Etter et al., 2018). This stands in sharp contrast to the vertical communications approach of an all-powerful sender and a docile receiver of the communications. By way of conceptual contrast, the blogosphere empowers users to be active participants in the flow of information in multiple directions through a highly

interconnected community of users to whom the corporate finds itself accountable (Ellison & Boyd, 2013). Such interconnected networks are facilitated through numerous touchpoints for the rapid sharing of novel content, which enables users to upscale gatekeeping barriers in the shaping of corporate reputation. This introduces a new dimension in this regard, as the users, be they customers, stakeholders or non-customers, are now involved in the co-production of corporate reputation (Pfeffer, Zorbach & Carley, 2014).

A new concept, 'networked narratives', has thus been borne out of the contestations between the interchange of roles between the sender and the receiver and how these feed into a highly interconnected superstructure through the social blogosphere, as powered by posts on social media, debate forums, sharing, liking and re-tweeting, among other (Kozinets, De Valck, Wojnicki & Wilner, 2010). The common thread is by extension, "re-sequenced, altered, customized [sic] or re-narrated" (Cover, 2006: 141) as users communicate. In addition, a minimum distinction is made between the sender and recipient as social platforms enable the consolidation of the co-production process through linkages which empower users with unlimited access to the entire chain of content on online platforms (Etter & Vestergaard, 2015).

2.9.2 Multiple assessments of reputation in the public

As noted previously, there are 4.5 billion social blogs users globally, which includes but is not limited to: networks such as Facebook; blogs such as WordPress; 'microblogging' platforms such as Twitter; video streaming services such as YouTube; photography and story sharing platforms such as Instagram; as well as a host of others, which allow users to engage in discussions and debates on social issues but also allow for views on corporates' services and products to be made public (Castells, 2014; Stratcounter, 2021). This indicates that corporates have very rapidly lost control of the perception and evaluation of their reputation, as users have now become key players in the reputation-making process (Etter & Vestergaard, 2015).

Scholars argue that this has exposed the heterogeneity of information sources that is ushered in using social platforms, which offer a rendezvous of a multiplicity of experiential realities, perceptions, and worldviews (Castells, 2014) and furthermore, entrench engagements and conversations which are free from pre-conceived corporate communication narratives (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). The peculiarity of the content that is generated on social blogs are a derivative of personally lived experiences, which until they are shared online by users might not have reached or broken forth into the public sphere. Social blogs are thus equated to "electronic word-of-mouth" (Mangold & Faulds, 2009: 358) as they empower users to generate reviews and evaluations that influence the reputation of companies and to share these publicly

(Orlikowski & Scott, 2014). This equips users with the capability to capture and disseminate reviews through their own platforms, such as social blogs, and sharing of information in the online environment (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016). In the traditional media however, these responses or evaluations would not have reached the public sphere and would not have had the same impact, reach, or influence (Hussain, Ahmed, Jafar, Rabnawaz & Jianzhou, 2017).

The users of online platforms thus trust fellow user-generated information, in terms of their experiences in regard to corporates' services and products, as more reliable than the corporates themselves (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) as they share the 'experiential credibility' from their shared realities (Hussain et al., 2017). More so, they share their first-hand vulnerabilities and success stories (Sotiriadis & van Zyl, 2013). Papacharissi (2012) outlines the heterogeneity of motives in the age of social blogs. This refers to the fact that social blogs are also used in the communication of images and symbols by individuals and companies, as persons and establishments seek to consolidate their identities and images online, yet these can either be endorsed or dismissed by users (Marwick & Boyd, 2010; Papacharissi, 2012). The bulk of social blog users face less gatekeeping restrictions than journalists and professional communications persons do in terms of the rigour with which they assess their information before such information is shared, thereby easily making evaluations and judgments of corporate reputation public (Flanagin, 2017).

2.9.3 Understanding the impact of size of an organisation in reputation management vis-à-vis growth of social blogs use

Scholars investigating the topic of corporate reputation management, though concentrated in the global North, posit that the adoption of social blogs for the purposes of managing reputation in the age of new technologies is dependent on the size of the organisation. Their main argument is that the larger the organisation, the greater the chances that the organisation will invest in the use of social blogs for the purposes of building a competitive reputation in the digital age (Becker & Lee, 2009). Accordingly, a New York Stock Exchange study focused on 198 companies and sought to gain insights on the platforms used by these companies, of which 69 were from the Fortune 500 companies, 79 were medium in size, and 58 were small-scale (Becker & Lee, 2018). The research showed that larger companies have more control and ownership of social blogs than smaller ones do. Furthermore, the big companies were comparatively more responsive to blogosphere posts than were the smaller ones. However, the size of the organisation, on the other hand, had a limited relationship to the style of response to reputation matters in the online environment. This illuminates the fact that there was limited adoption of strategic frameworks towards the management

of corporate reputation in the digital age in most of the firms (Becker & Lee, 2018). The research, though conducted in the USA, brings to the fore critical issues that need to be attended to pertaining to reputation management in the current era of the social blogosphere. A quandary has emerged regarding the dynamic of managing reputation in the online environment, due to its ever-presence. With the internet being 'always on', social blogs and networks have ravaged industries, and made and 'unmade' reputations, while also changing the balance of forces between once weak and voiceless customers and the corporate, as earlier alluded to. This has seen the rise of the use of the phraseology 'professional consumer', shortened to 'prosumer' (Davis & Moy, 2007). These prosumers are active players in the generation of content and sharing economy and shape opinion towards the purchase decision, as well as other decisions, more so than organised formations and establishments (Spencer & Shandwick, 2010).

To maintain a healthy stakeholder relationship, there is a need for the organisation to ascertain and maintain the firm as well as the brand's personality and character at equilibrium over a sustainable period. The new dimensions borne out of these platforms and communication channels have undoubtedly shifted the pendulum in favour of the audience, and with it the relationship between corporates and consumers. Information flow is increasingly multidirectional, interconnected, and often difficult to predict (Deighton & Kornfeld, 2009). The communication of users is difficult to predict, necessitating frameworks to strategically manage reputation online (Becker & Lee, 2018).

Scholars, mostly in the Americas, argue that social blogs' management for the purposes of creating a competitive reputation has accrued benefits over a given period. They argue that social blogs drive utility value for a firm, which includes but is not limited to shaping the perception of the company through its influencer role; stakeholder awareness building; pushing the traffic of the company's website through tapping into conversations online; and increasing stakeholder buy-in in the company, which consolidates its competitiveness and sustainability (Black, 2017; Culnan, McHugh & Zubillaga, 2010; Ragusa & Diehl, 2016).

On the other hand, while there is increasing consensus regarding the importance of managing reputation online positively, scholarly works fall short of making pronouncements on the critical steps necessary to achieve a positive reputation, and there is thus a lack of concrete strategic proposals (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2019). Various scholars bemoan the pace with which organisations are losing control of communications and messaging, while users are generating content daily as the internet is 'always on', thereby posing a reputational risk to existing organisational reputations. Kaul and Chaudhri (2019) propose a means to assess

the return on investment of the blogosphere vis-à-vis its reputational strength and performance. These scholars have examined this approach in the global North, and caution must therefore be recommended when attempting to make generalisations regarding the African and Zimbabwean realities, respectively. Equally striking is that existing scholarship on the topic of corporate reputation takes a reactionary approach and is rather defensive, instead of being pioneering, focusing mainly on crisis management (Madden & Smith, 2018). However, there are growing concerns among scholars that, regardless of whether a company may be active on social blogs and thus may be tracking and managing its reputation, or whether it is not doing so, this would not stop conversations. Hence there is a need for structural and strategic frameworks for managing reputation online (Deephouse Bundy, Tost & Suchman, 2017; Kotler et al., 2017; Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021).

In this regard, scholars argue that there is a need to monitor the online space as it represents the virtual clash of two major forces. The first force emerges from the unfiltered customers/'netizens' (net citizens), while the other force is that of the professionals in the corporate reputation management sphere. In such an environment, it is critical to monitor and measure how the platforms impact on companies' reputation (Jones, Temperley & Lima, 2010; Davids & Brown 2021; Kotler, Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021). This is relevant to the research objectives in the current study, which seeks to assess how the telecommunications sector is managing its reputation in the age of social platforms. It has been argued that a company cannot manage efficiently that which it cannot measure (Dijkmans et al., 2015). As such, a key question emerges from the literature analysed, namely, a matter pertinent to this research, as suggested by Smith and Smith (2019) of 'who is branding who?' This is a critical question, as it opens corporates to the broader concept of accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to the audience/customers/stakeholders as they are highly restless, sophisticated, and suspicious of companies (Aaker, 2018; Kotler et al., 2017). This situation thus calls for the establishment of mechanisms and strategic approaches towards protecting corporate reputation in the online sphere and mitigating the reputational risk that accompanies the evolution of social blogs (Jones et al., 2010). Organisations must increasingly take an active role in influencing conversations that stakeholders use in shaping their decisions, as they may increasingly be losing trust in corporates through a trend that is well-established in the emerging literature. This lack of trust is highly problematic, as stakeholders have assumed the role of watchdogs on the performance of corporates and are quick to share when a brand succeeds or fails (Tennie, Frith & Frith, 2010). This is because the blogosphere is seated on negotiated and socially constructed reality, where there is a need for corporates to fully understand the dynamics at play to influence conversations effectively (Abratt & Mingione, 2017). This again relates to

Davis and Moy's (2017) concept of professional customers or 'prosumers', who possess a great capacity to influence and shape corporate reputation.

There are market dynamics and forces that can sway the production for the business either negatively or positively (Barclay, 2016). Therefore, scholars propose that there is need for a structured measurement of reputation in the age of social blogs (Delgado-García et al., 2017; Eckert, 2017; Franklin-Johnson & Comyns, 2016). This study devises a framework to deal with online reputation management dynamics, as scholars argue that understanding of market dynamics and forces will give corporates more control of their reputation (Chun, Argandoña, Choirat & Siegel, 2019; Cintamür & Yüksel, 2018). However, measuring reputation in the online environment ought to be highly focused on understanding and engaging with stakeholders, which will in turn provide an organisation with the best opportunity to maintain influence over its reputation (Chun et al., 2019).

Accordingly, the proposed model that has emerged through research regarding the subject of the measurement of reputation is based on evaluation of the three elements of the reputation matrix, namely participating, measuring, and monitoring, as illustrated in Figure 2.14 below.
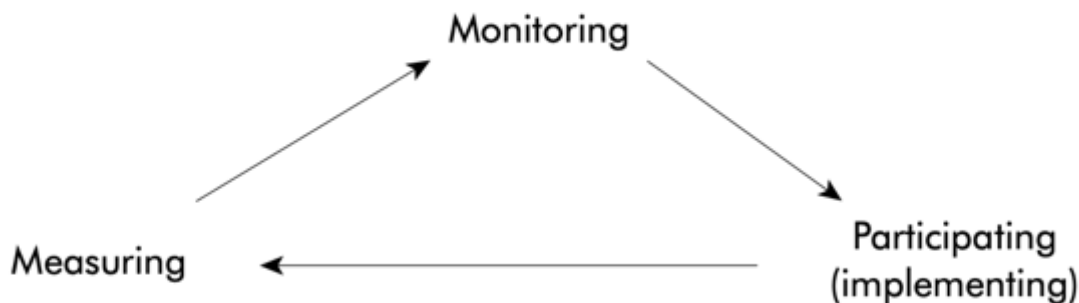
Figure 2. 14: The process of monitoring and managing reputation online

(Source: Jones et al., 2010: 929)

The model was established to be used in understanding online management of reputation, with the goal of developing a broad-based approach towards building enduring relations and facilitating comprehensive participation and engagement with customers (Davis & Moy, 2007). The model aims to create a foundation

of a two-way and comprehensive approach towards the management of the engagement and participation of stakeholders. This serves to establish a means of encouraging sustainable development through a triangulated relationship between monitoring, measuring, and participation of stakeholders in the implementation of a company's approach to mitigate risk as the company drives conversations (Delgado-García et al., 2017; Franklin-Johnson & Comyns, 2016). For this reason, the consolidation of high-level reputation management strategy ought to be anchored on stakeholder participation, as the key towards management of reputation in the online sphere (Jones et al., 2010).

The matrix developed out of the participating, measuring, and monitoring model outlined above, is a four-quadrant matrix, which allows for the understanding of the management of online reputation to be established as illustrated in Figure 2.15 below.

MONITORING

Breadth →

'Bulling Corner' Companies here have a very narrow view of their web environment and shallow perception of the level and scope of participation required being susceptible to 'bulling' attacks.	**'Puddle Swimmers'** Good monitoring breadth allows knowledge of their web presence but lack of depth prevents benchmarking as well as future strategic implementation.
'Blind Miners' Narrow monitoring, misleading metrics, weakening strategies and tactics, high risk in an environment that is rather fragmented.	**'Tuned-in Mavens'** Are well positioned to deliver 'king' content, though leadership allows maximised engagement bankable strategies leading to brand leadership and esteemed business reputation

M E A S U R I N G

Depth

Figure 2. 15: Online reputation-management-monitoring-measuring matrix

(Source: Jones et al., 2010: 929)

The online reputation-management-monitoring-measuring matrix comprises a quadrant model, which offers a means for understanding the monitoring and measuring of online corporate reputation management. The top-left quadrant is the 'bulling corner', which defines a corporate with a shallow scope of the social blogosphere, making it vulnerable to attacks (Jones et al., 2010). The top-right quadrant is the 'puddle swimmer', which defines a corporate with a strong monitoring regime of the web environment but one which lacks depth in implementation. The bottom-left quadrant shows the 'blind miners', which refers to a corporate that does little measuring and monitoring of its online reputation. Lastly, the 'tuned-in mavens' are strong in monitoring and measuring online reputation, engaging in top-end content generation and implementing of well-thought-out reputation and brand strategies (Jones et al., 2010). By deducing the interlinkages in the matrix, corporates are encouraged to engage with stakeholders in the digital age with the aim of co-creating a sustainable reputation. Though the matrix defines the character of corporates in measuring reputation, it falls short in defining a framework that could be used in practice to consolidate reputation in the digital age. The current study therefore seeks to respond to these lacunae and recommended practice through contributing to new knowledge on the topic of online corporate reputation management.

The engagement of corporates with stakeholders leads to the configuration of corporates as a community of online participants, rather than being deemed the proverbial 'elephant in the room'. Virtual communities are "communities of stakeholders who share the same interests" (Solomon, 2003: 354). Since the social blogosphere comprises amalgamated spheres of user-driven and generated content, all elements form a complex platform, which requires an in-depth understanding of users and their behavioural patterns, as well as their participation in the communication mix (Aaker, 2018). For this reason, "social media has been painted as the new marketing landscape for business to engage with communities of customers wherever they congregate" (Solis, 2007 :86). A corporate must therefore understand where customers congregate, as well as the topical issues they discuss (Aaker & McLoughlin, 2010), in order to develop strategic mechanisms towards measuring engagement in the online sphere (Kotler et al., 2017).

In the same paradigm, scholars propose the development of what is referred to as "online thought leadership content" (Scott, 2011: 133). This relates to the need to establish comprehensive social blogs in management tools and to define a communication strategy that is all-encompassing, which is a radical departure from traditional approaches (Becker & Lee, 2018). In addition, for corporates be competitive, they need to embrace the shifts from a transactional interface to relational engagements, which requires the corporate to relinquish control-centric communications and philosophies, and instead to embrace the values of openness, transparency, accountability, and engagement (Kotler et al., 2017). Accordingly, it is critical to note that if

applied correctly and effectively, the blogosphere becomes the best set of tools for improving corporate reputation. However, its effectiveness in relation to corporate reputation management in particular is yet to be examined (Eckert, 2017) in Africa and in the Zimbabwean context. specifically.

2.9.4 Social blogs' influence on corporate reputation management

There is a sizeable amount of scholarly work on corporate reputation management, and the way in which is shaped by social blogs, however most of this work has been carried out in the tourism and hotel industry in the USA. These industries have seen shifts in the approach used and way the industry does business, with the aim of enhancing business performance and online reputation in a different manner compared to traditional approaches that have been used in the past. This has been done with the hope of developing new tools pertaining to the shaping and monitoring of online reputation, with the intention being to attract business in the destination industry (Floreddu, Cabiddu & Evaristo, 2014; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Service industries that sell intangible services depend on reputation in influencing purchase decisions now more than ever before. For this reason, it is critical that customers be able to access information about the organisation continuously, so that businesses can reap the dividends that accompany positive eWOM (Kotler et al., 2017).

One of the seminal cases highlighting the effect of social blogs on corporate reputation is that of the feud between David Carrolls and the major American airline, United Airlines. Carrolls launched a campaign against United Airlines after more than a year had passed without the airline compensating the artist for his broken guitar. The guitar was broken in the cargo section during a flight, leading to Carroll composing a song 'United Breaks Guitar', which attracted more than 10 million views within four days of being posted online. Though there remain challenges in gauging the impact on the stock exchange value of companies, there is need to consider strategic approaches towards management of reputation online (The Huffington Post, 2009). This illustrates how online reputation is fragile, as well as the speed with which it can be lost.

The developments are consequential, given the arguments by scholars such as Castellano and Dutot (2017), who suggest that there is a significant relationship between eWOM and electronic reputation. This is attributable to the continuous development of social blogs that have, in a profound manner, allowed online communities to influence decision-making, and have transformed vertical power structures into horizontal ones anchored on social blog communities (Kotler et al., 2017). EWOM has been defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet" (Hennig-Thurau, Qwinner, Walsh

& Gremler, 2004: 39). Scholars agree and have formed consensus on the fact that this is a departure from traditional word of mouth, which was slower and had limited reach (Bastos, Piccardi, Levy, McRoberts & Lubel, 2018). EWOM can occur between or among people who are not related and do not know each other in real life, as it occurs in the context of online communities. Furthermore, it is a realm over which both corporates and users have limited control, in terms of the conversations and engagements that occur that will in turn influence decision-making (Aaker, 2018; Capriotti & Ruesja, 2018; Castellano & Dutot, 2017; Chetty, 2018).

Successive research on eWOM has, by and large, concentrated on the impact of eWOM on sales management, with limited focus on corporate reputation (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008; Yeh & Choi, 2011). However, there remains notable evidence that eWOM has impacted on reputation management (Aaker, 2018; Castellano and Dutot, 2017; Kotler et al., 2017). This is supported by scholars such as Chevalier and Mayzlin (2016) and Proserpio and Zervas (2017), who argue that online user-generated reviews are gaining traction, as tools to influence customers in decision-making when customers want to engage a given brand. Furthermore, some scholars argue that firms operating in the digital age have a rather problematic disposition, resorting to deleting or blocking content or persons or posting negative comments, rather than attending to the issues raised. This proves highly problematic, as traditional word of mouth is not as fast and permanent as eWOM (Datareportal, 2020; The Economist, 2019). Other scholars argue that management response mechanisms to negative reviews are the most critical in the sustainable management of corporate online reputation. A management review strategy is crucial, as it mitigates the cost of customers and stakeholders posting negative comments, due to the set guidelines informed by the strategy related to how an organisation responds to and attempts to set the record straight (Luca, 2017).

2.10 Challenges in using social blogs for corporate reputation management

The blogosphere is a new phenomenon that poses strategic challenges for all industries and their employees, leading to what several scholars refer to as the need for a "balancing act between communications offline and online" (Rokka, Karlsson & Tienari, 2014: 811). The major challenges that confront modern-day practitioners in this paradigm have been outlined above. There are increased pressures on corporates, due to the demands for transparency and accountability, where customers now depend on one another for a review of brands through eWOM (Aaker, 2018; Kotler et al., 2017).

In addition, the social blogosphere has exacerbated the potential risk to corporate reputation through a broadening of the fragility of reputation to new levels, as user-generated content has the potential to

negatively influence reputations, that may have been built over years or decades, in a very short space of time (Rokka et al., 2014). Accordingly, scholars argue that negative exposure is easily set into motion through discussions that grow into lengthy viral conversation threads (Kaplan & Haenlien, 2011; Kotler et al., 2017). This points to the fact that reputational risk can emerge from any source online, as they are widely open spaces for global citizens (Fournier & Avery, 2011). The major challenge triggered by social blogs is the reality that on these platforms, meaning becomes a contested terrain, and leads to power dynamics that result in conflicting propositions. This is because, by its nature, communications constitute platforms of contestation, where the online environment allows for these very same contestations to reach an unlimited audience, thereby making the online social blogosphere a vehicle of social conflict (Andon, Free & O'Dwyer, 2015).

For this reason, social blogs can be thought of as newfound platforms or marketplaces of ideas that are still emergent in nature, and whose implications for expression and communications are yet to be fully examined (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). Social blogosphere platforms and mechanisms of expression are relatively new, most notably Facebook, which was established in the year 2004, and Twitter which came into existence in 2006. Another platform, ResearchGate, was founded in 2008, while GooglePlus was formed in 2011 and others have been emerging every year since. However, their uses and approaches to communication in general and regarding reputation management specifically remain a developing area of inquiry. The business management literature reviewed shows that social blogs are used to gauge the pulse of market behaviour (Arias, Arratia & Xuriguera, 2014; Bollen, Mao & Zeng, 2011), which in turn gears the business community to utilise consistent information flow, which at times is highly contestable (Aral, Dellarocas & Godes, 2013). In other literature, social blogs are investigated in terms of their impact on brand and marketing management (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel & Chowdury, 2009), while in some jurisdictions social blogs are examined in relation to the field of public relations and crisis management (Ott & Theunissen, 2015).

Due to the emerging nature and continuous evolution of the field of inquiry related to the influence of social blogs on corporate reputation management, deriving meaning and defining scientifically agreed-upon uses of social blogs is far from being established, leaving a broad opportunity for corporates to experience dire reputational risk, in the absence of a defined formula or framework of response. It is therefore evident that social blog platforms since they are vehicles transporting a contested variety of meanings are prone to promoting reputational risk, as users enter into contestation with one another (Arias et al., 2013; Bollen et al., 2011; Brivo, Gendron & Guénin, 2005). In addition, there is an upsurge of literature that shows that

social blogs present a challenge of blurring the divide between the sphere of public and private lives of the online community (Chartier, 1989; Habermas, 2006; Hansson, 2007; Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012). The pervasiveness of these critical spheres happens as corporates struggle to maintain control of the communications sphere in the changing order from traditional to online processes (Aaker & McLoughlin, 2010). Consequently, there has been an increase in the number of scholars who challenge attempts to separate the private sphere, which is at the centre of individuals' lives, their relations at a personal level, and the domestic realm, from the public sphere, which defines the broader web of society as defined by its polity, the strata of its communities, and the way in which these dynamics relate (Papacharissi, 2015).

In this regard, Goodman (1992) proposes that the public sphere can be viewed as a dimension of the private sphere, and the false opposition between them can therefore be collapsed. Post-millennial scholars argue that online platforms such as the blogosphere allow for networking to occur between otherwise displaced audiences (Arias et al., 2013). Thus, online platforms open and make public the once separated realms of what is understood to be private and public. However, scholars such as Livingstone (2005) argue that the public and private spheres accrue different meanings in different contexts, as some extent of privacy is still enjoyed online, an argument which is dismissed by Snowden (2019). Other scholars motivate for closer examination of what is termed "false binary thinking of public or private sphere" (Baxter, 2011: 8). This, they contend, entails a reworking of the appreciation of social blogs' communication, a process that ought to focus on how employees use social blogs and how this impacts the complex and ever-changing nature of privacy in the digital age. For this reason, Kotler et al. (2017) suggest that companies must be alive to the sensitivities surrounding the blurring of the private and public sphere of life, as these are potential areas of reputational risk in the use of social blogs.

The additional challenge posed by using social blogs in managing online reputation is centred on the uncertainties and strategic propositions related to the increasing recognition of the blogosphere, social networks, micro-blogging sites, and the emerging sharing economy, better known as online media. These platforms have structurally shifted the way people communicate, yet the government and companies are facing certain difficulties in finding a strategic fit for communication in that sphere. This places organisations at high reputational risk, as they struggle to maintain equilibrium in a rapidly evolving space (Aaker, 2018; Andon et al., 2015; Fournier & Avery, 2011; Kotler et al., 2017; Van Kersbergen & Van Waarden, 2004; Zerfass, Verčič, Verhoeven, Moreno & Tench, 2012). Certain organisations have remained fixed in control-centric thinking, despite the shifts in the communications rubric. Social blogosphere governance refers to "the formal or informal frameworks which regulate the actions of the members of an

organization within the social web" (Zerfass, Fink & Linke, 2011: 1033). Zerfass et al. (2011) argue that social blogosphere governance constitutes:

➢ social blogs guidelines for sharing information in the age of the blogs;
➢ mechanisms of tracking stakeholder conversations and engagements online;
➢ capacity building programs for employees for effective social blogs use; and
➢ defining the key result indicators in assessing online activities.

Social blogosphere governance is a critical area used to define as the bulk of organisations are currently using knee-jerk approaches to the emergence of social blogs, which poses dire reputational risk challenges. Ott and Theunissen highlight the risks that are critical to attend to in this regard including but are not limited to:

➢ sharing of organisational confidential and sensitive information;
➢ reputational risk as employees post inappropriate information online;
➢ damaged reputation, which will either take a long time to be recovered or in certain instances will never be recovered; and
➢ legal costs or damages for sharing information are considered to be defamatory (Ott & Theunissen, 2015: 99).

In a study by the Brand Science Institute, it was found that 11% of firms in Europe indicated that social blog guidelines and procedures are adhered to and operational (Allen, 2010). In addition, the institute found that a high number up to 76% of firms surveyed did not handle social blogs' activities effectively and efficiently, and 86% do not know how to handle a social blogs backlash (Allen, 2010). An example of this backlash is the case of Nestlé. The company was heavily criticised on social blogs for the use of palm oil in its products, which culminated in a blogosphere campaign targeting their Kit Kat chocolates with the moniker 'Killer Kat' (Allen, 2010).

The same applies in the case of the social blogs' governance deficits that were outlined by Fink and Zerfass (2010) in a study of 1000 companies, government departments and agencies, and NGOs in Germany. It was found that all these entities were facing challenges in the governance of social blogs. The research revealed that 90% of the targeted firms had no regulatory framework or guidelines in place to manage social blogs (Fink & Zerfass, 2010). The same was found to be true in a broader European study by Zerfass et al. (2012), in which 2000 public relations and communication professionals were surveyed. The same scholars argued

that social blogs' governance was a critical emerging issue and that "the overall governance structures for social blogosphere are still underdeveloped and can be seen to be missing from most communication departments across Europe" (2012: 292). This shows that there were indeed challenges in the use of social blogs to manage reputation in Europe at that time, particularly in terms of a lack of social governance mechanisms. Such studies are necessary for current contexts in Africa and Zimbabwe, as the issue of online corporate reputation management is becoming increasingly pertinent due to the rapid evolution of online media platforms, which have direct and oftentimes serious consequences for corporates. The development of governance frameworks and guidelines will allow communications employees the tools and mechanisms, in line with the company's set standards, towards managing the company's reputation and mitigating online reputational risk.

This is different from control-driven approaches which give rise to situations whereby organisations dominate communications and are inward-looking. According to Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) (2011: 1), companies ought to shift away from the culture of choking employees through rules and regulations and should instead "guide employee use, rather than developing extensive formal rules that restrict it". Research conducted by KPMG (2011: 1) showed that "clamping down was likely to result in more, rather than less, misuse of social blogs [where] very few employees want to do the wrong thing - if they do, there are probably deeper cultural issues in play." The misuse of social blogs presents a significant challenge in terms of corporate reputation, as all messages that are posted online end up being there permanently for any of the public to view, which can severely damage a company's reputation and standing in communities.

There is burgeoning scholarship indicating that the internet does not forget. Edward Snowden (2019) argues that many people, himself included, without understanding the process, have contributed to the development of what is known as the global backup system of information. Snowden writes:

> …by age twenty-six, I was a nominal employee of Dell, but once again working for the National Security Agency (NSA). Contracting had become my cover, as it was for nearly all the tech-inclined spies of my cohort. I was sent to Japan, where I helped to design what amounted to the agency's global backup – a massive covert network that even if the NSA's headquarters was reduced to ash in a nuclear blast, no data will ever be lost. At the time, I didn't realise that engineering a system that would keep a permanent record of everyone's life was a tragic mistake (2019: 4).

The global backup system created a backbone for internet infrastructure that preserves content that is posted online in perpetuity. This is problematic, especially for corporates whose reputations are under attack, because of the fact that information is stored in the 'life-time memory' for the global audience to access at any given time (Aaker, 2018).

2.11 Twitter as a driver of corporate reputation in Zimbabwe

The use of Twitter in Zimbabwe has been growing positively for the past decade, compared to that of Facebook, which has seen a declining number of users in the period under assessment, as Facebook users are now joining what they call 'complex communicators' on Twitter (Datareportal 2020). Twitter use is growing in Zimbabwe, due to influential executives effectively using the microblog to communicate their views (Chaparadza, 2019). In 2012, Twitter usage stood at 0.4%, while Facebook was at 92.21 percent. However, in 2018, Twitter use had risen to 23% compared to the drastic drop in Facebook, which stood at 47% (Statcounter, 2019). Ngondo (2019: 11) notes that out of the 248 professional corporate reputation management persons, respondents ranked the social blog platforms they frequently used, as noted below:

> The Zimbabwean practitioners were asked how often they accessed specific digital media sites as part of their work in public relations. The mean scores ranging from very infrequently to very frequently revealed that Facebook (M = 4.22; SD = 1.04) was accessed more frequently followed by YouTube (M = 3.98; SD = 1.05), Twitter (M = 3.87; SD = 1.21), LinkedIn (M = 3.66; SD = 1.18), and Instagram (M = 3.66; SD = 1.18).

This showed that Twitter was part of the family of social blogs used to manage corporate reputation in Zimbabwe, which was ranked at number three (3) as of 2019. This ranking tallies with the monitoring of social blogs' use in Zimbabwe, as shown in Figure 2.16 below.
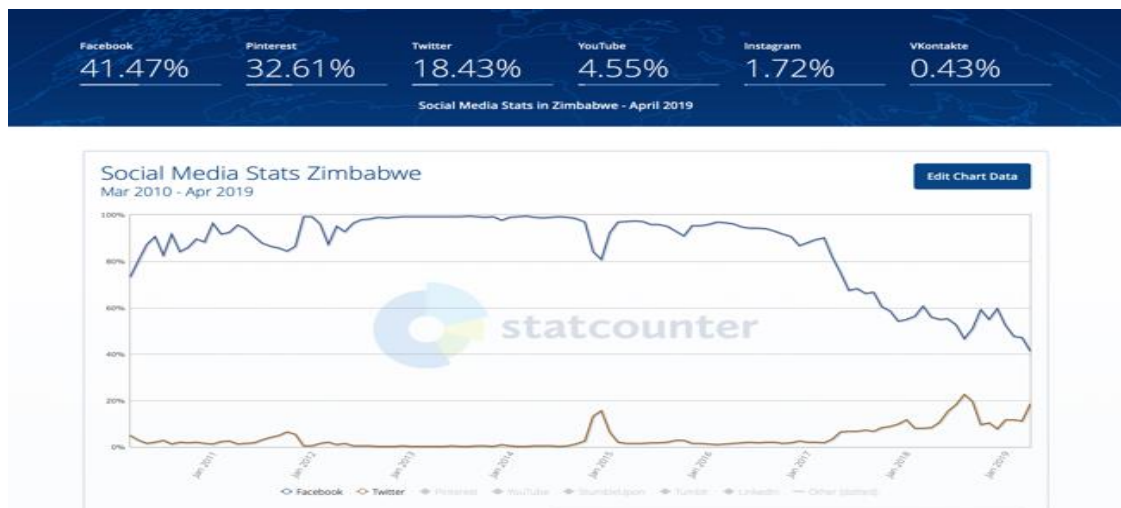
Figure 2. 16: Social blogs use statistics in Zimbabwe 2019

(Source: Statcounter, 2019)

However, there has been a rapid shift in the ranking of social media, mostly used in Zimbabwe from 2019 to 2021. In these two years, Twitter use grew in the country and became the dominant social platform, growing by a record 25.19% to 43.62%, followed by Facebook at 35.86%, Pinterest at 12.53%, and YouTube at 4.27% (Statcounter, 2021) (see Figure 2.17 below).

Figure 2. 17: Social blogs use statistics in Zimbabwe 2021

(Source: Statcounter, 2021)

According to Alhaidari, Iyer and Paswan (2015), social networking sites (SNS) have an effect and impact on customers' purchasing intentions. Scholars argue that SNS are critical platforms on which eWOM thrives, and influences customers before they make a purchase decision. Various scholars have noted that there is a need for senior management in the organisation to deliberately profile the social blogs that effectively communicate the company's messaging (Jin & He, 2013; Ko, Seo & Jung, 2015; Martin, Gnoth & Strong, 2009; Rim, Amit, Fujita, Trope, Halbeisen & Algom, 2015). Yet, Zimbabwean corporates in general and telecommunications companies are still to find a strategic fit to address these issues (Chigwende & Govender, 2020; TechZim, 2021).

The aforenoted is further supported by scholars who note the growth of blogosphere use, which has greatly altered the communication process from previous unidirectional exclusivity from the sender to receiver, which characterises most organisations. Customers and stakeholders are now increasingly engaging online, participating in the process of establishing friendships, generating the content, and sharing experiences and opinions (Song & Yoo, 2016). This suggests that social blogs and SNS empowers individuals and groups to communicate with the whole world about their opinions and experiences with brands, services, and products, thereby shaping reputations (Choi et al., 2017). The underlying philosophy of SNS and social blogs, in general, is that they are driven by user-generated content as compared to company-generated content, thereby connecting persons across the globe. This is a process conceptualised as a mode of opinion seeking, advancing thoughts, and sharing of information online, which can either build or deconstruct organisational reputations (Alhaidari et al., 2015).

Noting the afore-stated, the growth in social blogs' use in Zimbabwe has been stimulated by MNOs, who introduced data bundles to access Twitter, better known as Twitter bundles. Econet as the market leader, with more than 70% of the market share, allowed its mobile subscribers to access Twitter free of charge through promotional packages and loyalty programmes (Ngondo, 2019). The domino effect was that Econet users shifted away from using Facebook to Twitter and recruited other subscribers from other MNOs to join the micro-blogging site. Although other MNOs did not offer Twitter bundles free of charge as Econet did, they offered cheap data bundles, which attracted large numbers of Zimbabweans to become Twitter users (Chaparadza, 2019).

In addition to the aforementioned, it has been suggested that Twitter's nature distinguishes it as one of the most competitive venues that news organizations can use to break news. More than 92 percent of engagements on a Twitter post, or Tweet, happen within the first hour of it being posted, according to

YMarketingMatters (2019). Media houses such as the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation and newspapers such as The Herald, Newsday, The Daily News, Financial Gazette, Zimbabwe Independent and The Standard, among others, utilise the platform to tweet breaking news while the full story is only posted later on their websites (MISA, 2019b). The screenshots (images that show the contents of a computer/cellphone display) of breaking news are usually shared on other social blog platforms, which triggers the demand for the audiences to see the growing value and potential of being on Twitter (Chaparadza, 2019). In addition, Twitter is an embodiment of real-time conversations and engagements, while Facebook is generally a laidback and somewhat ongoing conversation that the audience can return back to when they are done with real-time engagements (Chaparadza, 2019; MISA, 2019b; Statcounter, 2019; ZAMPS, 2017). Through the 'hashtag' feature, which defines trending news and developments, Twitter has become the preferred platform in Zimbabwe, compared to Facebook, which is now in sharp decline (Statcounter, 2019).

According to POTRAZ (2018), there has also been an increase in the use of Twitter by consumers who are purely concerned with failing customer service. These customers realise that topics or complaints against brands can easily start trending and can therefore prompt a corporation to respond to the challenges that they are experiencing more quickly than if they had taken to any other social blog platforms (Mpondi, 2018). In the telecommunications industry, the #DataMustFallZim campaign received the most direct response from industry players, which shows the shifting power dynamics, where power is now moving from the corporates to consumers using Twitter. In 2017, it took the government less than three days to reverse the floor prices, which had been implemented by the industry players, because of them being perceived as gluttonous and inhumane by the majority of the consumer base.

Yet the cost of data remains one of the most pronounced challenges to access in Zimbabwe. The situation is further worsened by the fact that there were waves of increases in data costs by the MNOs and ISPs before the February 2019 official devaluation, where the argument was made that the currency volatility was affecting their ability to provide competitive services and meet their operations costs (MISA, 2019b). The hikes have therefore led to the online mobilisation of subscribers, who have rekindled their campaign on Twitter for the cost of data to be reduced under the campaign #DataMustFallZim. The campaign spotlights the issues of affordability and access to the internet in the country, testing the capacity of the regulator to balance commercial interests and the right to expression through the internet (MISA, 2019b).

A gigabyte of data in Zimbabwe was pegged at US$70 at the end of 2019, according to Howmuch.net. In this regard, MNOs and ISPs were accused of capitalising on existing confusion, and therefore unjustifiably

pushing the margins for maximum profits. The inflated data cost reporting, according to which Zimbabwe was inaccurately ranked as having the highest data costs in the world, is illustrated in Figure 2.18 below, which shows HowMuch.net's estimated continental mobile data costs.
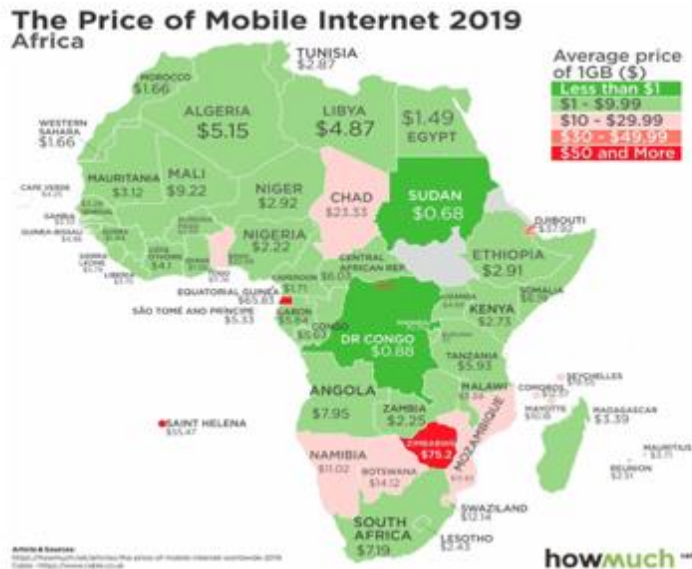
Figure 2. 18: The price of mobile internet in Africa

(Source: www.howmuch.net, 2019)

However, this reporting has been disputed by POTRAZ, who found that the real term's value after factoring in aspects such as misunderstandings over the currency regime in Zimbabwe is estimated at around US$15, depending on the bank rate used (The Standard, 2020). Even at that revised rate, it remains in the most expensive bracket on the continent.

In Zimbabwe, MNOs are only eligible to sell bundled data. The bundled data service is offered with limited access to a stipulated range of applications, such as Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp, among a few others. Bundled data is therefore used to refer to general data that gives access to the internet, but which expires within a limited amount of time. In Zimbabwe, this mobile data can only be used within 30 days (POTRAZ, 2018). The developments within the industry have led to the rise of highly mobilised consumers in the form of subscribers who view telecommunications industry players as driven by greed for profit, which importantly, increases reputation risk factors for the industry (POTRAZ, 2018: 2).

2.12 Major contributors to knowledge of social blogs and reputation management

In seeking to understand the scholarly work on the issue of the use of social blogs in corporate reputation management, it is of critical importance to assess the literature and understand the gaps that exist, which this research seeks to fill. Table 2.3 below presents an overview of the major contributors to the subject, the key findings of their research undertakings, and the gaps that emerge in the existing body of knowledge.

Table 2. 3: Contributors about reputation management and gaps in existing literature

Author	Contribution to knowledge of social blogs and reputation management	Gap analysis
Aaker (2018)	The author explores the use of the social blogosphere and how users shape reputation through their stories that are shared online. He outlines the challenges faced by corporates in terms of understanding their own character as tantamount to being human beings with the hope of influencing expression and how stakeholders relate to persons and remain highly suspicious of brands.	Aaker (2018) contributes to the discourse on social blogs and how they are increasingly shaping reputation management, without however defining the next tier on how to respond to these changes. This leaves a gap both in practice and theory. Major works in the field focus on defining the platforms and how they are increasingly gaining traction towards the management of corporate communications but are lacking in terms of suggesting tangible proposals for defining frameworks of engagement and their implications. Though the article, the author makes steps towards defining a

		framework and making concrete suggestions, where there is a need to narrow down the focus and test the assumptions through probing the concepts raised and attempt to come up with a new body of knowledge, particularly factoring in contemporary views on the interplay of social blogs and corporate reputation management in environments, such as the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry.
Snowden (2019)	The author examines the role of technological engineering and how it has led to the establishment of a conventional force of backup of all the data that is generated online. The author also examines the support infrastructure, which is now being abused by powerful governments, especially the American government, in performing mass surveillance on global citizens. The author articulates how the intelligence community is utilising internet systems to entrench power,	Compared to the research objective of the current author does not seek to understand the effect of the blogosphere on corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry. Instead, the book is more focused on the use of the internet in power retention. However, the book does have a short but profound chapter that lays bare the new dimensions that have since been made public in 2019.

	rather than promoting its use for the good of the human race.	This speaks to the current reality, namely that whatever is posted online, through the internet infrastructure that has been integrated with the intelligence community, helps to create a permanent record of people's life. In many instances whatever is posted online is not able to be deleted by the same user who posts the message, where, in most circumstances, only the owners of the servers are able to do so. This knowledge contributes to the objectives of the current study, as it underlines that fact that the implications of the use of social blogs on reputation is that information becomes permanent in the online environment. Though it mainly attends to the intelligence community, it also highlights the reputational challenges that emerge with the social blogs as they create a permanent record, which in the jurisdiction of the Americas

		and Europe has led to the right to be forgotten discussions.
Kotler et al. (2017)	The book outlines fundamental arguments based on research findings regarding the shifts taking place, from traditional communications to online communications, and explicates the impact of such shifts on online reputation and marketing more broadly. The research outcomes were telling, as it was noted that decisions are now being made online based, on group dynamics, rather than previously relied upon traditional means, when brand communications influenced decision-making online. The book also advances arguments in favour of the impact of eWOM, a strategic shift from traditional word of mouth, which was slower and less complex in its reach and impact.	The literature exposes the research gap regarding how the corporates are managing the shifts from traditional to online communications and how the process of management of corporate reputation is shaping in the age of the social blogs. A conceptual gap exists that requires inquiry.
Jamali, Nicholas & Herman (2015)	The research focuses on reputation in the digital ecosystem, and the implications of the new mode of communication. It centres on these mechanisms and examines how scholarly works have evolved in assessing the relationship between online platforms and the management	The scholars examine the major shifts in the literature as a result of new technologies, which saw the rise of open science initiatives, including open data, open publishing, citizen science, and open peer

	of reputation through an evolutionary assessment.	evaluations, among others, which have led to new approaches in establishing, exhibiting and assessing the reputation of scholarly works through these new platforms, in the mould of ResearchGate. The research provides the baselines upon which to propose the framing of frameworks in the management of corporate reputation in the digital age.
Aula (2010); Page & Fearn (2005); Weber (2009)	The authors focus on the broader connection between online communications and corporate reputation management, and the dynamics that are borne out of the possible clash of these two spheres.	The authors engage in crucial research, which contributes towards capturing and articulating the growing utilisation of social blogs, among other platforms, and the way in which social blogs are used to further consolidate or compromise corporate reputation management. The authors make seminal contributions towards defining and assessing the process of value proposition, evaluating, monitoring, and measuring as the company's attempts to listen and converse with its multiple

		stakeholders. However, these studies fall short in terms of proposing mechanisms towards managing reputation in the digital age. Therefore, there is a need to further assess the relationship between social blogs and the impact on the variable of reputation management, with the objective being to come up with a model toward effective use of the platforms.
Argenti & Barnes (2011)	The scholars seek to establish the relationships that stakeholders need to change when companies are in the process of incorporating social blogs and blogs into their communications strategy, where social blogs establish total connectivity that enables businesses and customers to enhance purchase decision intensity.	The research focuses on how relationships differ between online communities and those that are established offline. Hence, there is a need for stakeholders and companies to keep a check on the state of relations between the two, to ensure that relations are made stronger rather than being lost in transition. Though the scholarship attends to the fragility of the relationship between online and offline environments, it remains silent on the question of how this relationship is to be strengthened. For this reason,

		this study seeks to take the findings of foundational works a step further through defining a framework that can enhance corporate communications during the age of social blogs in managing corporate reputation. This further exposes the research gap that exists in as far as there is a need to transition from the traditional approaches to corporate reputation towards the new approaches, in which new media in the form of social blogs play a central role.
Jones et al. (2010)	The authors examine corporate reputation management in the complex era of the blogosphere. Their research assesses the issues related to corporate reputation and brand strategies through the case approach of the company Primark.	The research assesses how corporates manage responsive and competitive reputation and the strategic management of their branding in the new era of the blogosphere and the strategic implications for the viability and sustainability of corporates. It examines the processes Primark has applied and notes how the company has positioned its

		brand within the context of the blogosphere with the aim of building a competitive relationship with its stakeholders' chain and the mechanisms applied in protecting online reputation, while advancing the company's brand proposition and preserving value in the digital age. The research proposes a model of measuring online reputation. This will anchor the further development of the framework upon which the proposals for the management of corporate reputation will be managed.
Moyo (2011)	The author explores the utilisation of the social blogosphere in mediating encounters of Zimbabweans during the 2008 general election. It focuses on the processes that citizens employed to share information about their encounters during the violence that defined the election. The author moderates meaning out of the trends found using the theories of complexities in emerging media and citizen journalism. It is proposed that the	The work brings context to the Zimbabwean environment. It also highlights the critical component on how the social blogs are used to counter hegemonies in politics, which can also relate to counter reputational dominance. This highlights the conceptual gap that can be examined, linking politics and business, and aids

	emerging media has defined new practices that counter the hegemony of the ruling class and its traditional media. The internet is viewed as a transformative force that empowers citizens' right to express themselves, but it is not viewed as a ubiquitous platform, due to the limited reach and access between rural and urban localities and the class structures within the country.	the development of a conceptual framework that addresses the research gap regarding the interplay of traditional and contemporary approaches to corporate reputation.
Mare (2018)	The author examines the role of the blogosphere in the electoral process by studying Facebook and its contribution to the 2013 Zimbabwean public sphere. The author seeks to understand the impact of social blogs in electoral cycles, and the attendant complexities that they may bring in swaying the realities in political participation processes. In that regard, the author thoroughly examined the data using the dual process of virtual ethnography and qualitative content analysis, focusing on the interplay of interface among the three political formations and their candidates in the country on the Facebook platform to enhance their campaigns for the general election. The study concludes that social blogs have drastically altered the electoral sphere,	Highlights a key dimension that the social blogs have a critical role in mobilising opinion and participation in pursuit of certain causes. Notes that research must be anchored on the most used platforms of a given time, a gap which will be filled through predicating Twitter as the case social blog. The research falls short in locating the conceptual gap between traditional media and the new media and how it impacts on the management of corporate reputation.

	though creating class barriers, as also noted by Moyo (2011), between the generally connected urbanites and 'forgotten rural communities' voters. The study also highlighted a dangerous dichotomy of a celebrity generation of politicians that are accessible online, yet inaccessible offline.	
Madziwa and Sibanda (2018)	This is one of the few studies that examines the use of social media in the financial services sector with the aim of exploring the extent to which customers are engaged with the industry on various platforms. The research outcomes show that all the financial services customers use one or more platforms of social blogs to engage the institutions in the sector, mainly seeking information on services and products, or complaining about the service that they may have received. It was found that corporations in the industry ought to invest in security features, where, if these features were not implemented, it could result in confidential information circulating on social media and injuring the reputation of the industry.	The gap still emerges as the research falls short of proposing a conceptual framework that helps the practice and practical steps in the management of social blogs by top-level managers, employees and operational managers, with the aim of facilitating for attaining of the strategic goals of managing corporate reputation in a competitive manner in the digital age.
Ngondo (2019)	The study is close to the research area, in that it explores the utilisation of the	The research gap is at conceptual levels as this

	social blogosphere in public relations in Zimbabwe. The research draws out consensus over the fact that social blogs have altered the way public relations practitioners in the country share and disseminate information across their stakeholders. The research is important as it also attempts to rank the most used platforms by these practitioners namely Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram, among others.	research focuses on the functional area of the business, making it an operational area study, while the current study assesses the entire business and its ability to calibrate the business towards management of the corporate reputation in a changing communications and traditional media towards a new conceptual framework regarding how this can be handled within the telecommunications industry, and be replicated elsewhere.
Chigora and Mutambara (2019)	The authors explored the complexities of the tourism brand of Zimbabwe vis-à-vis the impact of social blogs in shaping either negative or positive images of the country in the global market. The research provided a comparative analysis of the new media to other types of media, and how they impact on national brand equity. The results of the study indicated that the most used media in promoting Zimbabwe as a tourism destination are magazines, newspapers, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, LinkedIn, television, radio, websites, blogs,	Though the scholar focused on brand destination marketing, the study is important as it combines mullite channels of communications and make proposals for marketing professionals towards a holistic approach in communication. The gap exists at theoretical and practise levels as the study does not propose how the practitioners should engage hence the need for the

	Instagram and Google. These media fall under the following broader categories: traditional media, social media, and digital media. The authors thus recommend that the marketing community in the sector should apply strategic interventions targeting the three categories towards the goal of shaping the brand equity of Zimbabwe.	research to structure a conceptual framework to attend to the research gaps.
Musungwini et al., (2015)	The scholars sought to establish the influence of using social blogs on companies in Zimbabwe taking a case approach, which focused on Facebook. The study found that Zimbabwean businesses used Facebook to promote their products and services. The research equally noted that the utilisation and uptake of social blogs was still evolving and that businesses had scope to implement a holistic approach of using social blogs as a strategic platform for strategic marketing functions beyond business promotions. This is because social blogs establish total connectivity that enables businesses and customers to enhance purchase decision intensity.	The research noted foundational observations that the uptake of social blogs was on the rise in 2015, when Facebook was a monopoly in the social networking platforms. Its recommendations where wide and sweeping, hence the need for the current research to probe how the growth of the social blogs and changing complex of the use of the same is changing traditional approaches to reputation management, and further probe how the telecoms industry is adopting to the changes in the environment before factoring in contemporary thinking and proposing conceptual

		frameworks to manage such phenomena.
Chingwende & Govender (2020)	The author examines the growth of social blogs utilisation and engagement in Zimbabwe and the resultant implications for national security complexities in the country. The researcher employed Habermas to examine how social blogs mediates expression of actions to appreciate the new media's influence regarding the architecture of security law in Zimbabwe. The research uses a case study of Facebook and its intersection with turning points in protests in Zimbabwe. The results show that protests are the most common issues of discussion on the social blog platforms. Regarding the orbits between the protests content and vis-à-vis national security, the bulk of the materials analysed was not in breach of security laws.	The research gap is theoretical as the research was underpinned by a seminal theory to better understand new phenomenon. This research will combine both seminal and contemporary throes towards the construction of conceptual framework to better understand the business context and behaviours of employees in the interface with the social blogs. This is critical, as the research is being conducted from internal stakeholder's perspective, notably with regards to it impacts on external stakeholders.
(Kotler , Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021)	The authors examine the interplay of technology and marketing with the goal of utilising technology to better enhance the customer experience through what they define as marketing 5.0.	The research gap is highly theoretical, as this is a practical guide for marketers regarding how to enhance marketing in the fast pace changing technology. It presents little in the way of

		theoretical framework. However, the work is instructive as it contributes to the practical recommendations of the research study.

2.13 Conclusion

This chapter assesses the nexus between the emergence of social blogs and their implications and complexities in the management of corporate reputation. This is a critical focal area, with the aim of understanding the key conceptual issues at play, and how they feed into the attainment of the research objectives in this study. This is particularly the case as the research seeks to understand the effect of Twitter as a social blog on the management of corporate reputation in the Zimbabwe telecommunications industry. The chapter therefore began by exploring the relationship between social blogs and corporate reputation management, through defining the key terms used to determine the causal relationships. The elements that contribute to a positive corporate reputation were considered, followed by a detailed assessment of literature on the challenges that are encountered by organisations in managing corporate reputation in the age of the blogosphere. Furthermore, the chapter discussed how Twitter is being used in Zimbabwe as a driver of corporate reputation management. The chapter was concluded with the assessment of the previous work of authors through a tabular assessment of their contributions to the subject, outlining relevant gaps and noting how this research attends to these gaps. The next chapter, Chapter Three, will focus on the theories in corporate reputation, assessing the traditional and contemporary views on the management of reputation that guided the development of the research conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 3

THEORIES IN CORPORATE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to critique the current body of knowledge in the form of literature defining corporate reputation and unpacking the theories that have shaped its development with the aim of locating gaps in the same. Section A will outline and critique the traditional approaches and theories to corporate reputation. This will be followed by Section B, which unpacks the contemporary theories on social blogs and corporate reputation management. Section C outlines the route towards building the research conceptual framework, while section D outlines the conceptual framework.

3.2 Section A: Traditional approaches and theories to corporate reputation

3.2.1 Defining corporate reputation management

Corporate reputation, from a conceptual perspective, has been viewed as an intangible or soft asset, which refers to something that cannot be measured or systematically managed (Aggerholm et al., 2011; Balmer, 2017; Swoboda & Hirschmann, 2017; Thiessen & Ingenhoff, 2011). According to Deephouse (2000), an establishment's reputation involves a collective assessment of its own standing from a three-tier position of affect, esteem, and knowledge. This suggests that the organisation's position is a creation of individual stakeholders' lived experience, as well as their perception of this lived experience. This is a departure point from Fombrun's (1996) definition, which brought shape and form to the concept. He defined corporate reputation as "the overall estimation in which a company is held by its constituents" (Fombrun, 1996: 9). However, there is no accepted definition since the discipline of corporate reputation management is still developing. Accordingly, Van Riel and Fombrun (2007: 43) define corporate reputation as "the overall assessments of organizations [sic] by their stakeholders". Corporate reputation refers to the general perceptions that stakeholders may have in terms of "an organisation's ability to fulfil their expectations, whether those stakeholders are interested in buying the company's products, are interested in working for the company, or are considering investing in the company" (Verčič, Verčič & Žnidar, 2016: 29). Some literature shows that there is often competing interests and tension among a company's stakeholders, which can lead to strategic ambiguity (Dickinson-Delaporte, Beverland & Lindgreen, 2010). Strategic ambiguity refers to the deliberate use of vague communication to allow for a multiplicity interpretation of a message

by different stakeholders in striving towards the achievement of the company's outcomes (Verčič, Verčič & Žnidar, 2016).

However, the literature on how corporate reputation is shaping up and taking form in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe is limited. A company's reputation is a critical ingredient in pursuing growth strategies. An organisation's reputation determines whether it pursues organic, hybrid, or merger organic growth strategies (Agnihotri, 2014). The literature shows that companies with strong reputations and prominent positive coverage in the media enjoy influence and affect both competitors and buyers, stimulating options for acquisitions or building competitive alliances (Agnrihotri, 2014). Baucus and Cochran (2016) note that the two strategic pillars of corporate reputation are quality and prominence. They argue that corporate reputation can be purchased through philanthropic work, while at the same time, disguising illicit organisational activities, such as the use of resource signals of quality and approvals of external stakeholders. In addition, Baucus and Cochran (2016) purport that corporate reputation can be purchased through engaging popular actors for reputation endorsement. Yet, Rindova, Williamson, Petkova & Sever (2005) note that this is not sustainable, contending that an organisation may go through the 'reputational deconstruction' process, which would lead to a catastrophic end of trust along the reputation chain. This proposition is, however, disputed by Dowling & Moran (2012), who argue that the concept of the purchasability of reputation, where firms can buy their way to a solid reputation, proves to be too bold.

Other scholars have postulated that reputation is constantly in the making. Accordingly, Balmer (2017) argues that the internal and external perceptions and relations that shape reputation are never fixed, noting that they change and result in a domino effect on the reputation chain, which therefore requires management to maintain a strategic role in continuously shaping the reputation mix. Goldring (2015) argues that corporate reputation management is of vital importance to the evolution of organisations, now more than ever before. Corporate reputation is thought of by Goldring (2015) as soft capital, which assists in lowering the costs of brand building, sustainability of product differentiation and maintaining loyal customers. These variables can only be achieved when stakeholders hold the dominant perception that a company is transparent and ethical, and experience such in their interactions with the company. The drive for such a strategic fit is a prerogative of the top management and all internal stakeholders who make strategic choices and engage in behaviours that are informed by the external stakeholders' perceptions and experiences (Dowling & Moran, 2012).

Additionally, Lafferty and Hult (2001) postulate that corporate reputation is a conscious process. These scholars refer to this conscious process as 'reputation orientation', whereby a company maintains a strategic process of establishing and managing a positive reputation across its multiple stakeholders. Goldring (2015) argues that reputation orientation entails a company's internal alignments that focus on how the company is unique and enable the company to deploy strategies that achieve sustainable advantages on performance. In this regard, reputation has three dimensions, namely: 1) purposeful identity, which is a function of the senior management within the company (Thiessen & Ingenhoff, 2011; Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994); 2) shared culture, which entails the vision in influencing purposeful identity (Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Goebel, Marshall & Locander, 2004); and 3) image detentions, which focuses on an infinitive evaluation process by management of a company's strategic actions and how these affect desired reputation (Laczniak & Murphy, 2006).

It is further argued that corporate reputations are established for a measurable time frame, through accumulative perception by the company's shareholders (Fombrun, 1996; Lafferty & Hult, 2001). For this reason, it is defined through assessing the encounters with a given company over a given period, thereby shaping identity clues and experiences accrued through transactions and similar encounters (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Reputation is thus an evaluative indicator of what the organisation has done, and how it has behaved (Balmer, 1998; Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Markwick & Fill, 1997; Simões & Dibb, 2002; Vella & Melewar, 2008). The common thread that runs through all the definitions above is the emphasis on communication and experience of organisational behaviour. It is therefore paramount to highlight that reputation management is a 'practice' concept, which requires an organisation to demonstrate its reputation in practice, thereby gaining trust and respect along the way. Sisson & Bowen (2017) note that the most effective way to positively influence the reputation of a given company is through behaving in ways that support and demonstrate the company's envisaged reputation. The firm's reputation is a derivative of the worldview of its members and of the public and is established and consolidated based on experiences accrued over the incremental space of time (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Yoon, Guffey & Kijewski, 1993).

There is convergence in current scholarship on the three key traits of corporate reputation management. The first common idea found in the literature is value creation. This suggests that corporate reputation is an asset, the value of which is intangible, where there is a need to unlock value for the company in the long-term future (Dierickx & Cool, 1989; Fombrun, 1996; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Sisson & Bowen, 2017). The second area of consensus is related to the view of corporate reputation as 'resource-centric', which means that it

can be managed as a way of attaining sustainable competitive advantage. This implies that corporate reputation management is a strategic means employed by a company as a source of differentiation (Herbig & Milewicz, 1993; Roberts & Dowling, 2002). The third element of convergence within current scholarship on the topic is that corporate reputation is used as a major ingredient in corporate communication, which shapes opinions and perceptions of stakeholders within and outside of the organisation (Bowen, Hung-Baesecke & Chen, 2016; Brammer & Pavelin, 2006; Lerbinger, 1965).

There is limited academic scholarship contributing to the development and establishment of the discipline of corporate reputation management in Africa more generally, and within the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry specifically. In most instances, there is generalisability and interchangeability of term and concept usage due to this gap, especially around the concepts of corporate identity, image, and reputation (Podnar & Golob, 2017). It is due to this reality that Podnar & Golob (2017) provide a framework that is critical in separating and differentiating the major constructs and concepts upon which the discipline is constructed, a framework that has been applied for the better part of the past decade.

Scholars have argued for an assessment-based approach towards appreciating corporate reputation management. In motivating for an assessment-based approach, these scholars are of the view that corporate reputation is an unobservable construct, which by its nature is latent, and exists in the minds of the multiple stakeholder chain (Agarwal Stackhouse & Osiyevskyy, 2017). This agrees with other scholars, whose work propounds the notion that corporate reputation is a soft asset, due to its intangible nature (Aggerholm & Andersen, 2018; Balmer, 2017; Swoboda & Hirschmann, 2017; Thiessen & Ingenhoff, 2011).

In assessing the corporate, it must be understood from the conceptual proposition of how it holistically manages identity, image, and reputation as a whole. Identity is generally defined as the mix of characteristics of a company defining the company's image. It reflects that which makes the corporate uniform within and diverse without. As a result, these characteristics are relatively constant over a period of time, as they distinguish one organisation from another (Dowling & Moran, 2012; Lafferty & Hult, 2001). The image of the corporate is defined as the personal impressions of the perceived organisation (Shee & Abratt, 1989). An image refers to the perception of an individual, or a defined set of attributes, beliefs, or impressions incrementally accrued of the establishment built in the mind of an individual when a person thinks of a given company or product/service offerings (Podnar, 2015).

To better understand the scholarly developments and attempts at defining corporate reputation, it is critical to note the attempts towards integrating and analysing the definitions by various scholars by grouping these

definitions into themes. The first themes that emerged between 1940 and the early 1990s can be classified broadly into corporate reputation as a strategic asset (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993; Caves & Porter, 1977; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Freeman, 1984; Sobol & Farrell, 1988). In the same period corporate reputation was also understood as a signal management process (Bagwell, 1992; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Kreps & Wilson, 1982; Milgrom & Roberts, 1986; Riahi-Belkaoui & Pavilik, 1991; Shapiro, 1983). Organisation-centric perspectives also emerged during this period, and these perspectives advanced the notion that an organisation's reputation is a construct of the firm (Barlow & Payne, 1951; McGuire, Sundgreen & Schneewis, 1988; Sobol & Farrell, 1988; Woodward & Roper, 1951).

Yet, from 1990 to 2006, other perspectives emerged in the scholarly works of various authors. The most notable of these perspectives is the viewpoint that reputation relates greatly to the perception of the stakeholders (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004; Balmer, 1998; Bennett & Kottasz, 2000; De Chernatony, 1999; Fombrun, 1996; Mahon & Wartick, 2003; Post & Griffin, 1997; Roberts & Dowling, 2002; Wartick, 1992). Another dimension also emerged during the same period, which distinguished key concepts in reputation management such as image, identity and corporate reputation (Balmer, 1998; Brown, Dacin, Pratt & Whetten, 2006; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Fillis, 2003; Illia & Lurati, 2006; Pruzan, 2001; Whetten & Mackey, 2002). A strong body of scholarly work emerged, which focused on assessing corporate reputation management measurement tools (Davies et al., 2003; Fombrun, Gardberg & Sever, 2001; Fryxell et al., 1994; Macmillan, Money, Downing & Hillenbrad, 2004; Walsh & Beatty, 2007). Scholars also applied these notions of corporate reputation to the development of the definition of the concept and the examination of corporate reputation through a stakeholder-centric perspective (Ahearne, Bhattacharya & Gruen, 2005; Caruana, Cohen & Krentler, 2005; MacMillan et al., 2004; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Waddock, 2000; Walsh, Dinnie & Wiedmann, 2006; Zyglidopoulos & Phillips, 1999).

Subsequently, from 2006 onwards, further scholarly perspectives regarding corporate reputation have emerged; the most notable of these works have developed linkages between corporate reputation and management theorem (Basdeo, Smith, Grimm, Rindova & Derfus, 2006; Bergh, Ketchen, Boyd & Bergh, 2015; Boyd, Bergh & Ketchen, 2010; Carmeli & Tishler, 2004; Carter & Ruefli, 2006; Davies & Olmedo-Cifuentes, 2016; Deephouse, 2000; Deephouse & Carter, 2015; Deephouse, Newburry & Soleimani, 2016; Foreman, Whetten & Mackey, 2013; Gardberg, Symeou & Zyglidopoulos, 2015; Ghobadian, 2017; Liedong, Ghobadian, Rajwani & Regan, 2018; Mahon & Wartick, 2003; Newburry, 2010; Rao, 1994; Roberts & Dowling, 2002; Shamsie 2003; Srivoravilai, Melewar, Liu, & Yannopoulou, 2016; Staw &

Epstein, 2018; Walsh, Schaarschmidt & Ivens, 2017). These scholarly works are outlined in Table 3.1 below, which summarises the evolution and key definitions of corporate reputation management.

3.2.2 Traditional Theoretical Approaches to Corporate Reputation Management

More than three decades of research in the field of corporate reputation management connect the three major concepts of identity, image and reputation remain problematic (Aggerholm & Andersen, 2018; Balmer, 2017; Swoboda & Hirschmann, 2017; Thiessen & Ingenhoff, 2011). Podnar and Golob (2017) provide a scientific approach to linking the three components, expanding on Whetten (1997)'s model of the relationships between the three critical components of image, identity, and reputation. In the foundational work, Whetten's (1997) inter-connection model extrapolates the interplay of a triangular relationship among the variables of image, identity and reputation, as outlined in Figure 3.1 below, and highlights the linkages through the steps of selection, variation, and the subsequent retention (VSR). However, it was Campbell's (1974) first model that sub-divided VSR into: 1) variations of changing of an existing form; 2) systematic choice from the existing variations; and 3) retention of identified variations.
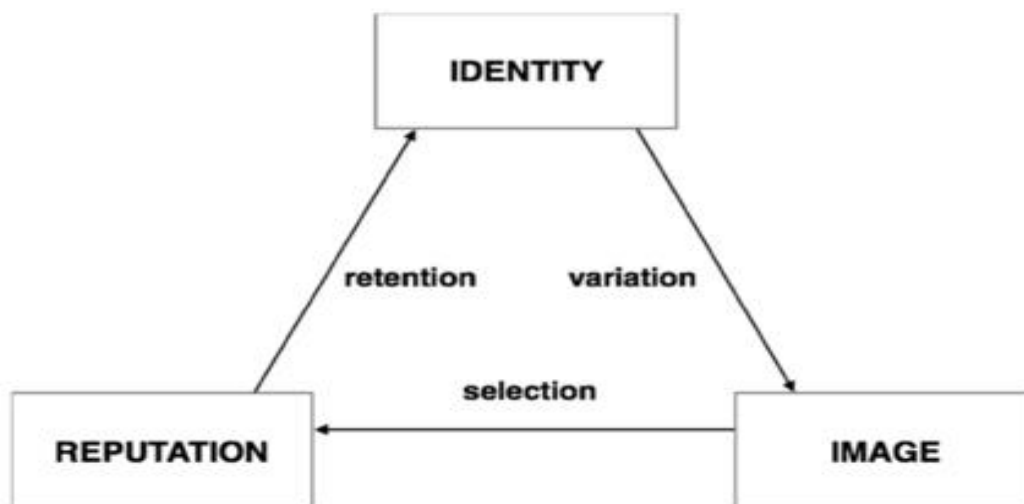
Figure 3. 1: Relationships among variables of image, identity and reputation

(Source: Podnar & Golob, 2017: 188)

3.2.3 Corporate image and identity: Variation and construction

The variation process, as proposed in the VSR model, suggests that both firms and their respective means of communication (be these intentional or unintentional) are not permanently fixed, but are subject to

alteration over time. According to Abratt and Kleyn (2012), stakeholders do not engage with a firm's aggregate corporate identity; rather, they engage with varying components of the firm's identity, thereby building their own worldview of the entity. This sets in motion a continuous process for organised and integrated communications and appeal of the company. However, organisations vary in their self-presentation to the public; hence, communication is skewed leaning towards the single side of the process and pointing to the link between image and identity (Shirin & Kleyn, 2017), while beyond this lies the process of construction. Scholars argue that each person is unique in formulating opinion and perception and making sense of issues that have an impact either by objective or by subjective factors. This is corroborated by social construction theory (Boutinot, Ansari, Belkhouja & Mangematin, 2015; Ravasi, Cornelissen, Rindova, & Etter, 2018; Velamuri, Venkataraman & Harvey, 2017).

3.2.4 Corporate image, reputation selection and validation

The VSR model establishes the positive relationship between image formation and of corporate reputation. The model proposes that the corporate reputation that is held by stakeholders is a derivative of images made on a day-to-day basis by individuals regarding an establishment. The corporate reputation also influences the establishment of corporate image daily (Cardwell, Williams & Pyle, 2016; Podnar & Golob, 2017). As propounded by the evolutionary perspective, people continuously assess multiple narratives and settle for the most appropriate one for the self (Rindova, 1997). Therefore, image and reputation are intrinsically constructs of mutual connectivity as explored through the selection and validation process.

3.2.5 Corporate reputation and identity: Retention and/or adaptation

According to the VSR model, the concept of retention refers to corporate reputation as an evaluation of a performance and subsequent image, and a tool to achieve the social unit and defined value in the mind-set of the stakeholders. The stakeholders outline whether to maintain and implement initiatives according to the personality of the entity and ratings of a firm, as attained through a selection process. This therefore suggests that reputation becomes a public memory of the firm (Podnar & Golob, 2017). However, other scholars argue that reputation is a feedback adsorption mechanism employed to make adjustments to both the form and shape of the unit. A company's identity thus becomes the pivot of its existence for gaining and retaining loyalty from persons and developing high trust dependency from members of the public (Abratt & Mingione, 2017; Ansoglenang, Awugah & Thompson, 2018). This is further elaborated in Figure 3.2 below, a consolidated amendment to Whetten's (1997) VSR model.
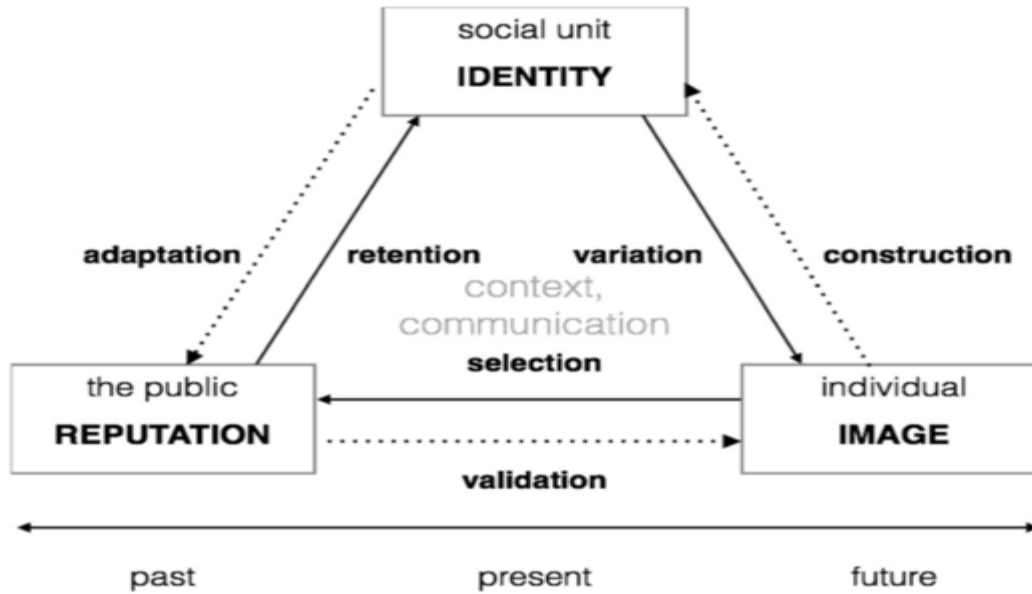
Figure 3. 2: The interconnection model of reputation, image and identity

(Source: Podnar & Golob, 2017: 190)

The complexity of corporate reputation management ought not overlook the major role played by Stuart (1999) in defining the discipline of corporate reputation. In defining the concept, the author underlines the role of internal processes in establishing the ultimate reputation of an establishment. This feeds into the narrative of a reputation as an asset, which ought to be protected by an organisation and used to unlock value for competitive advantage (Cardwell et al., 2016; Shirin & Kleyn, 2017; Stuart, 1999). The scholars underscore the essence of organisational culture, which encompasses corporate personality, strategy, and identity (Gibb, 1961; Mullins, 2005; Schein, 2015). This shapes the organisation's image and ultimately its corporate reputation (Cardwell et al., 2016).

In the VSR model, corporate personality entails the foundation of the corporate philosophy, which, inter-alia, encompasses corporate values, and the mission of an organisation. This informs the crafting of corporate strategy, which is centred on senior management structure, vision, products, communication and symbols. Management and organisational communication are encapsulated in the identity of an organisation, which includes the mix of the organisational behaviour enunciated through symbols and the communication mix (Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). Scholars in the field of corporate reputation management advance the argument that advertising, interpersonal communications, and management are applied to transform the identity of an establishment into corporate images which are then held in the minds of the

106

establishment's multiple stakeholders. This theoretical proposition also advances the notion that there is a definite link between the images resulting from internal processes and the ultimate reputation of an organisation that is finally established (Abratt & Mingione, 2017; Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Shirin & Kleyn, 2017; Stuart, 1999), as shown in Figure 3.3 below, in the model of the corporate identity management process.
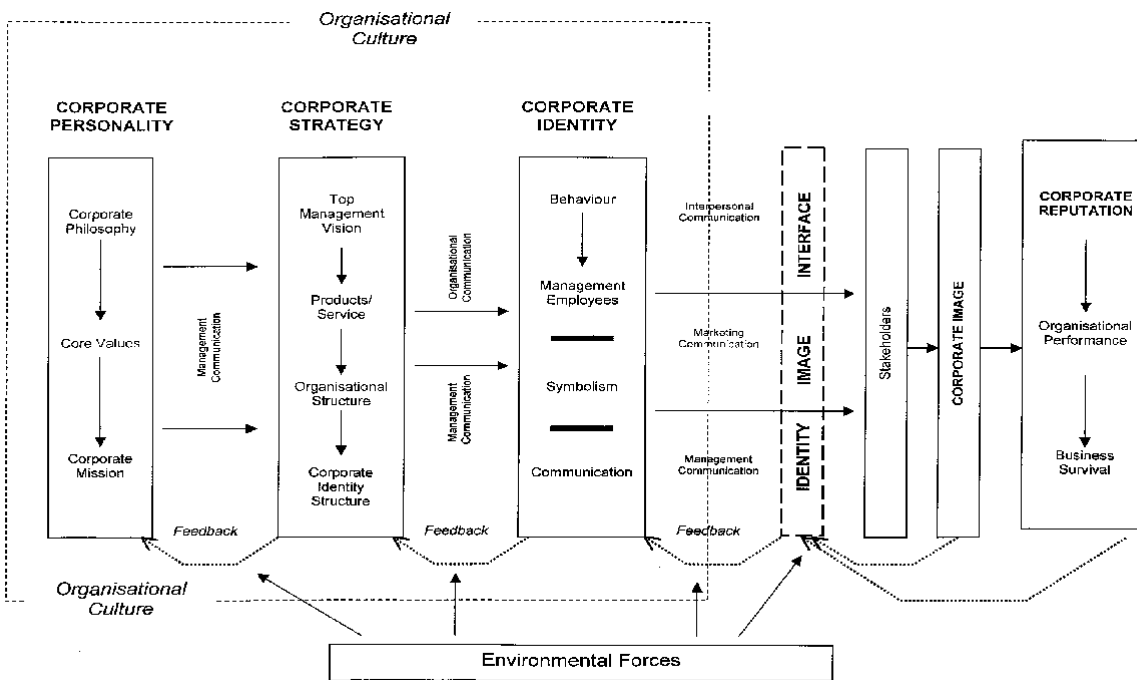
Figure 3. 3: The definitive model of the corporate identity management process

 (Source: Stuart, 1999: 206)

Ansoglenang et al. (2018) note that identity is a function of corporate reputation, which is a socially constructed concept, through a strategic process, which if managed competitively will lead to the organisation achieving a competitive edge over its rivals. To further unravel the complexity of corporate reputation, emerging scholars argue that the identity of an organisation appears in four forms namely: actual identity; communicated identity; conceived identity and ideal identity. Actual identity encapsulates the definitive and present set of attributes that defines the company through its structure, product, and service range, as well as ownership mix. On the other hand, communicated identity entails that which is reflected through controlled means of organisational communications. In other instances, the stakeholders hold a certain reputation at any given time. This is referred to as the conceived identity. Lastly, the ideal identity

is that which the organisation desires to optimally achieve. It is the desired vision, cast by the top management and strategic advisers (Balmer, 2012; Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Eckert, 2017).

This, therefore, unlike the structured and linear thinking propounded in the corporate identity management process model, unraveling the complexity of corporate reputation management. While there is an assumption of commonality of identity, corporate reputation is multi-dimensional, where there is no single commonly held reputation to be found among its stakeholders (Abratt, 1989; Dowling, 1986; Kennedy, 1977). The dynamism of the concept of reputation involves the need for internal stakeholders to be in harmony when it comes to the actual identity that they aim to create, and in their communication to the external stakeholders. Based on such a reality, it can be argued that corporate reputation is the most valuable corporate resource, which ought to be invested in and managed proficiently, and should be responsive to the changing business environment and realities (Melewar & Skinner, 2018; Podnar & Golob, 2017; Shirin & Kleyn, 2017).

However, scholars also argue that corporate identity is actually a living construct that once "launched and accepted, it no longer belongs to the management of the organisation, but to all its stakeholders: customers, employees, shareholders, business partners and suppliers" (Balmer, Stuart & Greyser, 2009: 17-18). This is further consolidated by scholars who argue that employee engagement has a lasting effect on the perceived quality of stakeholder service, product innovation, image, levels of customer satisfaction, and retention of employees. The perceived quality of all these aspects has a strong influence on the formation and management of corporate reputation. Hence, there is a relationship between the image of a corporate and customer satisfaction (Zameer, Wang, Yasmeen, Mofrad & Waheed, 2018). All scholars agree, however, that a strong corporate reputation unlocks a positional or status-based sustainable competitive edge for an establishment (Dowling & Moran, 2012).

Futurist scholars argue that there is a need to define the future pathways upon which the reputation paradigm shall gravitate. This, they argue, is because there are many unknowns in the dynamics at play in the constructs of corporate reputation management, where there is a need for greater understanding regarding the broader role of corporate reputation. In addition, there is a need to better understand how varying levels of reputation interact with one another, as well as an understanding of when they interact and what form of new reputation emerges ought to be developed (Alniacik, Alniacik & Erdogmus, 2012; Barclay, 2016; Veh, Göbel & Vogel, 2018).

3.2.6 Theoretical perspectives of reputation management

The literature review shows that there are six broad perspectives on reputation formation, which are: 1) reputation as a derivative of signalling through information; 2) the management of an invisible (intangible) asset; 3) the micro socio-cognitive aspects of corporate reputation management; 4) the macro socio-cognitive aspects of corporate reputation; 5) cultural sociological thinking, which is founded on socio-political approaches to corporate reputation; and 6) the role of participation and communication in the formation of reputation (Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty, 2006; Johnson, Erez, Kiker, & Motowidlo, 2002; Lange & Pfarrer, 2017; Lange, Lee & Dai, 2011; Ravasi, Rindova, Etter & Cornelissen, 2018). These perspectives will be discussed in greater depth in the sub-sections to follow.

3.2.7 The game-theoretic perspective

This theory of corporate reputation is founded on economic thinking, which fundamentally examines the impact and influence of reputation on repeated interactions and implications for a company's competitiveness (Milgrom & Roberts, 1982; Shapiro, 1983). At the centre of this theoretical perspective is the thesis that market actors grapple with communication asymmetries about one another's intentions and broader strategic direction. For this reason, corporate reputation prepares them for useful proxies to the same (Weigelt & Camerer, 1988). Reputation can also be understood as a pointer to expectations about future actions. According to Weigelt and Camerer (1988: 443), corporate reputation can be defined as "a set of attributes ascribed to a firm, inferred from the firm's past actions". These inferred attributes exist in the minds of observers (Clark & Montgomery, 1998) and assist stakeholders in making informed predictions about the future actions of counterparts, with the aim of influencing their decisions about entering into business engagements (Fombrun, 2006; Rindova et al., 2005).

Corporate reputation, from a game-theoretic perspective, is understood to come about through signalling. This perspective is informed by the thesis that stakeholders make concerted actions with the aim of signalling information on their respective unobservable elements, with a view towards influencing their audience's thinking and value system (Milgrom & Roberts, 1986; Spence, 1973; Weigelt & Camerer, 1988). For this reason, corporate reputation management is viewed as a consistent mechanism for supporting the predictability of business engagements. As a reliability guarantee mechanism, the only modalities that are observable by the recipients and have cost implications when engaged in, (as opposed to those that are not available to those without the requisite elements) define the signals (Shapiro, 1983). The proposition is further developed by Kreps and Wilson (1982), and Milgrom and Roberts (1982), to consolidate analysis of

competing offerings among organisations, including aggressive pricing, which may be signalling the likelihood of market warfare.

3.2.8 The strategic perspective

The strategic perspective of corporate reputation was initially informed by the signalling approach, derived from economic theory. However, the strategic perspective broadened and enriched the definition of signals as "any action by a competitor that provides a direct or indirect indication of its intentions, motives, goals, or internal situation" (Porter, 1980: 96). This conceptualisation was further expanded by Fombrun and Shanley (1990), who suggest that signals can be understood as strategic, institutional, and market signals, which include a mix of information cues that go beyond the set standards of 'costliness and observability' that are underlined in the economic theoretical approach. Other scholars postulate that undertakings by companies towards the flow of information and corporate reputation, define the critical gains of accumulated behaviours in a given period (Dierickx & Cool, 1989).

The strategic perspective holds that reputation is an intangible asset. Numerous scholars have suggested the adoption of the strategic perspective to reconceptualise the thesis of a reputation as a strategic resource, which is incrementally gained, advantageously utilised, and employed in exchanges and interactions with the organisational stakeholders (Barney, 1996; Dierickx & Cool, 1989; Fombrun, 1996; Hall; 1992; Obloj & Capron, 2011; Pollock, Lee, Jin & Lashley, 2015; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999). These scholars are credited for contributing to the development of this resource-based perspective in the discipline of corporate reputation. They emphasise that while corporate reputation is unique and difficult to substitute when harnessed correctly, it can lead to the attainment of sustainable competitive advantage (Ravasi et al., 2018).

The literature does not seem to point to the fact that organisations can absolutely control their reputations. Instead, various authors advance the argument that an organisation should strive to control its reputation, irrespective of the multiplicity of signals and communicators involved in the chain (Love, Lim, & Bednar, 2016). The reviewed literature shows that a company's market behaviour may send efficient and effective signals by its activities in high dynamics of the market (Basdeo, Smith, Grimm, Rindova & Derfus 2006), retaining market dominance (Shamsie, 2003), while employing innovative interventions to gain positive portrayal from the press (Rindova, Martins, Srinivas & Chandler, 2017), focusing on social corporate responsibility (Turban & Greening, 1997), or the observance of environmental standards (Philippe & Durand, 2011), among other activities. However, recent critics have argued that certain actions may in fact relay negative signals, which are harmful to corporate reputation, and might lead to withdrawal from

collaborations (Zhelyazkov & Gulati, 2016), to the offloading of employees (Flanagan & O'Shaughnessy, 2005), or to the reduction in a company's operation scale (Bednar, Love, & Kraatz, 2015; Love & Kraatz, 2009). The violation of expectations can alter how future signals are interpreted by the stakeholders, which can have negative consequences for a company (Gomulya & Mishina, 2017).

It is according to theoretical framing that scholars argue that when corporate reputations are under threat or are in decline, there is a critical need for repair signals (Pfarrer, Decelles, Smith & Taylor, 2008). The repair signals may include the appointment of new company leadership, such as the chairperson of the board, or company chief executive officer (Gangloff, Conelly & Shook, 2016; Gomulya & Boeker, 2014; Zhang & Wiersema, 2009).

3.2.9 The macro-cognitive perspective

This perspective on corporate reputation management is located at the intersection of organisational and strategic cognition studies (Narayanan, Zane, & Kemmerer, 2011). The perspective emerged with the goal of pushing the boundaries of analysis of economic philosophies, arguing that corporate reputation "forms as a result of information exchanges and social influence among various actors interacting in an organizational [sic] field" (Rindova et al., 2005: 1033). This approach, therefore, emerges from the basis of incorporating the narrative and thinking of the strategic approach about its signalling abilities through the diversity of a set of interventions and subsequent expression, but extends further to highlight the function of institutional channel stakeholders, who focus on communication and distribution, thereby influencing exchanges of information (Fombrun, 2012; Pollock Rindova & Maggitti, 2008; Rao, Greve & Davis, 2001; Rindova, 1997; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999; Rindova et al., 2005; Zavyalova, Pfarrer, Reger & Hubbard, 2016).

Corporate reputation can also be understood in terms of prominence and evaluation in a firm's industry. From this macro-cognitive viewpoint, corporate reputation is the sum total of diverse positions and cognitions about an organisation from a multiplicity of its stakeholders, as opposed to a singular assessment held by the game-theoretic or micro-cognitive approach to corporate reputation. In essence, two elements of reputation for an organisation are emphasised (Deephouse, 2000; Rindova et al., 2005), namely: the aggregate attention a company gains; and the ability of assessment it attains (Ravasi et al., 2018), based on "assessments of the financial, social, and environmental impacts attributed […] over time" (Barnett et al, 2006: 34).

The literature contributing to the theorisation of corporate reputation as an aggregation of opinions and beliefs is rooted in the systematic summation of individual opinions, including opinion polls (Rindova et al., 2005) and reputational surveys (Martins, 2005; Rindova et al., 2017) that mirror the aggregate chain upon which corporate reputation is established. Scholars investigating corporate reputation from a macro-cognitive perspective argue that the expression of aggregate opinions refers to 'social facts' that impact a correlated influence on the rated firm and its respective stakeholders (Bermiss, Zajac, & King, 2014; Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Martins, 2005).

Corporate reputation can also be theorised from the social construction perspective. Contrary to the game-theoretic and strategic philosophies, which are centred on the communication of specified signals and their subsequent impact on respective recipients, the macro-cognitive approach concerns the sharing of various categories of communications among various stakeholders, where corporate reputation is understood to manifest through socially constructed narratives (Rao, 1994; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999). The social construction approach is rooted in the postulation that various stakeholders infer corporate reputations from a multiplicity of signals communicated by organisations, and actions of influential brand ambassadors and significant others in the forms of the press, rating agencies and certifiers, among others (Fombrun, 1996). The intermediaries are thought to possess endorsement power through expertise in assessing a firm (Rao, 1997; Rindova et al., 2005). For this reason, the social constructionist approach also reveals how stakeholders engage amongst themselves through information sharing, and making their respective choices (Boivie, Graffin & Gentry, 2016; Pollock et al., 2008) as they attempt to minimise incomplete information-related challenges. In addition, recent research reveals the implications of the diffusion of the blogosphere through the fact that it offers stakeholders the possibility to neutralise gatekeepers that existed in the age of the traditional communication and media, by the ability to share their assessments of companies in the public arena (Boutinot, Ansari, Belkhouja & Mangematin 2015; Ravasi et al., 2018; Velamuri, Scheneckenberg, Comberg & Spieth, 2017).

3.2.10 The micro-cognitive perspective

This scholarly position on the formation of corporate reputation is a derivative of the theoretical thinking of information-processing approaches (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Taylor, 1981; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) and aims to understand how persons gain access to and process information to establish corporate reputational judgments (Bitektine, 2011; Highhouse, Broadfoot, Yugo & Devendorf, 2009). Contrary to signalling theory, information processing theory assumes that the corporate reputation interlinked signalling effects are interpreted by all stakeholders in the same rational approach (Carson, Madhok, Varman & John, 2003).

The micro-cognitive perspective emerged from the theorisation of corporate reputation as either a multidimensional propitiation that encompasses numerous analytical dimensions (Bitektine, 2011), or as an aggregate assessment of the company by the stakeholders (Highhouse, Brooks & Gregarus, 2009). This suggests that the initial view of corporate reputation was in terms of companies being fixated on "being known for something" (Lange et al., 2011: 86). Scholars who study corporate reputation from a micro-cognitive perspective hold that the assessment of organisational reputation is founded on how an organisation meets peculiar, individual interests (Bitektine, 2011; Fischer & Reuber, 2007). The second theoretical proposition is founded on the proposition that corporate reputation judgment involves an evaluation of the company's successes in fulfilling its various stakeholder expectations relative to the afore-stated dimensions, or attainment of "generalized [sic] favourability" (Lange et al., 2011: 159).

The major focus area of the micro-cognitive approach is how the exchange of information is detailed and processed at the recipient's end (Barnett et al., 2006; Mishina, Block & Mannor, 2012). It focuses on evaluating how thorough information is acquired on a given firm's critical features, from a person's memory, as well as from external sources. This leads to continuous questioning by an individual of the authenticity and reliability of the information, geared towards answering the permeating question of "how an organization [sic] will perform in the future relative to other organizations [sic]" (Bitektine, 2011: 155). However, in the literature reviewed, quite a substantive number of scholars tend to question the notion that corporate reputation judgements are neatly rational (Etter, Ravasi & Colleoni, 2018; Zavyalova et al., 2016), deferring to the thinking that they are more effective in construct than they are rationale (Raithel & Schwaiger, 2015). Some of these scholars propose that emotional responses to firms may be due to entirely different motivations, such as 'celebrity' (Pfarrer, Pollock & Rindova, 2010; Rindova, Pollock & Hayward, 2006) or 'social approval' (Bundy & Pfarrer, 2015).

3.2.11 The cultural-sociological perspective

This theory is used to explore how reputations are defined in the public domain. The bulk of the research employing a cultural-sociological perspective is centred on investigating the reputation of artists (Bromberg & Fine, 2002; Lang & Lang, 1988), political actors (Ducharme & Fine, 1995; Fine, 1996; Ravasi et al., 2018), and business leadership (King & Fine, 2000), among others. These previous studies have laid solid foundations on which to further engage in scholarly work regarding how corporate reputations are formed, as they offer in-depth engagements on the socio-economic and political steps by which corporate reputations are established, maintained, managed, disputed, and reviewed.

Studies using a cultural-sociological perspective are rooted in the notion of reputation as an objective social fact and an ongoing collective position, and thus evaluate entities along with technical (Sauder & Fine, 2008), moral (Ducharme & Fine, 1995; King & Fine, 2000), or other criteria (Lang & Lang, 1990). There is also a shared consensus that the 'shared established image' can be different from the one held as private or personal opinions (Fine, 2008; Lang & Lang, 1988). A further theoretical proposition underpinning the cultural-sociological perspective is that corporate reputation forms through the socio-economic and political processes engaged in the 'interactional arenas' (Bromberg & Fine, 2002; Fine, 2001) and is moulded by 'reputational entrepreneurs' and 'reputational arbiters'. The construct of reputational entrepreneurs refers to those stakeholders who mediate the realities of the corporate's reputation and includes the media, analysts, rating agencies and public relations experts, with an interest in building, managing, supporting, or dispelling certain portrayals of an organisation (Fine, 1996). Reputational arbiters sit in a position of 'objectivity' as evaluators of a firm's reputation; these include rating and ranking agencies (Sauder & Fine, 2008).

Departing from a macro-cognitive perspective, cultural sociologists are focused on engaging in and contextualising the relationships among stakeholders through aggregate representations, and on the subsequent interaction approaches, socio-economic, and political factors, and expansive practices which define the same (Fine, 1996). This can lead to a combination of interpretation, narrative, and assessment in the process leading to an individual's formation of a set of objective facts. Therefore, corporate reputation as a concept is thought to evolve mainly out of these multiple interactions (Bromberg & Fine, 2002). Corporate reputation is therefore thought to be a construct of summative production and sharing of cues and projections that define the overall memory of activities, persons, and firms. This has inspired additional research, which shifts its focus from historical to 'living' corporate reputation, through critiquing interactional approaches and socio-political processes, which have an impact on how positive reputations can be achieved, weakened or destroyed over a given scope of time (Bermiss et al., 2014; Bromberg & Fine, 2002; King & Fine, 2000).

3.2.12 The communicative perspective

This perspective on the establishment of corporate reputation took form through the emergence of corporate communication as a discipline of practice (Rao, 1997; Van Riel, 1997), which was mainly due to the practitioners of corporate communications being concerned with 'identity mix' of the corporate and 'positioning' as a strategic science and art of managing corporate reputation (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004). This led to the development of the foundational reputational models (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004; van Riel

& Balmer, 1997) that focused on the ability of corporate communication to contribute to the positive portrayal of a company to its stakeholders' awareness, recall, satisfaction, behaviours, and command levels of reputation changes (Ravasi et al., 2018). Subsequently, further scholarly work was undertaken to address the theoretical propositions focused on classic communication theory (Cornelissen, Thøger-Christensen & Kinuthia, 2012). Other work also saw the development of the theorem on "communication as constitutive perspective of organisations" (Shirin & Kleyn, 2017: 275). in the construction of and giving form to organisational communication (Putnam & Nicotera, 1999; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). In critically assessing the literature, the texts point to the fact that the communicative perspective leans heavily towards the approach and philosophy of organisational communication being an on-going, dynamic and "interactive process of manipulating symbols toward the creation, maintenance, destruction, and/or transformation of meanings" (Shirin & Kleyn, 2017: 277). For this reason, corporate reputation is thought to be established by a series of exchanges of information between the firm and stakeholders in accordance with their respective environments (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009).

The communicative approach is less focused on the cognitive elements of corporate reputation and dismisses the notion that corporate reputation is a fixed variable in the mindset of the company's multiple stakeholders (Cornelissen, Durand, Fiss, Lammers & Vaara, 2015). Instead, scholars foreground thinking that corporate reputation is a communicative construct, which is ever dynamic and changing, depending on how the stakeholders negotiate meaning. Consequently, the approach is contradictory to the game-theoretic and micro-cognitive perspectives outlined above, as corporate reputation is thought not to be constructed according to numerous dimensions, but rather as an assessment of firms and their respective behaviour because of a continuous exchange of information about the firm (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011; Cornelissen et al., 2012; Podnar & Golob, 2017).

The communicative approach is also focused on the exchanges which define social interaction as the mediating variable in the construction of reputation (Cornelissen et al., 2015) and attempts to unravel the notion that the process of information sharing in itself is a construction of a social assessment process, which ends with the negotiation of meaning (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). Differences in forms of expression, such as language application, and differences in communication lead to a binary approach in corporate reputation formation, whereby firms disseminate messages to stakeholders. As such, the role of the stakeholder is viewed as being the agent in the construction of the meaning being exchanged (Ashcraft et al., 2009). There are both collective and communicative exchanges of information that occur between stakeholders representing focal firms, which might include stakeholders exchanging information on their

115

experiences, and engaging in bringing a certain reputation for a given firm 'into being' (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). For this reason, the communication approach changes attention from corporate reputation establishment, as an effect of information exchange by either firms or the press, to corporate reputation as resident in communities of interaction and exchange of information on the part of stakeholders who jointly produce corporate reputational outcomes in and through their acts of communication. The theoretical perspectives discussed in the section above that form the foundation of corporate reputation management are summarised in Figure 3.4.

Evolving Theoretical Assumptions about Reputation Formation
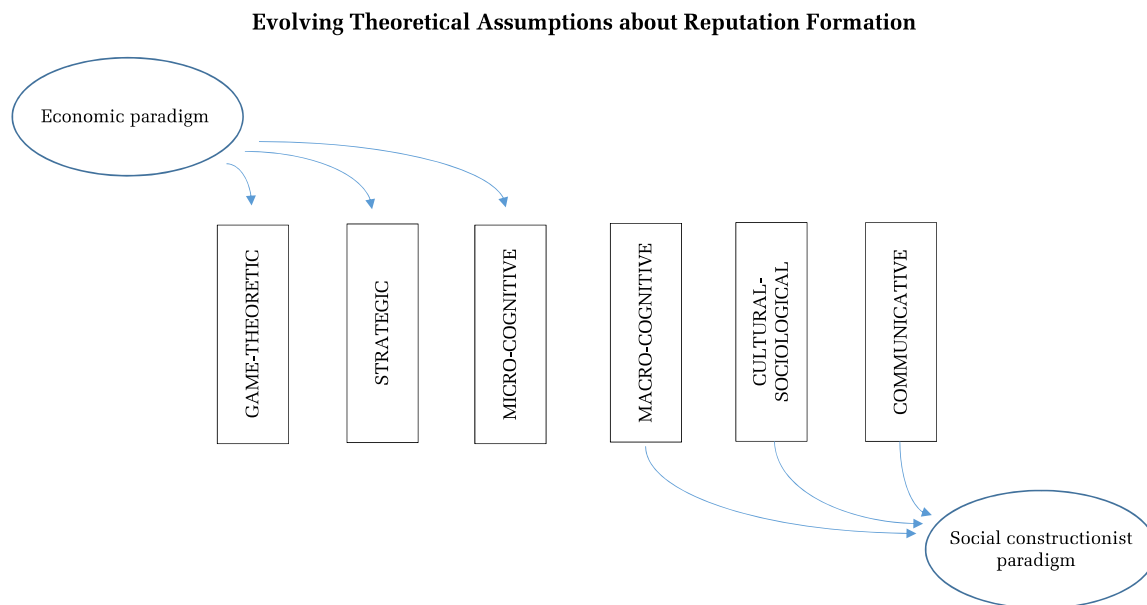
Figure 3. 4: Theoretical assumptions about reputation formation

(Source: Ravasi et al., 2018: 589)

3.2.13 Corporate personality

According to Balmer (2017), the philosophy of character/personality is applicable to the examination of entities such as corporations. On this basis, formations and establishments alike may have a measurement of their own personalities. A review of the literature indicates that the evaluation of corporate personality is instrumental in the understanding of the construct of corporates in terms of establishing what they stand for and as a differentiation variable. Through the use of the concept of the corporate personality, the process of understanding the character of organisations is founded on:

- a focus on re-currency and non-changing variables, which entails the development of an understanding of the features/characteristics of the company as located in varying environments and different periods of time (Keller & Richey, 2006); and
- a concentration on unique variables, i.e. ones that may differ from one company to the next (Keller & Richey, 2006).

There are defined characteristics of corporations that are both constant and unique, and which can be employed for comparative analysis between and among companies, and therefore constitute how an image is constructed in the mindset of the stakeholders and audiences (Davies et al., 2003; Kaul & Chaudhri, 2019; Sisson & Bowen, 2017).

According to Markwick and Fill (1997), corporate personality constitutes a derivative of two main elements, namely organisational culture and strategic purpose. Organisation culture refers to the main assumptions, values, norms and critical beliefs of a company, otherwise referred to as the corporate philosophy. The corporate philosophy is then articulated through the way in which the company expresses itself, its manifestation of symbols, structures, rituals, artifacts, and norms of behaviour. This development of culture translates to the establishment of certain characteristics or behaviours "the way we do things around here" (Guptara, 1998) or self-view. On the other hand, the second component of the corporate personality is the strategic purpose and strategic processes employed by the firm, which entail the strategy that drives the institution. This includes but is not limited to how a company drives its mission statement through a defined set of strategic objectives; the process of strategy formulation; the establishment of the vision statement and objectives and how these permeate down through the entire establishment; and how the entity relates to its stakeholders (Aaker & McLoughlin, 2010).

Scholars such as Roper and Fill (2012: 351-352) go on to define corporate personality as the "…embodied in the way the organisation carries out its business, the logic of its activities, the degree of persistence and aggression it displays in the markets in which it operates and the standards that are expected of all stakeholders... Corporate personality is what an organisation actually is."

Of critical importance is the fact that, whereas corporate image and corporate reputation may be beyond the control of a company, corporate personality/character is a variable that falls within the sphere of control of the organisation. Companies tend to behave or communicate those critical traits that their employees, and to greater extent stakeholders, hold as beneficial to the corporate in the long run. These attributes will vary from company to company (Sisson & Bowen, 2017).

3.2.14 Corporate strategy

Corporate strategy has been defined as "the direction and scope of an organisation over the long term which achieves advantage for the organisation through its configuration of resources within a changing environment, to meet the needs of markets and to fulfil stakeholder expectations" (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington, 2008: 10). This definition was developed from foundational scholarly work, such as a study by Ohmae (1983), who notes that while all corporate strategies are being developed, a business must aim to attain superior competitive advantage. The sole purpose of strategic planning "is to enable a company to gain, as efficiently as possible, a sustainable edge over its competitors" (Aaker & McLoughlin, 2010: 18). Corporate strategy thus refers to "an attempt to alter a company's strength relative to that of its competitors in the most efficient way" (Ohmae, 1983: 36). In furtherance of this proposition, scholars have developed what has come to be known as the 'strategic triangle', which denotes the importance of the three sets of stakeholders at the heart of a competitive strategy, namely company, customer, and competition, where the strengths of the company must meet the needs of the customer and maintain an edge in the long-term existence of the company against competing offerings. This positions reputation management as part of the strategic assets crucial to sustaining a competitive edge (Aaker & McLoughlin, 2010).

Mintzberg (1987) outlines five classes of strategy that assist in formulating corporate strategy perspectives, which have come to be known as 'the Five Ps' of strategy:

➢ planning - corporate strategy is an outcome of an organised planning process, which includes establishing objectives; assessment of threats and emerging opportunities; assessment of the internal strengths and weaknesses; constructing and assessing options; and finally, the choice of options and execution.

➢ plotting - the enduring feature of corporate strategy is in its abilities to construct a lasting process that is continuously outdoing competing forces that therefore responds to competitor strategic moves, with the aim of gaining a lasting competitive advantage.

➢ pattern - this is a culmination of monitoring certain trends over a period of time, which will then inform the process of strategy formulation.

➢ position - for any organisation to craft a competitive strategy, that entity must first understand where it is at in terms of market position. The organisation must understand not only the market, but also every force within the market environment.

> perspective - the strategy, which is competitive and enduring, emerges from the way in which it absorbs the organisation's worldview, and is thus seated on the corporate personality or character of the company.

Hamel and Prahalad (1989) introduce a critical component of corporate strategy, namely strategic intent, which they define as an ambitious and compelling dream that energises and provides the emotional and intellectual energy for a journey to the future. Strategic intent, according to Hamel and Prahalad (1989), consists of the following three key components:

> Direction - strategy is tied to both the mission and vision statements of the company in a way that is unifying and proposes a personal touch to the perspective of the future.
> Discovery - this injects a sense of uniqueness, and a promise to explore new, uncharted and competitive spaces.
> Destiny - this promises the internal and external stakeholders an emotionally loaded objective, which internal stakeholders mostly view as intrinsically irreplaceable and priceless.

However, for a corporate strategy to be competitive and sustainable, it must also be guided by strategic objectives. Drucker (1955: 81) noted that "objectives are needed in every area, where performance and results directly and vitally affect the survival and prosperity of the business." When objectives are established in an effective manner and are communicated broadly among the stakeholders within a company, they advance commonality of direction and therefore become tributaries of effective and efficient organisation. Furthermore, they facilitate the optimum distribution and allocation of scarce resources, which further enhances corporate performance and strengthens the reputation of the firm. Strategic objectives also set the benchmark against which the company is measured. As noted by Aaker and McLoughlin (2010), there are three hierarchical levels of strategic objective:

> 'Corporate strategies' are a holistic representation of the entire company. These strategies are fixated on the overall performance and direction of the company, especially seeking to unlock value for the company in the long run.
> 'Tactical strategies' are mainly divisional level strategies or those focusing on strategic business units. They are task-oriented in pursuit of chosen strategies to compete in selected markets in the medium-term range.

> ‘Operational strategies’ are focused on the plans at functional and departmental levels. They are highly detailed outlines of key tasks, plans, reports, and procedures towards actions required in delivering the above two high-level strategies.

For the corporate strategy to be cohesive, it must speak to the other two lower tier strategies, with the aim of achieving a cohesive and commonly bound direction (Kotler et al., 2017).

3.2.15 Organisational culture

The organisational atmosphere is a construct of cultural assumptions, values, norms, sanctions and beliefs which tend to inform the behaviours of persons and communities within the organisation which, by extension, establish shared persona or behaviour. Many scholars use ‘corporate personality’ and ‘organisational culture’ interchangeably. In practice, organisational culture refers to the image of what an organisation is, what it stands for, what it is like, and therefore how it presents itself in communication and interaction with the world (Gibb, 1961; Mullins, 2005; Schein, 2015).

According to Mullins (2015: 108), organisational culture may be defined as “the collection of traditions, values, policies, beliefs and attitudes that constitute a pervasive context for everything we do and think in an organisation”, while Schein (1985: 87) coined the popular understanding of organisational culture as “the way we do things around here”. These notions of organisational culture as the thoughts and behaviours prevalent in an organisation that influence the way things are done are illustrated in Figure 3.5 below, otherwise known as the ‘cultural iceberg’.
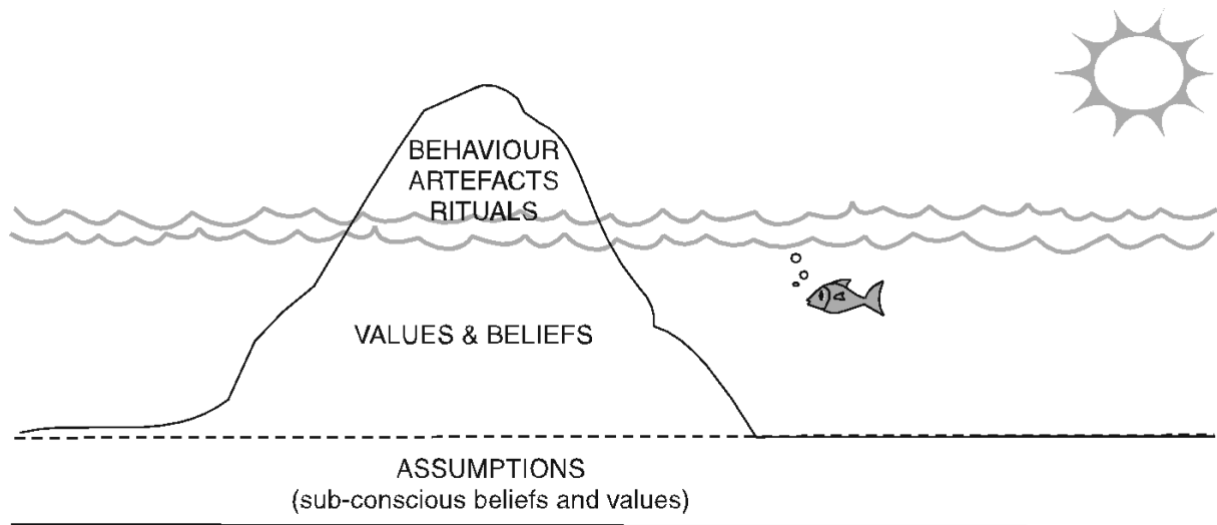
Figure 3. 5: The cultural iceberg

 (Source: van Riel & Fombrun, 2007)

The illustration above denotes the understanding that, in organisational culture, there are observable and 'tangible' components of culture, notably:

- ➢ Behaviour - beliefs regarding personal and interpersonal behaviour, traditions, and guidelines about behaviours that are deemed acceptable or unacceptable.
- ➢ Artifacts - tangible expressions such as symbols, buildings and interior decorations in buildings, the dress code of the organisation, symbols and benchmarks, or role models.
- ➢ Traditions - trends of collective behaviour which have symbolic value, such as writing styles, business rituals, and ceremonies (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007).

Beneath the tangible tip of the iceberg are the values and beliefs that inform behaviours and give rituals their peculiar meaning and impact in the organisation. Values and beliefs may be overtly expressed in sayings, payoff lines, and slogans. These values and beliefs are underpinned by the organisational cultural assumptions that constitute the enduring and founding ideas that are no longer questioned by the culture, but which guide the thinking and behaviour of the stakeholders (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Johnson et al., 2008).

A clearly defined corporate culture shapes the communication climate within the organisation, that is to say, the structures, beliefs and values defining corporate communication in and by the company. The culture of an organisation is integral in either enhancing or hindering communication. According to Gibb (1961), the

'communication climate' of a company may be responsive and open, enabling collaborative work and the multi-layered and directional flow of information, but it can also be non-responsive and closed, thereby discouraging the same. Seminal work by Peters and Waterman (1982) outlines the notion that the outstanding characteristics of competitive companies are borne out of their investment in the cultural values to provide a campus for the business processes, and to unlock the intrinsic value of employees in stimulating their approach to work. Scholars like Deal and Kennedy (1982) pushed the frontiers of these arguments, noting that cultural durability is a critical component defining the behaviour and progression of a company.

It is within this school of thought that the argument is advanced that strong organisational cultures are ones that play a critical role in the business as they are both horizontally and vertically shared and held as the measure of performance. According to Huczynski and Buchanan (2016), strong cultures entail the levels to which employees share a commitment to a defined set of objects and values ingrained in the management approach and the supporting high motivation levels towards the attainment of the objectives (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). Aaker (2018) suggests that a strong corporate culture is pivotal in stimulating corporate performance in the following ways:

➤ It replaces formal rules, procedures and supervision, gearing employees towards the values of high product quality and customer relations and empowering the means to make decisions towards the achievement of the corporate values.

➤ It increases employees' loyalty and commitment to the company therefore making it easy to retain a highly talented and skilled employee pool. This is mainly because human beings have an inherent need both to belong and to be part of a higher calling or pursuit of a bigger dream, therefore strong culture can satisfy both needs by instilling the value and culture of a 'family' assembled to achieve greater things than would otherwise be possible.

➤ It can be employed to institute organisational change, on the foundational base that by changing values, behaviour will equally follow suit.

3.2.16 Stakeholders

A review of the literature shows that there are many scholars who have examined the topic of corporate reputation management to varying degrees, yet the field of study is limited in focus when it comes to the age of the social blogosphere. In an attempt to create convergence in the definition of stakeholders, the most representative definition is one that defines the term "as those individuals or groups who depend on the organisation to fulfil their own goals and on whom, in turn, the organisation depends" (Johnson et al., 2008:

93). Equally compelling is the broader definition of stakeholders as the "individuals and/or groups who are affected by or affect the performance of the organisation in which they have an interest. Typically, they would include employees, managers, creditors, suppliers, shareholders (if appropriate) and society at large" (Worthington & Britton, 2006: 220). Additionally, scholars have advanced the definition to include persons or groupings who are either harmed by, or at advantage from the organisation, or whose standing can be compromised or has to be upheld by the organisation (Jobber, 2017).

Considering the foregoing, it is critical to note that the definition of stakeholders has evolved over time, with the literature initially examining the concept mainly from the traditional communication perspective. However, the trend that is conceptually consistent in the existing literature (Davis, Kee & Newcomer, 2010; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2016; van Riel & Fombrun, 2007) is the fact that there are three major categories of stakeholder, as illustrated in Figure 3.6 below, for any given establishment:

➢ Internal stakeholders - these are the various structures within the organisation itself which include but are not limited to, directors, senior managers, operational managers, and employees of a company or volunteers.

➢ Connected Stakeholders - these are directly linked to the company through economic or contractual relations with the company. They vary from customers or beneficiaries of non-governmental organisations, intermediaries, suppliers, and stakeholders of the company.

➢ External stakeholders - these are the stakeholders that are not directly linked to the company but are on the boundaries of those that are linked through an interest in the company's activities or are affected by the operation of the company in an indirect manner. These include, but are not limited to, the government, lobby groups, and media, among others.
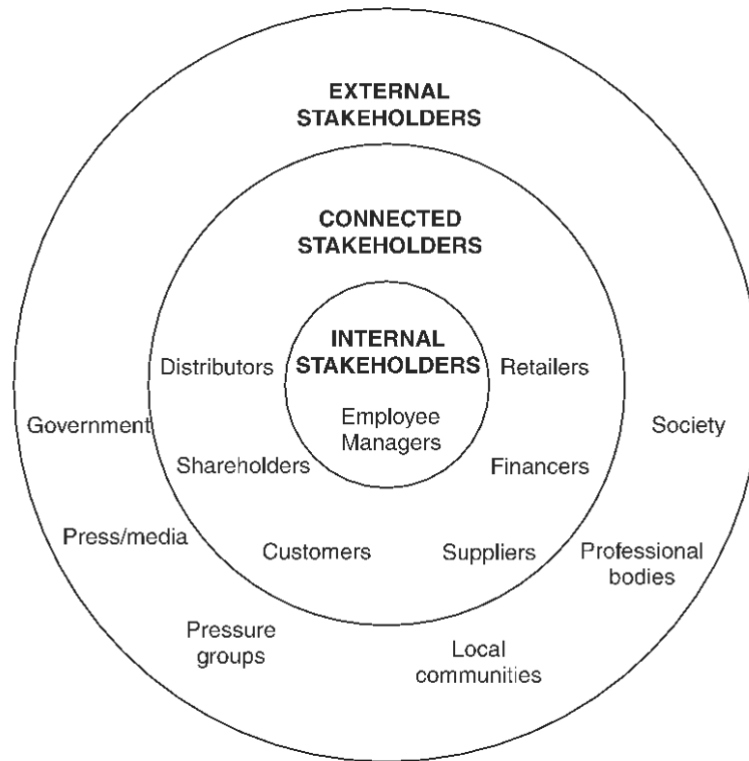
Figure 3. 6: Stakeholders of a company

(Source: van Riel & Fombrun, 2007: 178)

Scholars such as Mendelow (1981) devised a method that is critical in the selection and prioritisation of the various stakeholders. The matrix developed by Mendelow (1981) is now widely employed in assessing the following two major issues:

➢ the level of interest in influencing the company towards the satisfaction of the stakeholder's needs, or to protect their interests; and

➢ the amount of power that is vested in the stakeholder towards advancing certain actions that have implications on the company (Kotler et al., 2017).
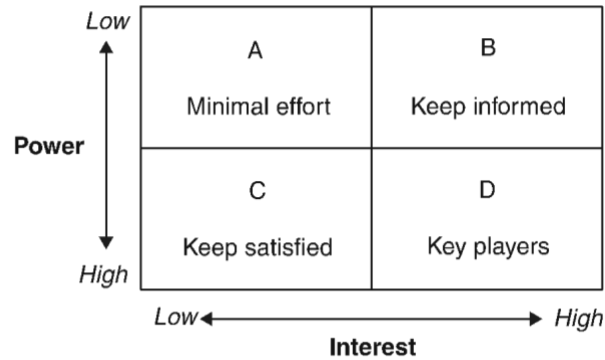
Figure 3. 7: Mendelow's power/interest matrix.

(Source: Kotler et al., 2017: 105)

Kotler et al. (2017) suggest that, in Quadrant A, stakeholders do not have both the interest or influence in the organisation, as it has little impact on the stakeholders, and they lack the power to make any decisions to influence the company. Accordingly, the company ought not to prioritise them, but it is worth the company's time to monitor them nonetheless. Quadrant B stakeholders are of high importance as they have a crucial interest in influencing the company and decisions. However, while these stakeholders have low power levels in affecting the company, they might have influential power in the future, hence the need to keep them informed of the company's activities. In Quadrant C, stakeholders are critical due to the high levels of power they wield. They have low interest in applying the power to influence the company, yet if they are to be affected or disappointed, they might be convinced to apply their power to protect their interest or to advance their position. For this reason, the company must ensure that the stakeholder is satisfied at all material times. Lastly, in Quadrant D stakeholders are most significant because they hold both the power to decide and the interest to apply the power. These stakeholders range from customers, main suppliers and intermediaries to senior managers and strategic allies. Companies must invest in managing relations with the key players, as they are commonly referred to (Aaker, 2018; Kaul & Chaudhri, 2015; Kotler et al., 2017).

Despite the advances in the definition of stakeholder management, there is little literature available on how stakeholders are to be managed and engaged on social blogs, as this is considered new media, an area of study still in the process of examination. Where literature on stakeholder engagement emerges, it mainly emanates from the Americas, Europe and Asia, and there was no evidence found of these sorts of studies being conducted in Africa.

3.2.17 Key reputation management pillars

In analysing the existing body of literature on the topic of corporate reputation management, ten (10) key pillars underpinning the discipline emerged. These constitute the major philosophies and values that define the evolution and consolidation of corporate reputation management as a discipline. These are outlined in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3. 1: The corporate reputation management pillars

Pillar	Description	Gap Analysis
1	Corporate reputation management is a multiple stakeholder dimension discipline. This means that the study of the subject matter is undertaken from the points of view of different stakeholder perspectives, with different needs, experiences and worldviews of the company being investigated. These stakeholders may be internal or external stakeholders which include, but are not limited to, government, competitors, suppliers, media, management, employees, shareholders, board of directors, customers, analysts and lobby groups (Veh et al., 2018).	The traditional theoretical propositions were anchored on serving and attending to the reputational needs through the traditional channels of communications, where in the corporate of organisation had control over how and what the stakeholders consume in terms of messaging. In the traditional approach to reputation management, the touchpoints are controlled by management through corporate communications.
2	Strategic concepts or elements of corporate reputation management are intertwined. These elements start with defining the organisation itself, through establishing its corporate	The gap emerging is that their traditional approaches of corporate reputation management have been altered by the new media such as social blogs, thereby requiring that the company engage in internal strategies

	personality and examining how the organisation's internal stakeholders, such as employees, management and shareholders, perceive the company i.e. how they define the identity mix of their organisation. The other strategic element relates to how external stakeholders project the company, in terms of its image and the reputation itself, which is a sum total of the internal and external stakeholders evaluative process of the firm's standing (Barclay, 2016).	on how employee, operational, and general employees utilise social blogs, with the aim of shaping how they in turn influence the external stakeholders such as customers. Further to this, a research gap also emerges regarding the need to assess how these employees relate to the external stakeholders such as customers through research.
3	Reputation is a mediated experience through multiple organisational touchpoints. This suggests that reputation is an ecosystem that defines stakeholders' interface with the organisation through its multiple touchpoints such as strategic communications, encounters with products and services, interactions with employees and brand experience, among others (Abratt & Mingione, 2017).	The analysis of the current body of knowledge also highlights that the management of Corporate Reputation is done through multiple touchpoints, focusing on the traditional (tangible) touchpoints. This presents a gap upon which this study will be built, as the social blogs and online communications give birth to the digital touchpoints which require corporate to actively engage stakeholders (Kotler , Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021).
4	Corporate reputation ought to be evaluated and must hold a certain measured value at any given time. This entails a process of structured tracking, monitoring, and evaluation	The research gap emerges from the fact that the traditional approach of measuring corporate reputation is no longer adequate, as it will not factor in the online dimensions. However, it is

	of the corporate reputation through tools that have been defined over the years (Sarjana, Kartini & Rufaidah, 2018; Stuart, 1999; Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017).	critical to note that through this research, foundational work will lead to further research.
5	Corporate reputation is manageable. Although reputation is an elusive variable, because it is dependent on the viewpoint of various stakeholders and the bulk of the variables lie outside of the control environment of the organisation, the organisation can still utilise identity variables to influence both corporate image and reputation (Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Eckert, 2017; French & Wickham, 2018; Gotsi & Wilson, 2001).	This a key insight on which the research is anchored, whereby measuring the internal stakeholder's behaviours and attitudes and invest in key conceptual frameworks, will allow for the management of a competitive corporate reputation through influencing how the external stakeholders view the corporation.
6	Corporate reputation and financial performance of an organisation are strategically linked. Thus, business performance is influenced by a strong reputation mix. This is the case because the organisation is able to attract a competitive pool of employees, gain a sustainable edge against competition, build a loyal customer base, and have high engagement with stakeholders, which are all critical ingredients for	Though the theories focused on the traditional approaches, it is worth noting that it anchors this current research through locating the critical interplay between a positive reputation, financial performance, customer loyalty, and capacity to retain employees. This is foundational, as it justifies why it is key to interlink the traditional approaches towards corporate reputation and contemporary views.

	strong financial performance (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Keh & Xie, 2009; Khan, 2019; Li, Berens & de Maertelaere, 2019).	
7	Reputation comparative analysis drives stakeholder loyalty. This emerged from the Fortune 500 companies ranking, which has evolved to measure the performance of reputable companies in America (Delgado-García, De Quevedo-Puente & Blanco-Mazagatos, 2017).	This provides a contextual gap that though it is proven elsewhere. There is equally need to analyse the essence of such global trends in the local context.
8	Corporate reputation is measurable. Irrespective of the enormous challenges in observing and tracking the intangible asset of reputation, there have been quite a number of tools developed to strategically monitor and measure reputation with the aim of companies being able to maintain a lasting edge compared to competing offerings (Abratt & Mingione, 2017; Balmer & Greyser, 2006).	The tools that have been designed are by and large measuring the traditional touchpoints of corporate reputation management. Yet the introduction of the online spaces and social blogs require new perspectives in terms of tracking and tailor making the strategic steps towards managing corporate reputation in the digital age. This, however, should not be viewed as an end in itself, but highlights the gap that the management of corporate reputation in the age of social blogs, requiring new approaches that factor in the platforms as part of the broader organisational strategy to maintain competitiveness.
9	Corporate reputation is fragile and can be lost faster that it can be created (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001;	Fragility is even more prevalent in digital spaces than traditional channels of communication as the internet spreads the messages factor through e-WOM, which keeps

	Hansen, Samuelsen & Silseth, 2008; Khan, 2019; Li et al., 2019).	a permanent record (Kemp, 2021; Kotler , Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021; Snoden, 2019).
10	Corporate reputation can be a subject of study through advancing knowledge and approaches from other established disciplines, such as strategy, business management and marketing, among others (Cintamür and Yüksel, 2018; Khan, 2019; Li et al., 2019).	Extant literature was surveyed for relevant lacunae.

Having assessed the available literature related to the area of corporate reputation management, it is evident that there is a glaring gap in the existing body of knowledge in terms of the study of reputation and new forms of communication, with implications for the management of these new forms of communication. However, it must be noted that there are recurring variables that emerge in the literature, such as the pillars underpinning the understanding of corporate reputation management, and the definitions that can be used to make generalisations, which can be applied in the study of different contexts.

3.3 Section B: Contemporary theories on social blogs and corporate reputation management

This section outlines the review of theories on the concept of employees' use of public social media. Six contemporary theories will be analysed from the personal behaviour theories, social behaviour theories, organisational behaviour theories, and mass communication theories. These theories are boundary theory (Yang 2020); social capital theory (Cao et al., 2016; Delavari and Badizadeh, 2018); social cognitive theory (Carlson et al., 2016; Moqbel and Kock, 2018; Papadopoulos et al., (2013); social blogs and social exchange theory (Davids and Brown, 2021), while the last one is a seminal theory, the definitive model for management of corporate identity (Stuart,1999). The key insights from the theoretical literature review and analysis provide insights on how social blogs and their impact on corporate reputation are managed strategy should be formulated and managed in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry.

A conceptual framework explains the main or key concepts, key features and key words that are critical and underpinning research (Bougie 2009: 68-69). This is supported by Bhattacherjee (2012), who argues that there are various types of variables that constitute a conceptual framework which are noted below:

- Self-sufficient elements: those variables that influence and determine other variables.

- Reliant elements: those variables that are influenced and determined by other variables.

- Attributing elements: those components that are controlled by the self-sufficient components, yet they also regulate the components.

- Regulating elements: components that influence the relationship between the self-sufficient and dependent elements (Bhattacherjee, 2012: 11).

A conceptual framework is also defined as "a conceptual framework represents that researcher's synthesis of literature on how to explain a phenomenon… it maps out actions that are required in the course of the study given researcher's previous knowledge of other researchers' point of view and his observation of the subject of the research" (Reoniel, 2015: 1). Suffice it to note that the framework depicts how the researcher understands the connections and relationship between and/among variables, which in essence is the researcher's map for the investigation (Patrick, 2015: 1).

3.3.1 The Boundary Theory

Boundary theory is rooted in the process, and results between mutually independent domains, mainly focusing on the work, family, and private life domains (Yang, 2020: 1). The theory argues that there is a clear distinction between the work and out of work (non-work) domains, where employees at any given time establish temporal, physical, and psychological demarcations, or boundaries, in order to make sense of and apply themselves to the work and non-work roles and responsibilities (Chen, et al., 2020: 6). Wherein the physical workspace is the conventional office, herein referred to as work-life, while the non-workplace is physically the home space and family life (Van Zoonen & Banghart, 2018). In this regard, the theory denotes the specific roles assigned at work, wherein one is referred to as an employee, and falls into a work structure, with lines of command and job titles. At home, the same person assumes different roles and responsibilities as a parent, child, or spouse carrying different roles and responsibilities. To avoid chaos, the individual engages in different behavioural patterns with the aim of managing these different roles (Yang, 2020: 6). This has led to scholars examining the impact of the use of public social blogs and its impact (van

Zoonen, Verhoeven, and Vliegenthart, 2016; van Zoonen & Banghart, 2018; Yang, 2020). This is depicted in Figure 3.8 below:
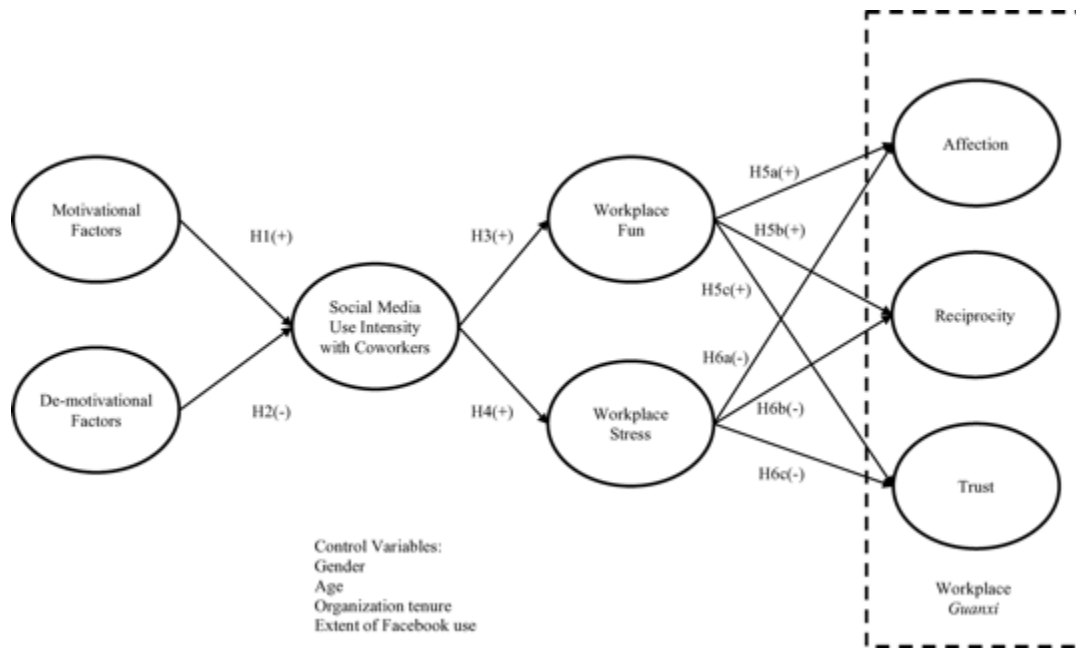
Figure 3. 8: *Social blogs Use intensity with Co-workers*

(Source: Yang, 2020: 6)

3.3.2. Social Capital Theory

This is a theory that integrates both the current or potential, linked to the control of an enduring network, wherein there is institutionalisation of familiar relationships, where there is an interplay of the networks members and their identities that are then supported through institutional means and the institution in return dependent on those networks. The theory is established in constructs and concepts, which include informal networks, trust, norms and values, which sustains the notion that social base or relationships are a valuable resource for organisational goals (Yang, 2020). Social capital come in the forms of structure, bonding, strong and weak ties, and horizontal and vertical networks. In relation to the social capital on employees' use of public social media the following types of social capital are key: "bridging and bonding social capital; structural; rational and cognitive social capital; online bridging and bonding social capital and shared vision and network ties (Chen et al., 2020: 5).

3.3.2.1 Work performance

Good employees' performance is intertwined with a rise in the levels of productivity of the company. Environmental and personal attributes have an impact on the performance of employees. Important environmental factors include occupational characteristics, reward systems, and technology. Institutional barriers are also one of the characteristics of the workplace culture that can be interrupted by competitive performance. Such factors will lead to a reduction in job satisfaction and stimulate high turnover (Delavari and Badizadeh, 2018).

3.3.2.2 Knowledge transfer

This entails the system in which knowledge is produced and shared with team members of the institution (Delavari and Badizadeh, 2018). Generally, institutions can opt for different mechanisms to build their knowledge system (Rezaie et al., 2009; Gholami et al., 2013).

Employees of the institution enjoy differing levels of access to information and apply multiple techniques to access it (Nazari- Shirkouhi et al., 2013). There is an imperative need for an institution to develop similar standardised procedures or use the same patterns to provide knowledge and develop it into new products and be best responsive to the stakeholders (Nazari-Shirkouhi et al., 2013; Nazari-Shirkouhi and Keramati, 2017).

Accordingly, employees' use of public social blogs is best understood in the context of social capital as playing a mediating role. According to Cao, Ding, and Zhang (2016), the use of public social media by employees for work purposes is instrumental in the knowledge transfer and performance of employees at work due to the shared vision, networking, social ties, and trust.

However, despite the contributions to both theory and practice, the theory has notable limitations. The theory has been tested mainly in Asian nations and their specific market environment.

The theory, according to Cao, Ding, and Zhang (2016), has been tested on a few variables of social capital, which leaves room for further inquiry regarding the broader theory.

3.3.3 The Media Synchronicity Theory

Media synchronicity theory is rooted in the assumption of compatibility between the media synchronicity capabilities, and the requisites of the communication process, which impacts the communication process (Dannis, Fuller, and Valacich, 2008). (Chen, et al. 2020: 7) have noted that "Media synchronicity theory

believes that all tasks need to go through two basic communication processes, namely the conveyance process and the convergence process. Each task contains these two communications processes and has different demands for the two processes. In addition, the theory also considers the moderating role of the degree of media attributes, training, social norms and past experiences. Specific to the employees' public social media usage…"

The theory, therefore, analyses the impact of the use of social networking tools on the job performance of employees. The contribution of Cao et al. (2016) to the development of the theory examined the use of the theory in developing insights on the effect of social networking tools on employees' performance in discharging their duties.

However, according to Lee and Lee (2018), the theory has been applied to assess the impact of Facebook utilisation by employees and the accompanying moderating role of task traits (Chen et al., 2020). The variables are highlighted in the conceptual framework presented by Lee and Lee (2018) in Figure 3.9 below:
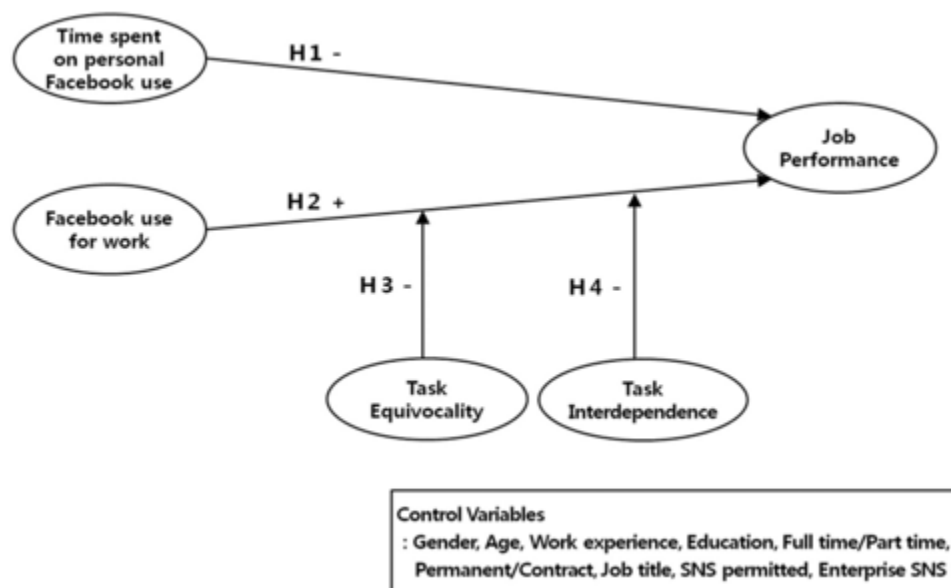
Figure 3. 9: *Media synchronicity theory to examine the impact of Facebook usage on the performance of office workers & the moderating role of task traits*

(Source: Lee & Lee, 2018: 833)

The theory was applied in the South Korean content surveying employees in the offices' utilisation of social networking sites and noted an increase in use, which attracted interest in terms of the impact of SNS use on job performance. The results indicated that Facebook utilisation for work had a positive impact on job performance. This despite the time spent on the platform, which in turn had no significant impact on the job

performance. Task interdependence and interconnectivity had a negative moderating effect on the scale of impact on the use of Facebook platform for job performance. This is attributable to Facebook specifically in terms of advantages for stimulating performance in roles where the scale of interdependence is low, as it is a medium due to relatively low synchrony and is preferred for one-to-one relations building and development. The theoretical implications are that there is a need to design and ensure policies and frameworks are in place to stimulate such synchronicity (Brooks 2015, Brooks and Califf 2016; Lee and Lee, 2018; Chen, et al., 2020).

3.3.4 The Social Cognitive Theory

The theory consists of three main variables, notably the personal factors that are rooted in the cognitive, affective and events of biological nature, environmental events and behavioural patterns (Papadopoulos, Stamati, and Nopparuch 2013). The foundational assumptions are that the individual emotions and cognitive abilities have an impact on their behavioural patterns, which by way of reciprocity, changes the individual's cognitive processing, emotions, and environment. By extension, the three, namely the individual's emotions, cognitive thinking, and environment, influence each other in a cyclical manner (Chen, et al., 2020: 4)

According to Carlson et al., (2016), social cognitive theory contributes immensely towards understanding the employee's usage of public social media and the resultant perspectives on the dynamic and mutual relationship of personal variables, environment, and behaviours. Accordingly, Chen et al., (2020) argue that social media use by employees may result in both "productive behaviours (task-oriented and relationship-building) as well as unproductive behaviours (deviance) at work" (Chen et al., 2020: 4). There is a build-up on channel expansion theory, wherein Carlson et al., (2016) explore the effect of utilising social blogs on organisational behaviour. This has resulted in the observation that "working individuals found that intensity of social media uses contributed to greater task-oriented social media behaviours, more relationship-building social media behaviours, and more deviant social media behaviours…" (Carlson et al., 2016: 15). In addition, the afore-stated scholars discovered that the moderating impact of preoccupation with social blogs has on these direct relationships and discovered that such preoccupations diminish the impact of social blogs' use on both productive and unproductive behaviours. The interplay of these variables is outlined in Figure 3.10 below.
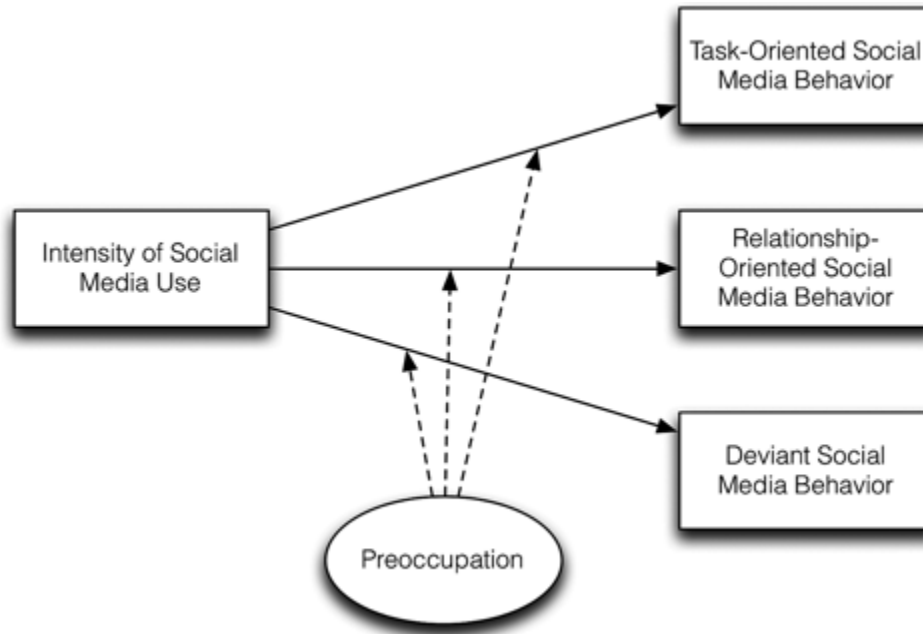
Figure 3. 10*: The Social blogs Use in the Workplace Model*

(Source: Carlson et al., 2016: 18)

3.3.4.1 Social blogs addiction impacts work and personal environments

The theory also contributes to the understanding of the impact of technology addictions, which includes Internet addictions, tracing them since the turn of the new millennium (Shapira et al., 2003). This further contributed to the body of research on social blog addiction (Kuss and Griffiths 2011b). Suffice to say that the social cognitive theory constitutes one of the key theories that seek to develop insights into addictive behaviour in personal and work environments.

These addictive social blogs' behaviours stimulate conflict between platform users and the environment, which subsequently alters the latter (Moqbel and Kock 2018). Social cognitive theory underpins the argument that addictive social blogs' behaviour triggers a conflict between platform users and the work environment, which by extension affects job performance (Chen et al., 2020). Employees that are addicted to social blogs perform, as their productive time competes with productive work (Charlton 2002). According to Andreassen et al., (2014), time spent on social blogs leads to a reduction in performance at work. This has led to some institutions attempting to ban the use of social blogs at work in order to avoid the performance challenges, which in most cases has not succeeded (Moqbel and Kock 2018).

3.3.5 Social blogs and the social exchange theory

The social exchange theory (SET) has gained traction as one of the foundational theories employed to develop insights into the social exchange in web-based communities online (Gharib et al., 2017; Jahan and Kim, 2020; Kapoor et al., 2018). The theory was first developed by Homans (1958). The foundational pillars of the theory are rooted in sociology economics and psychology. The theory seeks to explore the social behaviour of people in economic spheres. Pivotal to this theory is that there is trade through a social exchange relationship.

Despite the theory gaining traction in social platforms research, it is criticised for its lack of theoretical precision on the subject matter. Accordingly, the theory is criticised for simplifying complex relationships, and factors involved while engaged in economic activities (Cropanzano et al., 2017; 2U Inc, 2020). Moreover, since the theory's focus is on the exploration of social exchange (Blau, 1964), social blogs' consumption habits and an interplay of other factors have changed both rapidly and drastically (Davids and Brown 2021).

According to Li et al. (2020), there is a need for additional research focused on theorising social blogs' growth and use, especially in relation to the institutional use of social blogs strategies and how it impacts engagement with the broader stakeholders. Suffice to note that there is a need to further invest in the development of both conceptual and theoretical frameworks to address the issues of organisational use of social blogs that are not explained by SET (Albert and Salam, 2013; Urquhart and Vaast, 2012; Vaast and Walsham, 2013). Accordingly, Davids and Brown (2021) propose a framework for the development of emergent issues such as social blogs strategy, reputational risk, and online community engagement as outlined in Figure 3.11 below.
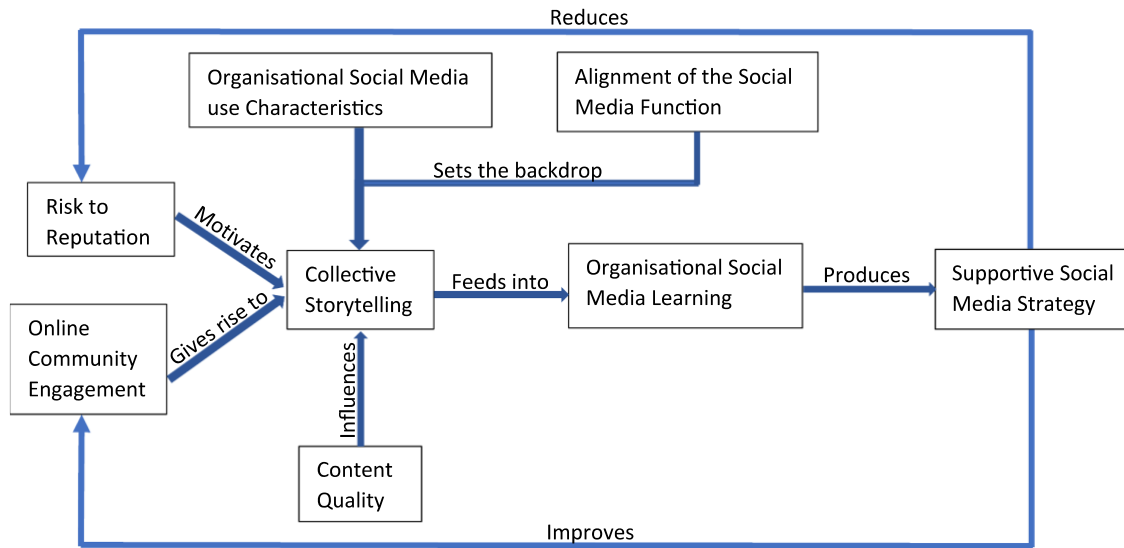
Figure 3. 11*: Emergent theories on social media engagement and management of reputation online*

(Source*:* Davids and Brown 2021: 11)

3.3.5.1 Social blogs use in organisations

Organisations are now using social blogs for varied purposes, which include but are not limited to: (1) general employees engaging the social blogs through internal communications (Ho ̈gberg, 2018; Vuori, 2012); (2) as mechanisms for the development of new business models (Bouwman et al. 2018; Lyons et al. 2008); (3) employees collaboration on such platforms for developing new products (Mpandare and Li, 2020); and (4) as the most effective and efficient way towards the collection and dissemination of information, which is critical towards the improvement in the institutional decision- making process (Wright et al., 2010). Organisational use of social blogs now includes external purposes, with stakeholders engaging on the social media, as opposed to the traditional sources of communication such as newspapers, television, and radio (Rashtchy et al., 2007; Vollmer and Precourt, 2008) for contact and interface with the company and its products and/or services (Corrada et al., 2020; Lempert, 2006; Vollmer and Precourt, 2008). Customers leave a permanent online footprint through reviews of their experiences with the company, also referred to as electronic word of mouth (e-WoM) (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2019). Suffice it to note that organisations ought to view social blogs as a strategic resource upon which to utilise the attainment of the organisational strategic goals (Appel et al. 2020; Shankar et al. 2011).

Unlike traditional media, social blogs' use increases the quality and scope of engagement between organisations and their stakeholders online, through their multiplicity of communities. This is critical in building and strengthening relationships (Sheng, 2019).

Further to this, user-generated content on these platforms helps organisations to better understand their stakeholders, which is critical for building a contemporary perspective on reputation management in the age of social blogs (Akar and Topcu, 2011; Smits and Mogos, 2013; Wang et al., 2020b)

3.3.5.2 Challenges of social blog use

The main challenge with social blogs is that they are not structured like traditional media, which can easily lead to organisational reputational damage if there is no strategy clearly defining the reputational agenda (Wang et al., 2020b). Most organisation engage in the online spaces from a defensive approach making it increasingly difficult to recover from a reputational attack (Nadeau et al., 2020). The shifts from a supply-side approach towards communication to a two-way communication process have left many top-level managers struggling as to how to manage the corporate reputation in the corporate sphere, is what the research seeks to answer through contributing to the framework for the industry and conceptual proposals for future research (Fuchs-Kittowski et al., 2009; Hanna et al, 2011).

3.3.5.3 Digital content

The quality of content from an organisation constitutes a key factor in deciding whether the organisation will attract a following online or not. There is a need for a deliberate strategy on how the organisation develops, shares, and handles the feedback online to enhance corporate reputation management (Wang et al., 2020a). According to Tilly et al. (2017), there is a need for the development of new data and information quality for the organisations to better develop and manage content online, which can be done jointly with the stakeholders if there is a strategy that guides the internal stakeholders towards such an outcome "reciprocal, dynamic, and implicit social-technical process that enables the matching of individual information supply by some prosumers 'both producers and consumers of information' and information demand by others" (Tilly et al., 2017: 13). The investment by the organisations into new approaches to understanding the needs, concerns, demands and experiences requires both a well thought out approach and tools to support the same, which will develop an inbuilt mechanism for corporate reputation management (Wright and Hinson, 2013; Carim and Warwick, 2013; Li et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020a).

Accordingly, content on social blogs is vast and varies from one platform of use to another, which can include tweets on Twitter, status updates on Facebook, to publishing videos on YouTube. Therefore, platform users share their thoughts through different mechanisms by:

(1) posting the 'comments'; (2) engaging the 'like' button to express agreement with content; or (3) 'retweeting' what someone has tweeted (Kietzmann et al., 2011). When a user is 'retweeting' this is a sign of agreement and showing support for the message expressed in the given tweet. Such actions may be an expression of friendship and loyalty on the platforms, even if those involved do not know each other (Boyd et al., 2010), while 'liking' posts lends support to the content shared (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

3.3.5.4 Community engagement

An engagement with communities online entails that there is a departure from the uni-directional approach of communication towards dialogue or conversing "the progression from interacting with the interface physically to becoming cognitively immersed in the content offered by it (e.g., social blogs) and then onto proactively spreading the outcomes of this involvement" (Oh et al., 2010, p. 25).

There is a deliberate need for organisations to utilise the social media features towards building a community of interest and loyalty online. This is done by ensuring that the organisation posts content and become part of the engagement process so as to show a commitment to being part of the community online (Andriole, 2010; Brodie et al., 2013; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Li et al., 2020; Sashi, 2012). Companies that develop strategies and plans that are part of the broader reputation management process become active users of social media, and rapidly engage the online community in conversations to positively influence the levels of responsiveness of the online community back towards the organisation. There are strategic benefits of such a deliberate consistency in responsiveness that leads to a satisfied online stakeholder chain with the potential increase in financial return (Sheng, 2019). Such engagements between a company and its online audience facilitate a more responsive co-creation of services, assessment of organisational performance, and unlock sustainable value for both the organisation and audiences (Namisango and Kang, 2018). The gaps in the literature reviewed under section D are summarised in Table 3.2 below.

3.2 Theoretical Gap Analysis

Author	Theory	Similarity with the Study	Gaps study will fill
Yang (2020)	Boundary theory	Domains of work and home affect how employees and top-level managers use social media.	The theory does not consider corporate reputation management as a strategic area affected by such use of social blogs by both the employees and top-level managers.
Cao et al. (2016) Delavari and Badizadeh (2018)	Social capital theory	The role of employees' respective networks and how they utilise such networks and relationships in their use of social blogs at work.	This was a generic study on the use of public social blogs but was not connected to the strategic and practice of corporate reputation management by both employees and top-level managers. Further the focus was on the use of the specific social platform Facebook.
Carlson et al. (2016) Moqbel and Kock (2018) Papadopoulos et al. (2013)	Social cognitive theory	The behavioural pattens on the use of social blogs by top level management and employees at work.	The theory did bridge the use of top-level management and employees towards reputation management.

		-	Further to this, the theory assumes that the addiction with the social blogs are counter-productive, and affects performance at work, which shows that the theory does not attend to the reputation management dynamics online.
Davids and Brown (2021)	Social blogs and social exchange theory.	General employees and how they engage with the online community.	There is limited articulation of the role of top-level management in driving the reputation management agenda online. The theory is concerned on the negative effects of online use and does not articulate the broader strategy of corporate reputation management which presents the gap of articulating contemporary approaches in reputation management in the age of social media.

Stuart (1999)	The definitive model of the corporate identity management process.	Identified the traditional approach of management of corporate reputation, focusing on organisational culture and the management of employees.	Does not attend to effect of social blogs on corporate reputation management and the way in which both the employees and top-level management can influence reputation management utilising such platforms.

3.4 Section C: Towards building a conceptual framework for corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry

The theoretical analysis shows gaps in the contemporary and recent literature pertaining to the effect of social blogs on the corporate reputation management process. These gaps are both conceptual, contextual, and theoretical. Figure 3.12 below, is an illustration that builds towards the construction of the conceptual framework of the research.
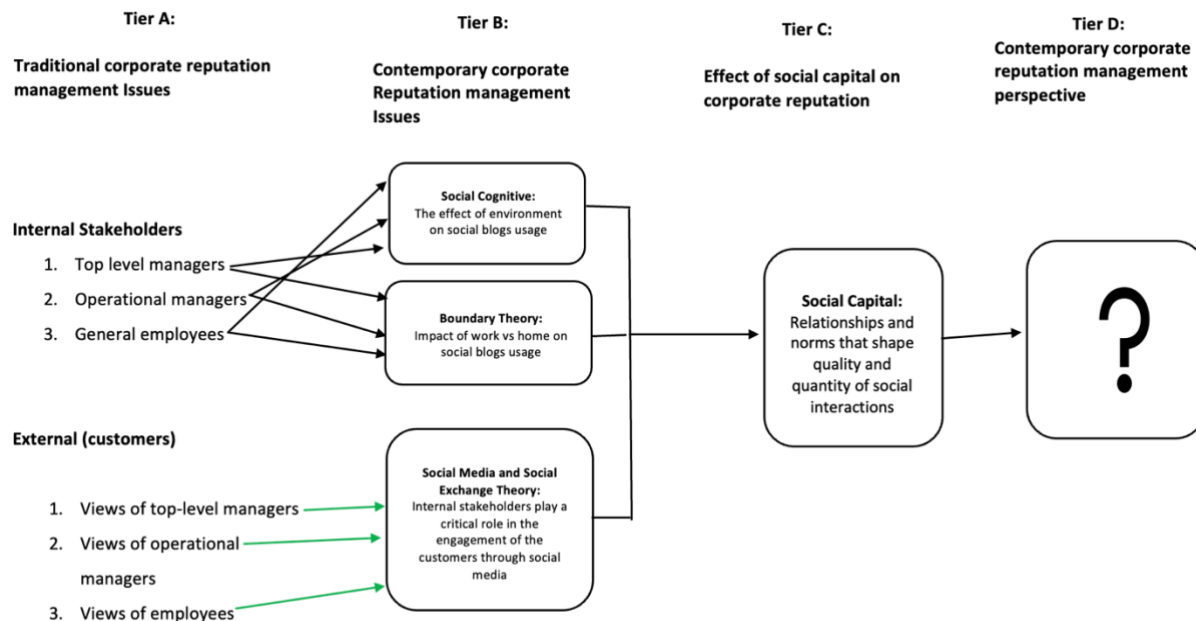
Figure 3. 12*: Towards Building a conceptual framework on the Effect of Twitter as a social blog on managing corporate reputation in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry*

(Source: Researcher's own construction)

3.4.1 The pillars of the conceptual framework

The building of the conceptual framework is structured into four strategic pillars, which are:

- Tier A: This is the traditional approach in corporate reputation management. This was developed from the traditional theories on corporate reputation management, as highlighted through the gap analysis. Having analysed the six broad traditional theories: 1) reputation as a derivative of signalling through information; 2) the management of an invisible (intangible) asset; 3) the micro socio-cognitive aspects of corporate reputation management; 4) the macro socio-cognitive aspects of corporate reputation; 5) cultural sociological thinking, which is founded on socio-political approaches to corporate reputation; and 6) the role of participation and communication in the formation of reputation (Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty, 2006; Johnson, Erez, Kiker, & Motowidlo, 2002; Lange & Pfarrer, 2017; Lange, Lee & Dai, 2017; Ravasi et al., 2018). The theories place the centrality of internal stakeholders, namely top-level operational managers and employees, at the centre of management of corporate reputation through taking structured and deliberate efforts towards shaping a favourable identity and image for the organisation. This led to the study placing such stakeholders at the epicentre of inquiry, breaking them down into those three categories and further seeking their views on how they seek customers engaging through the new media.

- Tier B: This refers to the contemporary study of social blog use, with limited research on corporate reputation management. The study reviewed contemporary literature on how employees engage on public social blogs reviewing four main contemporary theories, namely: boundary theory (Yang 2020); social capital theory (Cao et al., 2016; Delavari and Badizadeh, 2018); social cognitive theory (Carlson et al., 2016; Moqbel and Kock, 2018; Papadopoulos et al., (2013); social media, and social exchange theory (Davids and Brown, 2021). Social cognitive theory shapes the conceptual framework by grounding the study on the fact that the internal stakeholders' use of social blogs is influenced by the environment. Boundary theory contributed to the conceptual framework in noting the dichotomy of work and home domains, and how they influence the usage of social media. Social blogs and social exchange grounded the conceptual framework on the practicality of utilising internal stakeholders to determine their views, basing this on how they interact with the customers. This equally influenced research design as the platforms for inquiry, where social blogs do not allow for experiments, as they are public platforms. The last contemporary impact on corporate reputation is the social capital theory, which informs both

individual and corporate relationships and how they shape the quality and quantity of social interactions through social blogs (Carroll, 2013: 281).

- Tier C: influenced by Tier B, where little extant research motivated the current study. It concerns how employees engage on the social blogs and their views on customer engagement using social blogs feed into the social capital of the institutions in the industry.

- Tier D: refers to a connection between tiers, pioneered as part of this study.

3.5 The Research Conceptual Framework

This study was guided by a conceptual model, which seeks to assess the variables in the topic under investigation. The Twitter microblog platform is the independent variable, while corporate reputation management is the dependent variable in this study, as shown in Figure 3.13 below. This is integrating Tier A, B, C and D, with little research for the synthesis of the four tiers.
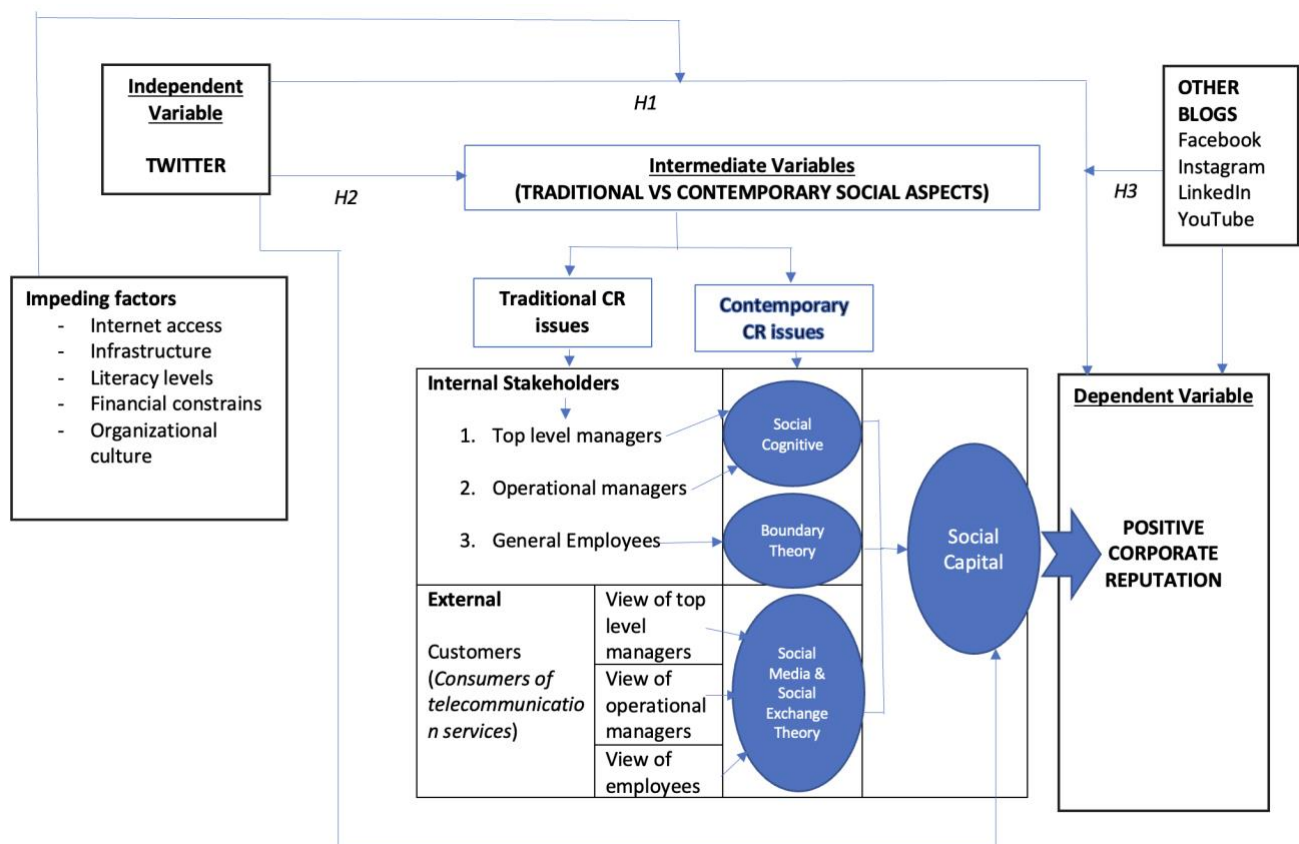
Figure 3. 13: *Research Conceptual Framework*

(Source: Researcher's own construction)

145

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 3.13 above, tested the main relationship (H1) for the study, which was to understand whether Twitter has a direct influence on the corporate reputation of telecommunication companies operating in Zimbabwe. Since the study was to position Twitter between the traditional corporate reputation guides (top-level managers, operation managers, general employees and customers) and the contemporary methods (boundary theory, social cognitive, social blogs and social exchange) these became the intermediate variables (H2) for the research. The fact that Twitter is not the only social blog in the landscape resulted in the study inviting other equal alternative types (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Instagram) as a comparison to assess their effect on corporate reputation against Twitter (H3). The use and application of social blogs are also affected by some impeding factors, as presented in the model, which include internet access, infrastructure, literacy levels, financial constraints, and organisational culture. Of more significance guiding the main gap of the study is that the traditional corporate reputation factors link with the contemporary issues and if well managed, can construct social capital of the telecommunication businesses to ultimately develop a positive corporate reputation.

3.6 Conclusion

Corporate reputation is gaining traction as a discipline of study regarding its implications for the performance of companies. Though there are scholarly examinations on the subject matter, there are competing dimensions in existing academic work, and in the actual practice of the science by professionals. The Zimbabwean telecommunications industry has faced numerous controversies as customers increasingly question the quality of services, the disappearing balances in their mobile phones, the prices which the stakeholders hold are predatory, the regulator threatening the players with penalties and the quest to remain viable in a very complex socio-political and economic environment. However, the literature reviewed in this chapter shows that there are various tools and perspectives that can be applied to track and manage corporate reputation in a competitive manner. The next chapter outlines the methodology used in conducting the research and presenting the results.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to outline the methodology that was employed in conducting the current research. The term methodology refers to how a study will be implemented, namely exploring both the theoretical and philosophical assumptions underpinning the study and the resulting influence on the selection of methods to be used to undertake the research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016). This entails outlining the research philosophy, paradigm, and research design and identifying those people who are going to participate in the research, and how they are going to be sampled. In addition, the data collection procedure, together with the instruments used, must be explained in some detail, and the tests of reliability and validity used in the research to ensure credibility must be explicated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data analysis methods that are employed in a study also need to be clearly stated, and the ethical considerations and limitations encountered during the research process revealing how these were overcome must also be addressed.

This research comprised an explanatory study which, according to Kelemen and Rumens (2008), refers to research that aims to develop new insights and thinking about the phenomenon being investigated, by asking questions that allow for evaluation of the phenomenon in a new scope and light. By taking an explanatory approach, this research will produce new knowledge on phenomena in the study of corporate reputation management using new media, which traditionally have not been available. The research, therefore, leans towards a pragmatist approach, which Creswell and Creswell (2018) note refers to a study that is both inductive and deductive. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue further that pragmatism, contrary to positivism, is geared toward the application of developing solutions, mainly arising from the investigation of circumstances and the consequential impacts of specific conditions. In this regard, this study is important, as it aims to develop a framework on social capital utilisation by internal stakeholders towards contemporary approaches on how corporates can effectively employ social blogs to better manage online reputation, and practical solutions in this regard will be recommended. The abovementioned issues pertaining to the methodology employed in the study will be discussed in greater detail within the scope of this chapter.

4.2 Research philosophy

A research philosophy is that perspective or worldview around which the development and understanding related to a particular phenomenon revolve. The philosophy underpinning a study sets the pivot upon which interpretations are made and instructs the approach and foundational assumptions through which the research methodology is selected (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; De Vaus, 2014; Saunders et al., 2016). The development of this perspective or worldview, which leads to the selection of the methodology, is of paramount importance, as it sets out the pillars upon which the study will rest. The research philosophy refers to the system of beliefs and assumptions informing the way in which a researcher views the world. These assumptions and beliefs influence and shape all aspects of the research project (Saunders et al., 2016). It is important to note that the philosophical worldview permeates the entire research architecture, where there is a need to unravel its complexities. This is the case because these philosophical worldviews are only latently or implicitly embedded in the research, yet they influence the entire process. This requires that issues are attended to and outlined from the onset, as they extend across the full spectrum of the research, which will establish whether the researcher settles for qualitative inquiry, a quantitative approach, or mixed methods (Baker & Foy, 2012; Creswell, 2013).

A worldview is understood here as "a basic set of beliefs that guides action" (Guba, 1990: 19). A worldview may be referred to as an epistemology, a paradigm, and/or an anthology (Baker & Foy, 2012; Neuman, 2009). Creswell and Creswell (2018: 6) define a worldview as follows:

> "general philosophical orientations about the world and nature of the research that the researcher begins to study… these types of beliefs held by individual researchers based on their factors will often lead to embracing a strong qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approach in their research."

Given the permeating role of the philosophical worldviews in research, scholars argue that a researcher ought to develop the competitive "skill of reflexivity" (Saunders et al., 2016: 151). This entails that a researcher at all times develops a system of introspection, exerting the self through the rigour of self-evaluation of his or her inherent assumptions, beliefs, or other preconceived notions, as a researcher would do to other persons (Creswell, 2013). This is illustrated in Figure 4.1, which shows how the reflexive process is developed.
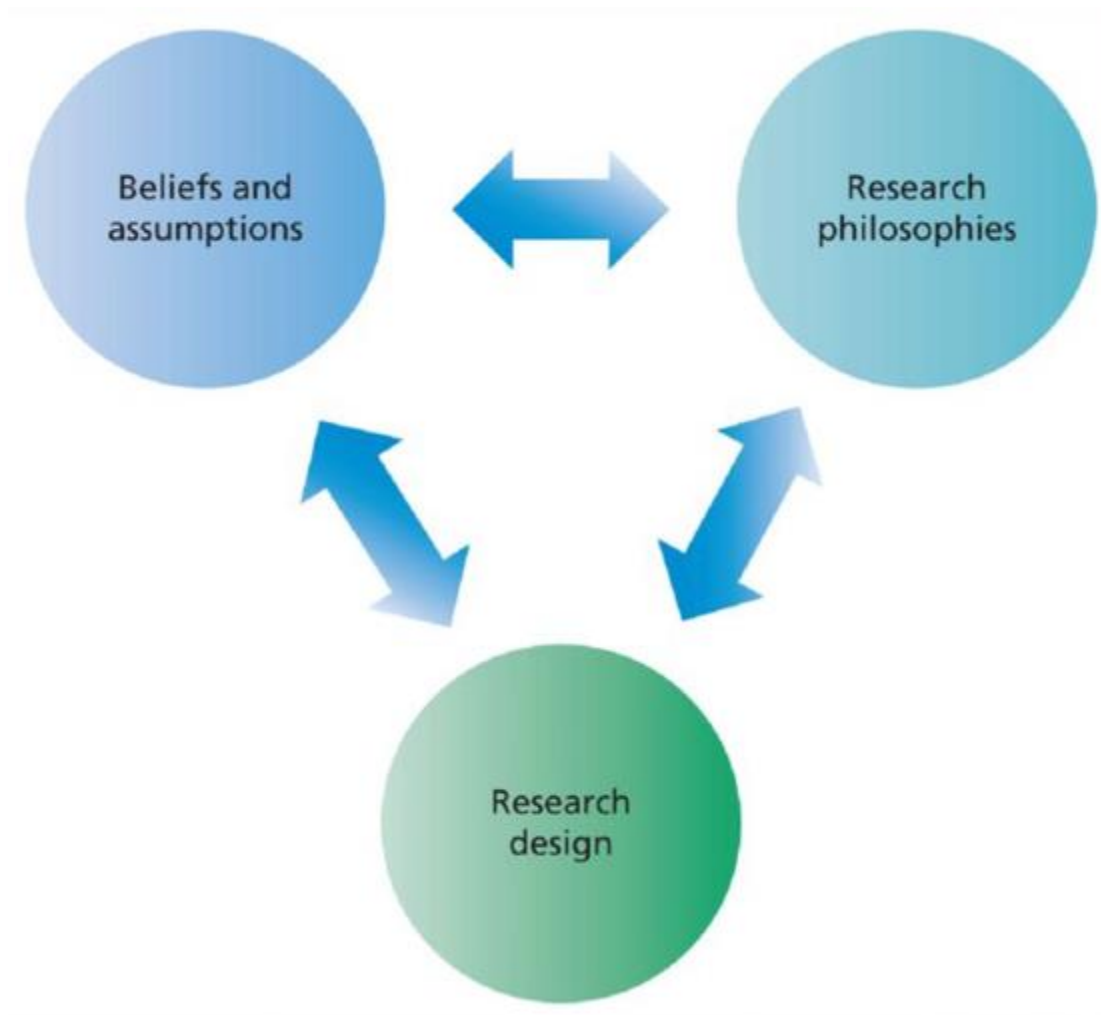
Figure 4. 1: Development of the reflexive process

(Source: Bristow & Saunders, 2016: 132)

There is a complex interplay and relationship between beliefs and assumptions, that is, the research philosophy underpinning a study, which is based on the researcher's beliefs and assumptions, and the research design that is selected through a reflexive process based on the underlying research philosophy. This complex triangulated process is performed within the four categories of worldviews that shape social science research, which are post-positivism, constructivist thinking, the transformative approach, and pragmatist philosophies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The four worldviews are articulated in Figure 4.2 below, which outlines the key variables constituting each of the worldviews.

Post positivism	Constructivism
• Determination • Reductionism • Empirical observation and measurement • Theory verification	• Understanding • Multiple participant meanings • Social and historical construction • Theory generation
Transformative	**Pragmatism**
• Political • Power and justice oriented • Collaborative • Change-oriented	• Consequences of actions • Problem-centered • Pluralistic • Real-world practice oriented

Figure 4. 2: The four philosophical worldviews

(Source: Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 108)

A post-positivist worldview holds that in reality, in the world, there is no such thing as absolute truth. This, therefore, entails that the process of research is highly focused on making assumptions and testing them to ascertain their credibility, or to discard them if they are found to be lacking credibility (Phillips & Burbules, 2000; Saunders et al., 2016). The constructivist philosophical worldview, on the other hand, suggests that the process of meaning is negotiated in human interactions, where the goal of research ought thus to interpret this meaning. Humans are thought to make meaning of their surroundings based on both social and historical experiences, taken as 'socialised cultural beings' (Schwandt, 1998). Hence, the process of understanding meaning is a social construct, which is an offshoot of human engagements as a community (Crotty, 1998). A transformative philosophical worldview is premised on the foundation of giving marginalised groups a pivotal role in research, with the aim of locating how they are living and changing their realities. The philosophy is anchored on the need for reconfiguring power dynamics and relations that have been in favour of majority classes, while making linkages to the inequalities and suppression of minority groups based on characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and age, among other political and social forms of dominance that perpetuate such inequalities (Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2010).

Lastly, the pragmatic philosophical worldview is not entrenched in any single system of understanding human activity and reality. It is immersed in mixed methods, as it draws insights from both the qualitative and the quantitative theoretical foundations in carrying out research. The worldview empowers the researcher to draw from both worlds in designing the research as the selected techniques, procedures, and methods are determined by the research objectives and needs. The mixed-methods approach emanating from the pragmatic worldview gives the researcher great leeway in terms of data collection and data analysis, instead of pushing the researcher towards leaning on either quantitative or qualitative methods, as may be the case in research guided by other worldviews (Creswell 2013). The pragmatist approach is mainly concerned with the 'what' and the 'how' of a study, an issue based on the broader goals of the study. The foundational issue is for the research to determine the necessity of undertaking the mixed methods approach, and to justify why both quantitative and qualitative approaches are critical in achieving a given set of objectives. The worldview is rooted in the historical, social, economic, legal and political contexts and aims to attend to the variables in that regard as they interact and shape phenomena. The approach opens the space for the selection of mixed methods in research and investigation of phenomena, with the aim of making assumptions and establishing the tools and procedures of both collecting and analysing data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Morgan, 2007; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010).

This research applied a mixed methods research design and drew on both the quantitative and qualitative approaches in its construction. This is referred to as the Quan-Qual sequential mixed methods (Creswell 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Saunders et al., 2016). It was therefore imperative that the research be properly grounded on the sequential mixed methods research approach. According to Saunders et al. (2016), the approach entails a double-barrelled study design involving two major strategies in data collection, namely the sequential exploratory study design, or the sequential explanatory research design; the former beginning with qualitative ahead of the quantitative approach, while the latter starting with quantitative, followed by a qualitative approach. This study began by using a quantitative approach, where data was collected using survey questionnaires. A questionnaire is an instrument for data collection, whereby the participants are required to answer the same preconceived questions in a predetermined process (De Vaus 2014; Ekinci, 2015). Thereafter, a qualitative approach was used whereby in-depth interviews were conducted with selected research participants. Saunders et al. (2016) argue that in-depth interviews are critical when conducting research, where deeper understanding of phenomena needs to be developed. This study therefore interviewed 18 purposefully selected key interview informants (KII) due to their expertise in the industry. The scholars also argue that top management

employees are highly inclined towards consenting to be interviewed in person, rather than completing a questionnaire, and also note that complex questions require interviews to be conducted for the researcher to obtain reliable, credible, and detailed data out of the process.

4.2.1 Mixed method research strategies

Mixed methods research has been defined as the employment of both quantitative and qualitative data collection approaches and supporting analysis techniques, including fusing the dual approaches in the entire research process (Saunders et al., 2016). Creswell and Creswell (2018: 249) define mixed method research as "an approach to inquiry that combines or integrates both qualitative and quantitative forms of research. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing or integrating of both approaches in a study." There are three particular strategies that are used in mixed methods research, namely "convergent mixed methods, explanatory sequential mixed methods and exploratory mixed methods" (Baker & Foy, 2012: 196). These three core mixed methods research designs are outlined in further detail in Figure 4.3 below. The explanatory sequential mixed methods approach was selected in this study, where the rationale for this choice will be explicated in the subsection to follow.
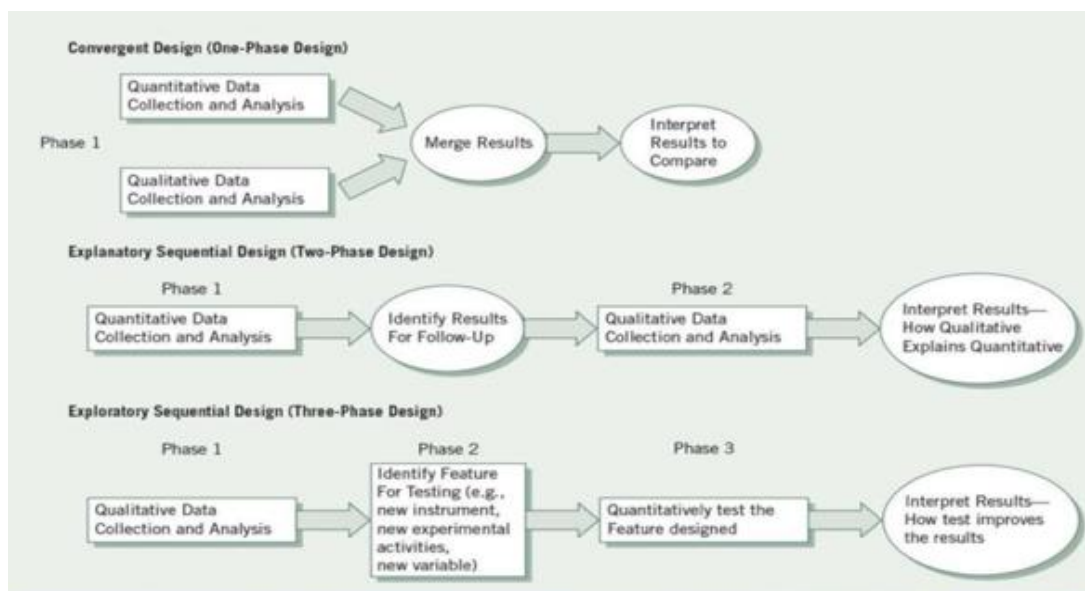
Figure 4. 3: Mixed methods core designs

(Source: Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 46)

4.2.2 Explanatory sequential mixed methods approach

The QUANT to QUAL sequential mixed method (Creswell 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell and Plano Clark 2011; Saunders et al., 2016) was selected for the purposes of this study. This study thus employed an explanatory sequential mixed method strategy, whereby the quantitative inquiry was first conducted through the use of a questionnaire, and the data collected were analysed. The results of this first step of quantitative data collection and analysis were then used to inform the development of the semi-structured interviews, a qualitative method, the findings of which were used to explain, in some depth, the results gathered in the questionnaire. The strategy is deemed explanatory in that the quantitative results are explained by the qualitative results, thereby developing deeper insights into the initial data gathered.

4.3 Population and sampling procedures

In this section of the chapter, the focus is, firstly, on describing the target population and, secondly, on justifying the sample size that was selected for the purpose of meeting the objectives of the study. The sampling strategy was derived from and guided by the mixed methods approach where both questionnaires (quantitative) and interviews (qualitative) were used as methods of data collection in the study. Different sampling strategies are used in quantitative and qualitative research, depending on the purpose of a study, thus the strategies used to select appropriate participants in this mixed-methods research will be outlined in detail below.

4.3.1 Target population

Population refers to the total number of respondents who can be investigated in order to answer the questions of the research. According to Saunders et al. (2016), a target population refers to the total number of people that are targeted by the research. The referred to target population can be subjected to an inquiry with the aim of understanding its thinking and positions on the subject matter of inquiry. For this research, the aim was to understand the effect of Twitter as a social blog on corporate reputation management in the telecommunication industry in Zimbabwe. The targeted population was employees and KIIs within the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe constituted the overall target population in this study. The employees as internal stakeholders are the critical driver of corporate reputation, revealing the need to explore how they are utilising managing corporate reputation in terms of the challenge of traditional approaches towards the new perspective driven by contemporary theories, especially social capital, in improving corporate reputation. Further, in a bid to understand the engagement with customers and their perceptions, the research interviewed top-level operational managers and employees to gauge levels of

satisfaction and interactions. Davids & Brown (2021) argue that it is feasible to gauge the perceptions of the customers and external stakeholders by inquiring from the employees and managers of a company about how they are performing the task. This is further supported by contemporary theories such as social capital, which assesses the strength of internal stakeholders as drivers of both strategy and practice (Cao et al., 2016; Delavari & Badizadeh, 2018). The decision to select the internal stakeholders in the categories of top-level, operational managers and employees was settled at due to the nature of the industry, which is heavily regulated, especially when it comes to the handling of customer information. Attempts to request for information related to customers' contact details required exemptions, and the consent of each customer. This proved to be expensive, time consuming and increased the chances that the research was going to be difficult to carry out within the projected time frame. A population refers to a large collection of individuals who are the main focus of a scientific inquiry and from which the final sample is actually selected (Creswell, 2013). The telecommunications industry is subdivided into five (5) categories, namely: fixed telephone services; mobile cellular services; internet access providers; postal services; and courier services, as outlined in Table 4.1 below and comprises 19 companies. A total number of 6,178 full-time employees work in these 19 companies in the telecommunications industry (POTRAZ, 2019), where the overall population was deemed large enough to warrant an investigation into the operations within the industry. The sampling procedures and research instruments used to gather data will be discussed in further detail in the subsections to follow.

Table 4. 1: Fixed telephone services, mobile cellular services, internet access providers, postal services and courier services

Market	Service Description	Licensed Operators
Fixed Telephone Service	Fixed Voice and Fixed Internet Services	1. TelOne
Mobile Cellular Service	Mobile Voice and Internet Services	1. Econet 2. NetOne 3. Telecel
Internet Access Providers (Class A)	Data and internet services	1. Africom 2. Dandemutande 3. Liquid 4. Powertel 5. Telecontract 6. Transmedia
Internet Access Providers (Class B)		1. CommIT 2. NetOne
Postal Services	Postal services	1. Zimpost
Courier Services	Domestic and International Courier Services	1. DHL 2. FEDEX 3. Courier Connect 4. Unifreight/Swift 5. Innscor Transport Company t/a Overnight Express 6. United Parcel Services 7. Skynet
Total		19 Companies

(Source: POTRAZ, 2018: 12)

4.3.2 Quantitative sampling procedure

A stratified random sampling technique was used in the quantitative aspect of the research. Simple random sampling is a technique where each person in the target population has an equal chance of being included in the sample, while a stratified random sampling procedure is used when the researcher wants various subgroups in the sample to also be represented in the final sample selected (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). A stratified random sampling approach entails a process whereby the researcher first selects the particular categories or groups of cases that should purposively be included in the final sample (Robinson, 2014). The sample is then divided or 'stratified' according to these categories in terms of factors which can be geographical, demographic, socio-economic, or psychological (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2016), the only requirement being that "there is a clear theoretical rationale for assuming that the resulting groups will

differ in some meaningful way" (Robinson, 2014: 17). Stratified sampling helped in grouping all the telecommunications industry representatives according to their categories and specialisation, such that a sample was extracted in each category population. According to Singh & Masuku (2014), stratified random sampling is an important tool when dealing with a heterogeneous population, as it puts the population into homogenous strata, compared to random sampling. The Zimbabwe telecommunications industry is representative of six different types of telecommunications-related businesses in the country. These telecommunications businesses operate in the following categories namely: fixed telephone services; mobile cellular services; internet access providers (Class A); Internet service providers (Class B); postal services and courier services. The use of a stratified random sampling method helped in segmenting the total population of Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry representatives into measurable strata. Each stratum was there for accorded an equal opportunity to be represented in the inquiry rather than random sampling that could have seen a concentration of one stratum over the rest of the industry players. Stratified sampling was therefore the best approach to coming up with a representative sample (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Based on these imperatives, the researcher adopted the stratification approach to identify the top five service providers in terms of the number of years in existence; the annual revenue generated; the market share that each company holds; and the number of employees in the company. Table 4.2 below provides a breakdown of these factors for each of the five top companies namely Econet, NetOne, Telecel, TelOne and Liquid.

Table 4. 2: Top five service providers in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry

Organisation	Years in Operation	Annual Revenue	Market Share: Subscriptions & national coverage	Number of Employees
ECONET	20	686,882,893	80.8%	1532
NETONE	22	105,520,406	12.4%	705
TELECEL	22	57,477,190	6.8%	528

TELONE	41	116,571,070	100% Fixed telephone 23% Internet Access Points (IAP)	1910
LIQUID	14	98,234,302	52.6%	159
Total				4834

(Source: Potraz, 2018: 12)

The total identified population of 4834 employees (as identified in Table 4.2) was then reduced to a stratified random sample using the Yamane formula established in 1967, as shown in the formula below, to select a representative population sample for the entire industry:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

$n = sample\ size$

$N = population\ size$

$e = the\ level\ of\ precision$

Therefore, the total population size was proportionately reduced to a representative sample through the following steps:

$$n = \frac{4834}{1+4834 \text{ x } (0.05)2}$$

$$= 369$$

➢ The formula takes a 95% confidence interval and the standard error = 5%, therefore: e = 0.05;

➢ A stratified sampling was employed to categorise the respondents;

➢ This was followed by the proportion approach used to calculate the number of employees that can be selected from each organisation to be included in the sample of 369 from the identified five companies, namely Econet, NetOne, TelOne, Telecel and Liquid, respectively.

The proportionate representation is illustrated in Table 4.3 below, which indicates the number of questionnaires that were distributed in each of the top five companies identified.

Table 4. 3: Questionnaire distribution in the telecommunications industry

Organisation	Proportion	Total number of questionnaires
ECONET	$= \dfrac{1532}{4834} \text{ x } 369$	117
NETONE	$= \dfrac{705}{4834} \text{ x } 369$	54
TELECEL	$= \dfrac{528}{4834} \text{ x } 369$	40
TELONE	$= \dfrac{1910}{4834} \text{ x } 369$	146

LIQUID	$= \dfrac{159}{4834}$ x 369	12
TOTAL		369

4.3.3 Qualitative sampling procedure

For the qualitative part of the research, purposive judgmental sampling was used to select participants, based on their position in their respective organisations, their years of work experience, qualifications and expertise. Purposive sampling is defined as a "non-probability sampling procedure in which the judgement of the researcher is used to select the cases that make up the sample. This can be done on the basis of extreme cases, heterogeneity (maximum similarity), critical cases, theoretical cases or typical cases" (Saunders et al., 2016: 724). It is common practice to apply purposive sampling in qualitative studies as qualitative research aims to generate in-depth understandings, which can be garnered from fewer participants than would be considered in quantitative research.

The researcher therefore targeted the key interview informants from the telecommunications industry, based on their knowledge of the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. To do so, the researcher referred to the POTRAZ database, identified the 19 operational companies in the industry, and interviewed 18 KII of the industry who agreed to participate in the study. Furthermore, the participants were also purposively selected, with the aim of assessing how strategically positioned social blog use is in reputation management within the companies, since the KII are knowledgeable about these strategic, operational, and administrative issues due to their experience, practice, and expertise. For this reason, the researcher deliberately selected all the KII in the industry, with the aim of developing insights on the practice of corporate reputation management, the intention being to utilise their knowledge in order to triangulate the patterns that emerge from the quantitative data collected.

4.4 Data collection tools

This section defines the mechanisms that were used as tools in the gathering of information on the subject matter of social blog use in corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. The quantitative research instrument used, namely the questionnaire, and how it was piloted,

modified, and then more widely distributed will first be discussed. Thereafter, the qualitative in-depth interview schedule and how the interviews were conducted will be outlined in the subsections to follow.

4.4.1 Research Instrument Design

The two research instruments designed, namely the questionnaire and the interview guide, were developed in line with the research design, which is based on three key issues, namely: case study, exploratory inquiry, and explanation of the phenomenon.

The researcher designed the instruments guided by the research objectives and research question, read together with the conceptual framework. In undertaking this design, the researcher undertook a pilot study where the instruments were tested and strengthened based on the feedback from the respondents and participants feedback. Further, the researcher sent the research instruments to six experts in the study to critique the instruments and the feedback was used to further consolidate the instruments. In this regard, the research instruments were shared with four people in strategic management in the telecommunications industry and social media research. Further two experts were also engaged and the feedback was to shape the questions that are in the instruments.

4.4.1.1 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was self-developed through exploration and review of the data known from the case study industry. This was with the aim of explaining the phenomenon of the changes from traditional approaches in corporate reputation and management using new media, mainly Twitter, and the way in which social capital as a contemporary theoretical proposition with the aim of answering the research gap on how to develop new perspectives to corporate reputation management. For this to happen, the instrument started by profiling the demographic, age, and educational background as it instructs the use of the platforms. Section A attempted to explore the use of Twitter in the management of corporate reputation, through a structured scale, probing the effectiveness of Twitter in managing corporate reputation. This was based on probing the key features of Twitter that enable its communication functions, and how best they facilitate the utilisation of social capital in the management of corporate reputation. Section B assesses the internal stakeholder's utilisation of the platform in the furtherance of the strategic objectives of the institution around driving the vision, mission, and engagement processes. Section C was crafted so as to gauge the internal stakeholders' views on customers' utilisation of Twitter and other social blogs in interacting with the company. Sections D and E were designed to facilitate internal stakeholders to rate the platforms they viewed to be strategic

and critical for use towards the consolidation of social capital, with the aim of developing contemporary views in corporate reputation management.

4.4.1.2 Interview Guide Design

The interview guide was designed with the aim of triangulating the information gathered through the questionnaire, by further probing the KII to develop further insights, and further explaining the outcomes of the quantitative process. For this reason, the 13 questions were designed to further probe and seek clarification in order to explain the survey results and better build conclusions. This was self-developed so as to further strengthen the research design, which takes place in three key pillars as noted above, namely, case study, exploration, and explanation of the phenomenon.

4.4.2 The pilot study and main survey

A pilot process of testing the quantitative research instrument, the questionnaire, was conducted before it was more widely distributed to survey the stratified random sample selected in the study. The term 'pilot test' entails a "small-scale study to test a questionnaire, interview checklist or observation schedule, to minimise the likelihood of respondents having problems with answering the questions and of data recording problems, as well as to allow some assessment of questions' validity and the reliability of the data that will be collected" (Saunders et al., 2016: 722). The aim of the pilot testing in this study was thus to assess the questionnaire's suitability in terms of checking whether the instrument clearly enquired about the topic related to the subject under investigation, whether the questions were understood and plainly accessible to the respondents, and whether it, therefore, allowed for the acquisition of the required information from the respondents. The pilot process involved applying a random stratified approach to select 36 respondents to test the instrument, representing 10% of the final sample that was selected from the overall population of employees in the top five companies in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe.

The pilot was conducted by facilitating the questionnaire procedure in person, with a sample of 36 respondents in the five companies. The questionnaire was facilitated in person, mainly because the researcher assumed that it would prove challenging to get respondents to answer the questionnaires if they were sent via online platforms, especially since the researcher is someone whom the respondents do not know personally, and whom the respondents have never met before. The pilot study was carried out in January 2019, and consisted of a questionnaire, with questions pared down by a quarter, in order for the researcher to broadly absorb the feedback from the respondents, and to determine whether the questions

were repetitive, which may have affected the response rate once the final questionnaire was distributed to the broader stratified sample identified.

An introductory visit was organised to the five organisations identified to be included in the survey, where clearance letters for the non-disclosure agreements were submitted. The process also included the disbursement of informed consent forms, which provided respondents with more information about the nature and aims of the research, and how the findings are to be disseminated. This was followed by telephonic follow-ups as the organisations cleared the process and granted the researcher permission to proceed with the research at different times. The researcher had to make follow-up calls for two weeks in order to prompt the respondents to accept the researcher's request to complete the questionnaire in a face-to-face context. The pilot study, therefore, proved very useful in terms of allowing the researcher valuable insight into how the questionnaire could be improved, so as to allow for more valid, reliable data to be collected in the actual survey of the final sample selected in the study. It further contributed to the consolidation of self-generated sections of the questionnaire, as highlighted in the research instrument design. Further to this, the pilot study supported the approach of utilising the insights developed from the population sample as internal stakeholders, as there was corroboration that the process of accessing the industry customer database was heavily regulated, and required exemptions for each customer, which will take time and become an expensive exercise.

A survey entails a study strategy, which encompasses a systematic process of data collection from a defined population of study and is widely considered a quantitative approach to data collection (Khan, Ullah & Ullah, 2013; Saunders et al., 2016). Accordingly, a frequently used definition of a survey is a method that "provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of the population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 250). The main survey was rolled out from May 2019 to November 2019. The survey was extended over this prolonged period, as the researcher faced a challenge in terms of the telecommunications companies taking an extended period to approve the process of undertaking the survey.

Once permission had been granted by the company, an introductory letter was formally delivered to the targeted sample of 369 respondents selected to participate in the study. For each organisation, a proportionate number of questionnaires was administered through the office of the Head of Marketing, together with introductory letters, outlining the nature of the research and informed consent forms to be signed by the respondents, which served as permission for their participation in the study. The questionnaires

were distributed evenly across marketing, public relations, customer care, front office and call centres. Reminder calls were made once again, and the respondents were emailed weekly, to encourage them to return completed questionnaires. There was close to a 100% response rate on the questionnaires administered, at 98%, recording 362 questionnaires that were completed and retained by the researcher. The complete batch of responses was transcribed into Microsoft Excel, with the aim of standardising the responses. All the original questionnaires have been filed manually and will be stored for a period of five years, in line with suggested research ethics protocols. The results were later further transcribed into a single data sheet, ahead of the next stage of data analysis, which will be articulated in further detail later in the chapter.

4.4.3 In-depth interviews

The in-depth interviews used for the qualitative aspect of the study were conducted with the aim of gathering expert knowledge and experience of the participants regarding the field of inquiry. In-depth interviews are employed as a data-gathering tool when there is an inherent need to develop insights with little to no knowledge about the subject matter (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008; Ryan, Coughlan & Cronin, 2009; Wahyuni, 2012). There are three defined types of interviews that are articulated in the literature, namely: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. In structured interviews, questions are predetermined, and the interviewer uses these strictly and does not deviate whatsoever from the order of and wording of the questions, ensuring that the interview follows a highly formulaic process, which does not lend itself to in-depth data collection (Saunders et al., 2016). Unstructured interviews, at the other end of the spectrum, have no pre-established list of questions and the interviewer has the leeway to guide questions in an extremely organic manner, largely steered by the flow of conversation that the interview may follow (Saunders et al., 2016). A risk faced in an unstructured interview is that the required data may not be gathered due to divergence from the focus of the topic under investigation.

A semi-structured interview, as opposed to structured and unstructured interviews, is defined as a "wide-ranging category of interview in which the interviewer commences with a set of interview themes but is prepared to vary the order in which questions are asked and to ask new questions in the context of the research situation" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 252). Semi-structured interviews involve the researcher having a pre-established list of questions which is used to guide the interview but also allow flexibility as the technique affords the researcher opportunity to pursue issues that may emerge from the participants' response to the questions in greater depth. In this study, a semi-structured interview technique was adopted,

as it allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic of the use of social blogs in corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 18 KII of the telecommunications companies in Zimbabwe. All interviews with the KII were conducted face-to-face. This was due to the realisation by the researcher that the target KIIs are very busy persons, who tend not to respond to emails that request them to answer questions, but instead are more eager to meet and discuss the subject matter. An introductory email was generated and sent to the 18 KII that were purposively selected for the interviews. The email contained various support documents noted below:

➢ introductory letter and pledge to maintain the highest confidentiality regarding the information gained during the interviews;
➢ acknowledgement letter from the Graduate School of Business and Leadership confirming that the researcher is a student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN);
➢ ethical clearance letter from UKZN's Research Ethics Committee;
➢ support letter from the student's supervisors to verify that the information gained from the interviews is only to be used for academic purposes;
➢ support letter from the Ministry of Information Communication Technologies and Courier Services to endorse the research as legitimate; and
➢ informed consent forms to be completed and returned by respondents.

The setting up of the one-on-one interviews did indeed take some time to be arranged, due to the KII busy schedules, as they tended to frequently postpone meetings from one date to another. Table 4.4 below shows the dates according to which the interviews were conducted. All interviews were conducted in the capital city of Zimbabwe, Harare.

Table 4. 4: Interviews schedule

Interview code	Date	Location
1. Telecel	08/05/19	Head office, Harare
2. NetOne	18/05/19	Head Office, Harare
3. Econet	05/07/19	Head office, Harare
4. Africom	07/08/19	Head Officer, Harare
5. TelOne	14/08/19	Head Office, Harare
6. Dandemutande	14/08/19	Head Office, Harare
7. Liquid	18/08/19	Head Office, Harare
8. Powertel	19/08/19	Head Office, Harare
9. Telecontract	24/08/19	Head Office, Harare
10. Transmedia	27/08/19	Head Office, Harare
11. Zimpost	06/09/19	Head Office, Harare
12. DHL	08/09/19	Head Office, Harare
13. FEDEX	10/10/19	Head Office, Harare
14. Swift	18/10/19	Head Office, Harare
15. Skynet	10/10/19	Head Office, Harare
16. Courier Connect	18/10/19	Head Office, Harare
17. United Parcel	21/10/19	Head Office, Harare
18. Overnight Express	21/10/19	Head Office, Harare

The research instrument, the semi-structured interview guide, is attached as Appendix Four. During the interviews, the interviewer first introduced himself and explained the nature and purpose of the research, which was followed by the dispensing of informed consent forms and ensuring that these were signed before proceeding with the interviews. The researcher requested permission from the participants to record the interview, using two devices, namely a voice recorder and a mobile phone, for the purposes of ensuring accuracy in capturing the interview and keeping a formal record. In all 18 interviews, the participants consented to be recorded. The participants were assigned codes instead of their real names being used, in order to guarantee their anonymity. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim into a single Microsoft Word document in preparation for the data analysis stage, which will be outlined below.

4.5 Data analysis

As the study employed a mixed method research strategy, namely an explanatory sequential mixed method approach, it is crucial to explain how both the initial quantitative data collected through the use of the questionnaire and the subsequent qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews were analysed. This discussion is contained in the subsections to follow.

4.5.1 Quantitative data analysis

There are generally six steps taken in the process of analysing quantitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The scholars suggest that the first step entails compiling an overview of the selected sample and the rate of response into a digestible and easy-to-read tabulated format. This is followed by assessing whether there are any biases in the responses through a wave analysis. Wave analysis is a mechanism used to track defined items and their average chances of response on a weekly interval, whereby the last wave of respondents is employed to show the possible response of those outside the sample (Saunders et al., 2016). The third step is what is termed the 'descriptive statistical assessment', which includes the assessment of the measures of central tendency (mode, mean, median, standard deviation) that are employed to analyse survey responses. The fourth deals with assessing the internal consistency of the data. This is followed by the utilisation of software packages to statistically analyse and process the data that would have been collected in the study. One such software package is the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) software, which was used to analyse the questionnaire data in this study. The sixth step deals with the presentation of data and findings through tables that are accompanied by a narrative interpretation of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher followed these key steps to analyse the data collected from the completed

questionnaires that were returned by 362 of the initial 369 respondents sampled. A Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to analyse the data to test the relationships that constituted the three hypotheses in the conceptual framework. This further led to the test of the fitness of the study framework. The results of this analysis are presented in Chapter Five.

4.5.2 Qualitative data analysis

There are also six steps that are generally taken in the process of analysing qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), which are illustrated in Figure 4.4 below.
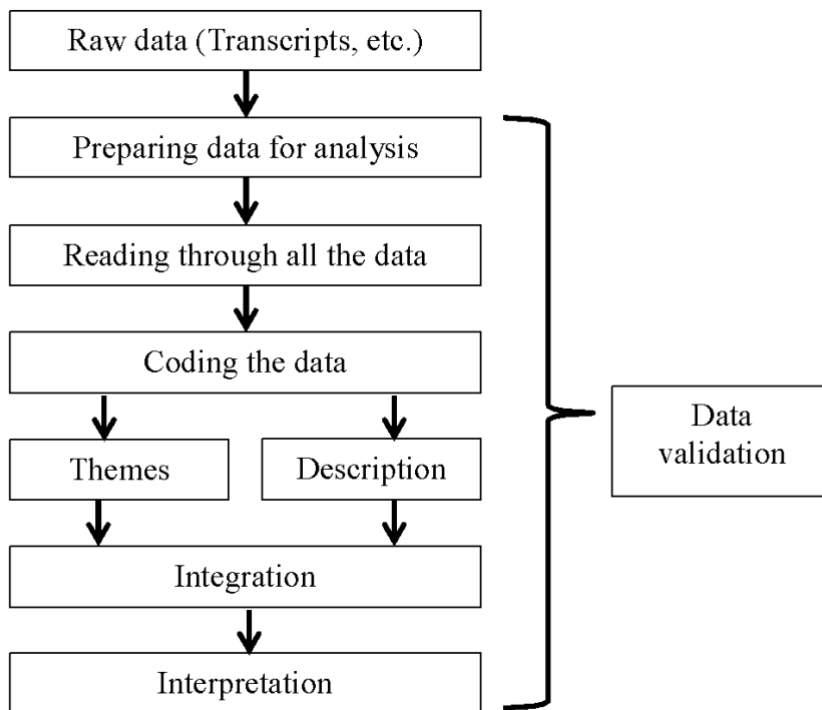
Figure 4. 4: The six-step qualitative data analysis process

(Source: Creswell & Creswell, 2018: 76)

The first step involves a highly operational and administrative approach of arranging the data into specific formats and categorical apportionments in order for the researcher to become completely familiar with the information collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The second step of the process calls for the researcher to be fully engaged with and well versed in the data, which allows the researcher the ability to note key issues in terms of consolidating meaning, identifying the strengths of the data and determining issues of data credibility (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This is followed by the third step, which is aimed at compartmentalisation of the data into themes with specific names for the identified categories. In qualitative

research, there are no predefined codes as the codes that arise are the result of the emerging data portions. This is followed by a fourth step of assigning codes, in describing related components and aspects. This will feed into the creation of thematic areas. Accordingly, Creswell and Creswell (2018) note that themes are not confined to the ones identified only, but can sublimate into advanced and complex ones, which will require additional mapping of these themes.

The fifth step focuses on the narrative that is developed with the need to expand on the themes and the related descriptions. In this research, which employs a mixed-methods strategy, the qualitative and quantitative narratives are first detailed separately, and then the dynamics between the two are assessed in relation to each other. The last step of the qualitative data analysis process, step six, entails the interpretation of the entire data set which allows for extrapolation of the key findings and identification of gaps, if any, that need to be attended to in order for credible outcomes to emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The qualitative data analysis in this study was undertaken using the NVivo 10 software package, which allows for coding and interpretation of qualitative data. In addition, the researcher also applied matrix coding which refers to the process of identifying intersections between two lists of items (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011), and word frequency count, the process of identifying the most frequently occurring words or concepts in data (Feng & Behar-Horenstein, 2019).

4.6 Data validation

This section of the study articulates how the researcher ensured the validity of the data collected. In quantitative research, validity refers to whether meaningful and useful inferences can be drawn from scores on particular instruments, while in qualitative research, validity is defined as procedures such as number checking and triangulation of data sources, among others, that qualitative researchers use to demonstrate the accuracy of their findings and convince readers of this accuracy (Saunders et al., 2016). This is further corroborated by Mohajan (2018), who argues that validity is concerned with the instrument, what it measures and by extension, how well it measures what it is meant to. The strategies used to guarantee the validity of the data gathered in both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the research carried out in this study will be discussed below.

4.6.1 Quantitative study

As noted above, quantitative validity refers to a determination as to whether that which was set to be measured in the study matched that which was measured in reality. Validity was first ensured in this study through pilot testing, which highlights extraneous sections in the questionnaire omitted in the final version,

ensuring that the questionnaire addressed the key issues that it was intended to when distributed to respondents. In order to guarantee the accuracy of the data, the researcher also double-checked the data processed by the statistician by engaging the SPSS coding process for accuracy, a strategy recommended by scholars such as Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011) and Saunders et al. (2016).

4.6.2 Qualitative study

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), there are various mechanisms for ensuring the validity of qualitative data in a study, one of these being triangulation. The researcher took this step by comparing the quantitative data to that of the qualitative data in mapping out themes and cross-checking the strength of the data acquired. In addition, secondary data was critical in triangulating the primary data that was collected during the interviews with the KII of the telecommunications companies, by comparing the findings and analysis processes with those of previous studies conducted in the field of inquiry. Additionally, qualitative data validity is also measured using the benchmark of the four key variables of confirmability, dependability, credibility, and transferability (Baker & Foy, 2012; Chowdhury, 2015; Creswell, 2013).

Confirmability, according to Saunders et al. (2016), measures the degree to which the research is anchored on objectively securing data. This requires that the researcher takes necessary precautions to guard against bias in the data collection procedures, as well as in the analysis and interpretation of the data. In this regard, the researcher in this study guarded against bias through the use of triangulation of the findings by comparing to the quantitative findings and to previous studies, and by employing an audit approach, which was carried out throughout the entire research cycle from inception right to the end of the study.

The test of a study's dependability has been equated to whether the data has been collected and analysed in a reliable way in a qualitative study (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Saunders et al., 2016). To achieve dependability, researchers must ensure that the research process is logical, traceable, and clearly documented (Tobin & Begley, 2004). When the research process is able to be scrutinised in such a manner, the dependability of the study is better able to be judged (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One way that a researcher can ensure dependability is to document, in some detail, the way in which the research was undertaken, as has been done in this chapter of the study, thereby ensuring the dependability of the study.

The credibility test in qualitative research has been equated to the internal validity test in a quantitative study (Baker & Foy, 2012; Chowdhury, 2015; Creswell, 2013). Credibility addresses the 'fit' between participants' views and the researcher's representation of these views (Tobin & Begley, 2004), that is, whether the procedures or processes conducted in a study fulfil the aim of accurately measuring participants'

views and whether the research accurately represents these in the presentation of the findings in the study. In this regard, the researcher invested heavily in understanding the organisational cultures of the participants, constantly reviewing and assessing the contexts, to factor in environmental changes and triangulation of data. Further to this, the researcher developed a rapport with and gained trust from the participants, which allowed them to open up to the researcher and air their views freely during the interviews. In addition, the researcher has also been working in the communications industry in Zimbabwe for the past 15 years, which is deemed to be relevant cultural capital to help in the assessment of context.

Transferability in qualitative research is equated to the external validity test in a quantitative study (Baker & Foy, 2012; Chowdhury, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Saunders et al., 2016). This is a test of whether the study can be replicated in different contexts, and whether the findings would broadly remain the same. This, however, is problematic for qualitative studies and the results thereof, as by design qualitative studies are context-dependent and findings tend to be specific to the particular context under investigation, meaning that the results cannot be generalised. For this reason, transferability for this type of study is a daunting, if not impossible task, especially considering the unique challenges faced in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. Yet, what is transferable is the methodology used in the study, which has previously been applied in different contexts, and can also be repeated in future studies of this nature.

4.7 Data reliability

The assessment of reliability in a study implies that the data collection tools are employed consistently and cohesively throughout the period in which the research is conducted. For this reason, reliability refers to whether scores to items on a research instrument are internally consistent, in other words, whether the item responses are consistent across constructs, stable over time and whether there is consistency in test administration and scoring (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based on this definition, it can be argued that the test for reliability is easier in a quantitative study than it is in a qualitative study (Zohrabi, 2013). The strategies used to ensure reliability in the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study will be explicated in the subsections to follow.

4.7.1 Quantitative study

The researcher should ensure that quantitative instruments pass the test of internal consistency, which is a test to ensure that the instrument can be used to collect the same data from a different set of respondents (Creswell 2009; Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Creswell and Plano-Clark 2011; Saunders et al., 2016). This was achieved in the study through a standardised administration of the questionnaire, as earlier articulated.

The statistical instrument of correlation analysis was used, through investigating whether the relationship between Twitter and its effect on corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe discovered in the first sample test gave the same results in the second test.

4.7.2 Qualitative study

Reliability in qualitative research refers to a measure of the consistency of the employment of the study techniques in the area of study (Saunders et al., 2016). This is achieved through two major steps, namely triangulation, and employing audit trails. This entails a detailed record of the study to be kept as evidence of the study being reliable (Creswell, 2013). In this study, the researcher ensured that a detailed record of the research process was kept, which has been summarised in this methodology chapter, and the findings of the study are also triangulated in two ways: comparing the quantitative and qualitative findings; and assessing the findings in relation to those of previous studies that have been conducted into the research topic. The researcher used the reliable software package, NVivo, to analyse the qualitative data. In addition, the statistician provided independent expertise for data coding in NVivo, which allowed for the researcher to carry out verification of the data. Hence, the study can be considered reliable as the necessary checks were implemented throughout the research process.

4.8 Ethical considerations and bias

Strict adherence to ethical procedures that protect the participants must be an integral aspect of any study that is undertaken and must remain at the forefront of a researcher's mind throughout the research process (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In this study, various steps were taken to ensure that all ethical procedures were followed. Firstly, permission to conduct the study had to be obtained from UKZN's Research Ethics Committee (Appendix One), in order for the researcher to proceed with the study. Once the Committee had granted permission, the researcher had to gain gatekeeper's permission for the research to be conducted with employees of the telecommunications companies. A gatekeeper's letter from the industry's parent ministry, the Ministry of Information Communication Technologies and Courier Services was issued, which allowed the researcher to then contact the telecommunications companies and to proceed with the administration of the questionnaires and to conduct interviews.

An introductory letter was sent to each of the 369 employees, operational and top-level managers selected for the questionnaire, and all 18 KII to be interviewed, which explained the nature and purpose of the research, so that all respondents and participants were aware and informed about the research. The principle of "informed consent involves researchers providing sufficient information and assurances about taking part

to allow individuals to understand the implications of participation so that they reach a fully informed, considered and freely given decision about whether or not to do so, without the exercise of any pressure or coercion" (Saunders et al., 2016: 16). An informed consent form was also included, which had to be signed by respondents and participants as proof of consent to participate in the study.

All respondents and participants were also assured that their personal information would be kept completely confidential and that they would remain anonymous in the reporting of the findings. This was achieved by using only codes to identify the respondents and participants in the analysis of the data, not employees'; operational and top-level managers', or KIIs' actual names. In addition, the completed questionnaires are archived electronically, but will not be published on any platform in order to safeguard anonymity. All questionnaires and interview transcripts will be kept for a period of five years and will then be destroyed, in line with suggested ethical guidelines. The research topic is not considered sensitive, therefore it was thought that respondents and participants would not experience harm or stress in the research process, another ethical consideration that was taken into account.

To reduce bias in the data collection and analysis processes, various measures were put in place by the researcher. Bias in research refers to a process whereby the researcher influences the results, intentionally or unintentionally, in order to portray a certain outcome (Shuttleworth, 2017). Various measures were implemented by the researcher in this study to avoid bias at all stages of the research. Sampling or selection bias was avoided in the quantitative aspect of the study by using a stratified random sampling technique, which gave all employees in the telecommunications industry an equal chance of being selected within the defined strata. The questionnaires for the survey were distributed to the participants to be completed in the absence of the researcher, so as to minimise the possibility of the researcher influencing the respondents in any way while they answered the questionnaire, known as administration bias (Miyazaki & Taylor, 2008). A statistician was hired for the coding and entering of the questionnaire data into SPSS, and the researcher thus had no influence over the data entry process.

With regard to minimising bias during the interviews with KIIs, the researcher took care not to influence the participants in terms of the responses to the questions. In addition, all interviews were recorded and then transcribed so as to ensure that an accurate account of the data was recorded to be analysed using NVivo. The qualitative data was directly entered into the different data sets by the statistician for further processing by the researcher, again to reduce any possible bias. The consistency test showed that even if the researcher had entered the information into the respective datasets, the results would have remained the same. Thus,

great care was taken throughout the research process to ensure that strict ethical procedures were adhered to and that bias was minimised through the implementation of various measures by the researcher.

4.9 Conclusion

The methodology chapter is a foundational chapter in the academic process. This chapter commenced with an overview of the pragmatic worldview that underpins the research. The pragmatic worldview informed the research design employed in the study, namely a mixed-methods design, which drew on both the quantitative and qualitative approaches in its construction. A sequential explanatory research design incorporating a questionnaire in the quantitative survey aspect of the study, and semi-structured interviews in the qualitative aspect of the study, was selected as most appropriate to identify the key themes related to the issue of corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe, and to explore these themes in some depth. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select respondents for the questionnaire, and purposive sampling was used to identify the key informants for the interviews, namely the KIIs of the telecommunications companies in Zimbabwe. The survey data was analysed using SPSS to carry out statistical coding and analysis of the data gathered from the questionnaires. The interview data was analysed using NVivo in order to identify the key themes that emerged. The quantitative and qualitative data was triangulated by comparing one set of data with the other, and by considering the data collected in the study against the findings of previous studies conducted in the field of inquiry. Validity and reliability of the data collected was guaranteed through testing and appropriate modification of the instruments, specifically the questionnaire, accurate recording of the research process, and employing a statistician to eliminate bias in the data coding processes. Finally, all ethical procedures were meticulously adhered to throughout the research process so as to ensure that participants were informed about all aspects of the research and that the anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed. Chapter Five presents the results and discussion by objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the research study and discuss the key outcomes of the research and discusses its implications to the industry and contribution to the practice in the industry and the knowledge gap as highlighted in the conceptual framework. The chapter presents the results in both qualitative and quantitative formats. The chapter also presents the proposed framework in line with the last research object of establishing a framework that will guide both practice and further research in the academic realm. The results are presented and discussed guided by the research's seven objectives below:

- to develop key roles of Twitter as a social capital driver for top-level managers in managing corporate reputation for the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry;
- to establish the operational effects of Twitter in managing the corporate reputation of telecommunication business in Zimbabwe;
- to understand how the employees' influence and are also influenced by Twitter in their execution for a positive corporate reputation;
- to evaluate Twitter and other social blogs on their dominance to manage contemporary corporate reputation matters;
- to compare Twitter with other existing social blogs on the key elements expected in global communication for a positive corporate reputation;
- to determine and understand the internal views by managers and employees on the appreciation of Twitter as a social exchange tool in consuming telecommunications services in Zimbabwe; and
- to develop a framework for social blogs and corporate reputation driven by Twitter as a tool for improved reputation in telecommunications businesses.

The first six objectives guide the presentation of results and discussions while the last objective guides the development of the framework in answering the knowledge gap of how the telecommunications companies bridge the gap between traditional approaches to corporate reputation and the contemporary theoretical propositions on how the social blogs with a specific focus on Twitter contribute to the social capital of companies in the industry and shape the contemporary methods of improving corporate reputation.

5.1 Response rate

Response rate is an important aspect of the external validity of any quantitative study. In the quantitative aspect of this study, a total number of 369 questionnaires were distributed, and 332 (90%) were successfully returned for analysis, as presented in Table 5.1. A response rate of this magnitude represents acceptable representativeness, thus high external validity (Saunders et al., 2016). The implications of such a response rate are that the study findings on how Twitter can be used as a social blog in relation to any other existing in the social space. This was with the aim to improve the corporate reputation of organisations operating in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry. The contributions would therefore be generalised as a representative of the entire population of telecommunications organisations in Zimbabwe together with their interested stakeholders.

Table 5. 1: Response rate

Number of questionnaires distributed	Number of questionnaires returned	Response rate
369	332	90%

As presented in Table 5.1, internal consistency of the survey questionnaire was done mainly to consider the reliability of various scales used in the construct. The overall internal consistency then resulted as 0.813 thus highly acceptable in comparison to the globally acceptable reliability coefficients of above 0.7. The presentation in Table 5.2 below, therefore, summarises the test outcomes.

Table 5. 2: Reliability of questionnaire items

Item	Cronbach's Alpha (Standardised Items)	N
Twitter as an effective media platform in corporate reputation	0.736	4
Top-level management and Twitter	0.745	4
Customers and Twitter	0.830	7

Overall Reliability	0.813	18

5.2 Demographics of respondents and participants

5.2.1 Age

The graph in Figure 5.1 shows the age range of the respondents and participants and indicates that the majority (30%) are between 31 and 40 years old. This is followed by 18–30-year-olds (25%). These two age ranges are the most active in terms of usage of social blogs and the internet in general. This shows that the research was conducted with a group of respondents and participants who, for the most part, are actively involved in the use of social blogs such as Twitter, which strengthens the credibility and validity of the results as it can be assumed that the respondents and participants are familiar with the platforms and were thus able to offer accurate information regarding their usage in the management of corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry.
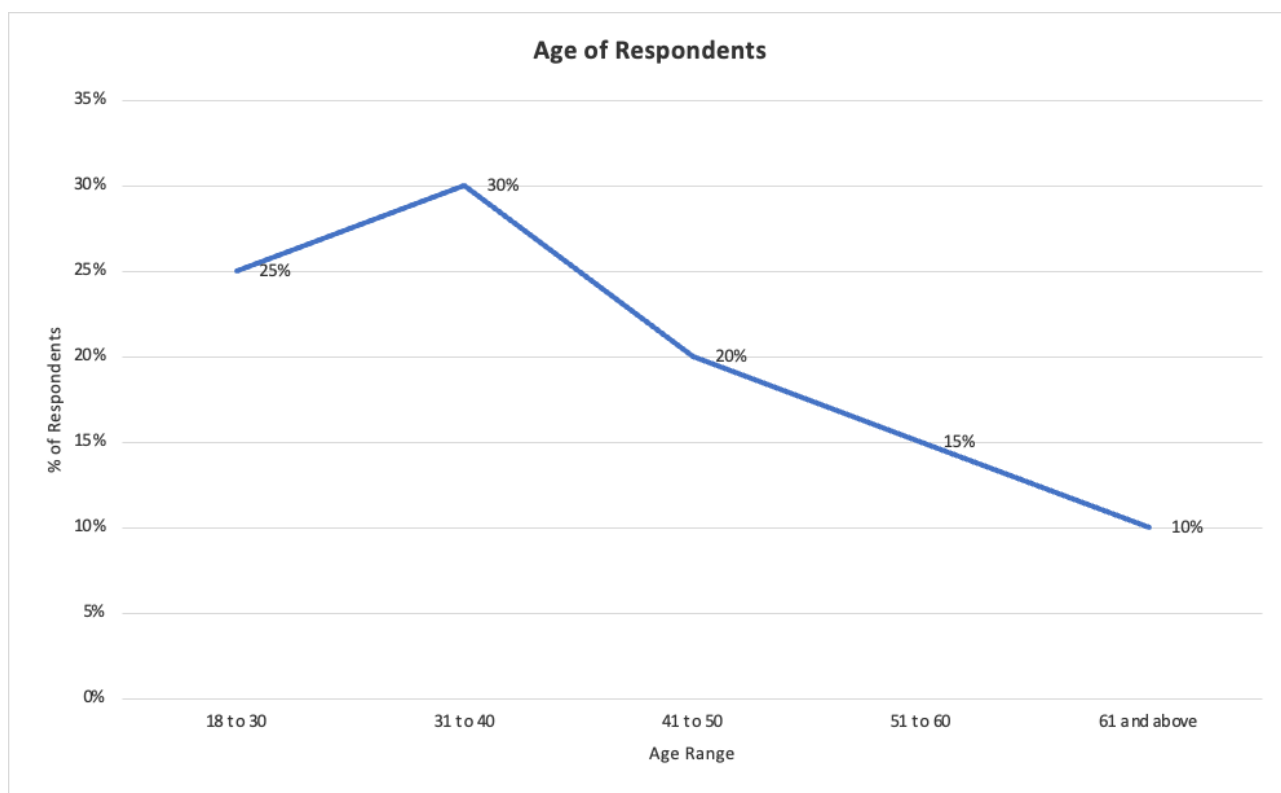
Figure 5. 1: Age of respondents

5.2.2 Level of education

Figure 5.2 shows that the majority of the respondents and participants (45%) have diploma qualifications. This might be due to the fact that most of the practitioners in telecommunications and other related media and communications industries in Zimbabwe have attained diplomas from polytechnics. This points to the fact that the study was carried out with the appropriate informants, namely those who, due to their education and training in the field, have insight into the use of social blogs in various communications to the extent of being able to assess various platforms as tools for corporate reputation management. This also assisted in improving consistency in responses from all the selected parties for this study.
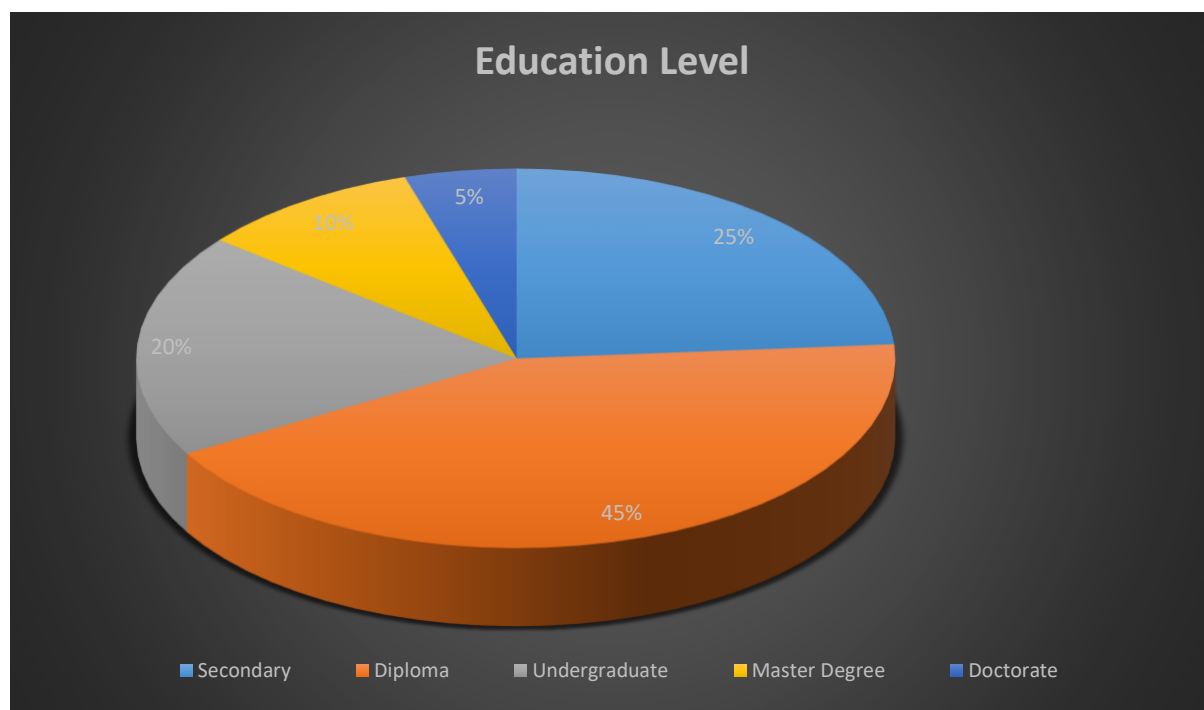
Figure 5. 2: Educational level

5.2.3 Gender

The majority of respondents (60%) were men, which is in line with the overall statistics regarding the demographics of employees in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. The industry is dominated by men, though women are increasing their presence in the industry, as reflected by 40% representation of women in this study (POTRAZ, 2020).

5.2.4 Types of services provided in the telecommunications sector in Zimbabwe

Figure 5.3 below shows that the dominating industry that respondents and participants are employed in is the mobile service provider sector, which is also the main focus of this study. This shows that the study was

conducted within the correct delimitations, so as to develop a better understanding of the application of social blogs in corporate reputation management in the mobile telecommunications service providers in Zimbabwe. The five companies belonged to the following categories: three (Econet, Telcel and NetOne) are in the mobile services, TelOne belongs to both fixed voice and internet services, while Liquid falls under Internet, courier and postal services (POTRAZ, 2021).
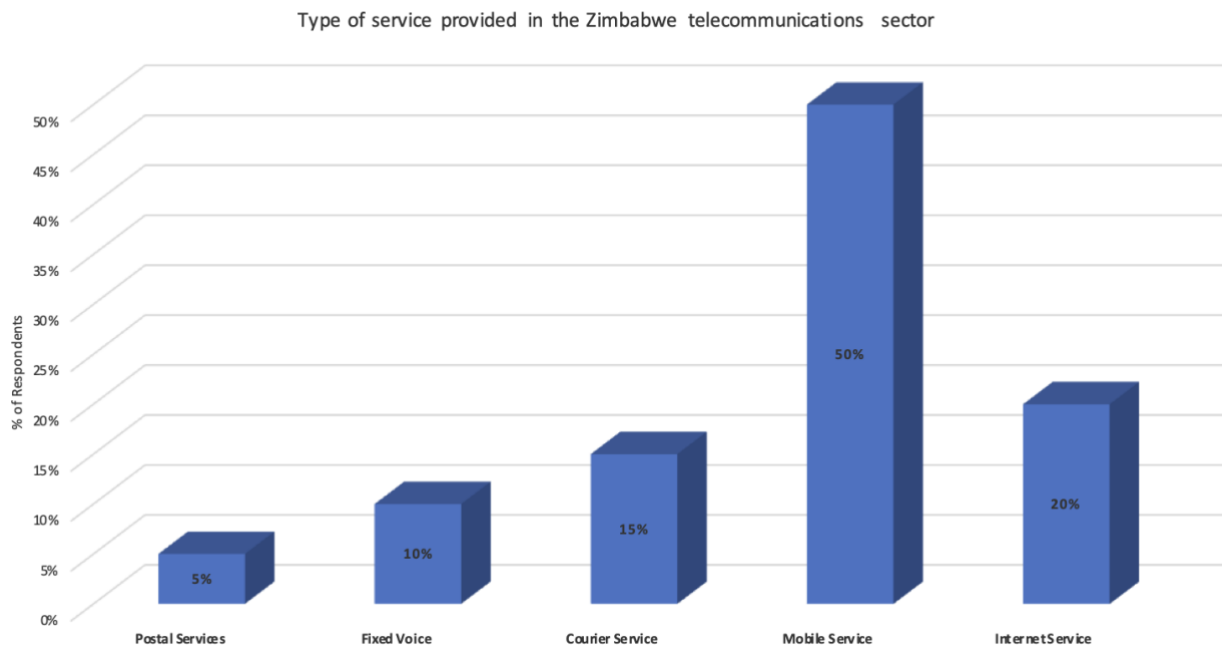
Figure 5. 3: Types of services provided in the telecommunications sector in Zimbabwe

5.2.5 Testing the research relationship

Pearson correlation and regression were employed to examine the relationship between Twitter and the operations of the top-level management in improving corporate reputation. Before any computations were done, the underlying assumptions pertaining to the use of the two tests were tested, which is noted as an imperative (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

5.3 RO 1: To develop key roles of Twitter as a social capital driver for top-level managers in managing corporate reputation for the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry

This objective concerns the senior executives in the telecommunications industry, who have both the power and authority to put in place systems and structures that can enhance either a positive or negative corporate reputation. This is highly critical, as the focus is to maintain a rewarding and sustainable social capital. which is expected when an organisation in the telecommunications industry moves from the traditional ways of managing corporate reputation into the new ways driven by social blogs driven corporate reputation, to

achieve a positive social capital. This research went on to interrogate the top-level managers using both the quantitative and qualitative approaches through using questionnaires and an in-depth interview guide, accordingly. In this regard, the questionnaire was developed to answer the question on the roles of Twitter for top-level managers in the management of corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry. The results were then analysed through Structural Equation Modelling so as to test the relationships and fitness of the framework developed for the industry and future research. To this end, their various responses speak to the uptake of social blogs as transformative in this development. The details from their responses are as presented below.

5.3.1 Relationship between Twitter and top-level management

Pearson correlation and regression were employed to examine the relationship between Twitter and the operations of the top-level management in improving corporate reputation. Before any computations were done, the underlying assumptions pertaining to the use of the two tests were tested, which is noted as imperative (Kotler et al., 2017). A scatterplot in Figure 5.4 suggests that Twitter use by top level management and corporate reputation is positively correlated, which means that the variables influence one another.
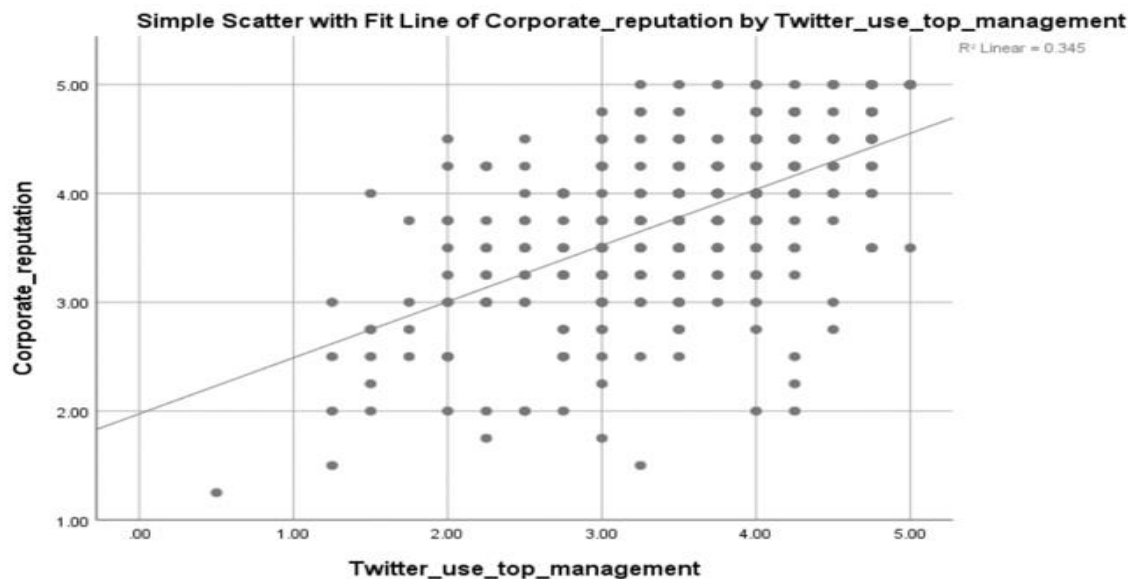
Figure 5. 4: Scatterplot - relationship between Twitter usage and corporate reputation

Figure 5.4 indicates that the data is in a normal distribution, where Pearson correlation and linear regression analysis can be used. In addition, the collinearity diagnostics indicate no collinearity in the data and therefore

use of linear regression has not been violated. Below, the results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 5.3.

Table 5. 3: Model summary

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.588[a]	.345[b]	.343	.62351	2.065
a. Predictors: (Constant), Twitter_use_top_management					
b. Dependent Variable: Corporate reputation					

The results in Table 5.3 indicate that a positive link exists between Twitter usage and improvement of corporate reputation (R= 0.588). Overall, Twitter usage by top management accounts for 34.5% ($R^2 = 0.345$) of the total variance in corporate reputation. The summary proves the hypothesis that Twitter is an independent variable, while corporate reputation is a dependent variable, hence the two related variables' relationship can be investigated through research. This is the case given that the usage of Twitter is 34.5%, while R is greater than 0.5%, the required standard measurement in regression analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This means that the variables being tested are fit for being investigated through research of this nature.

5.3.2 Key roles of Twitter in top-level management duties

In relation to the above, top-level managers are responsible for the overall management of the organisation and in research being corporate reputation specific. They are the custodians of the corporation's vision along with its mission, objective and values. Consequently, it was important to assess how these key elements at the pinnacle of a corporate are considered through the use and application of Twitter as presented in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5. 4: Key roles of Twitter in top-level management duties

Top-level management roles in the telecommunications industry	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
SB_Q1. The vision of the organisation is imparted to the organisation and external stakeholders using Twitter as compared to any other media platform	3.58	1.002	-.541	-.246
SB_Q2. Twitter helps in crafting of strategic goals for top level management as compared to other forms of media	3.55	1.005	-.419	-.408
SB_Q3. Formulation of strategic goals in relation to corporate reputation can be enhanced using Twitter as compared to other forms of media	3.48	1.084	-.876	1.425
SB_Q4. Strategic coordination of ideas can be achieved using Twitter for improved corporate reputation compared to other blogosphere	3.28	1.609	-1.461	1.678

Table 5.4 above shows respondents' perceptions about top-level management and Twitter. Findings suggest that 'The vision of the organisation is imparted to the organisation and external stakeholders using Twitter as compared to any other media platform' (mean = 3.58, Std = 1.00), and that 'Platform helps in crafting of strategic goals for top-level management as compared to other forms of media' (mean = 3.55, Std = 1.00). The results also indicate that Twitter enhances the 'Formulation of strategic goals in relation to corporate reputation can be enhanced using Twitter as compared to other forms of media' (mean = 3.48, Std = 1.08) and enables 'The strategic coordination of ideas for improved corporate reputation compared to other blogosphere' (mean = 3.32, Std = 1.61). The negative skewness for the four top managerial roles shows that the roles on Twitter have a long-term impact as there are few negative outliers pertaining to the platform and functions. This entails that organisation should not expect short-term gains, but should instead invest in

the long-term approaches towards strategic engagement on Twitter and other social blogs. This is supported by Kolter *et al.* (2021), who argue that organisations moving from traditional approaches to the digital age should take a strategic approach to the long-term benefits of influencing the customers online through their digital touch points.

This confirms the problem statement conceptual assumption that the telecommunications industry is facing gaps from traditional to new perspectives in corporate reputation management. The results, therefore, affirm that the top-level managers are engaged in corporate reputation management, which is now being influenced by new platforms such as social blogs like Twitter and thereby contributing to the contemporary approaches in corporate reputation management.

This is validated by the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, which highlighted that Twitter is now the most dominant social blog, which was initially not occupying much space in the past decade (Stratcounter, 2021). As the dominant platform, commanding 43.62%, the results show that the utilisation of such a platform by the top-level management will set the strategic tone for the entire organisations insofar as they are sharing the vision of their companies; craft the strategic goals of their companies; formulation of their strategic goals; strategic coordination of their ideas, among others. These four managerial roles scored a positive standard deviation of one (1) and above, which confirms the key roles that management are utilising Twitter in the telecommunication industry in managing the reputation of the companies, as supported by Chigwende & Govender (2020), who argue that senior managers and public relations executives should prioritise social blogs in their bid to manage their image.

5.4 RO2: To establish the operational effects of twitter in managing corporate reputation of telecommunication business in Zimbabwe

This objective sought to establish the tactical practise of inquiry. This was done by asking the research question: What are the effects of Twitter in managing corporate reputation in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry? The focus of the objective was to establish how operational managers engaged in the shifts from the traditional approaches to contemporary approaches, wherein the social blogs build social capital and shape new engagement processes with the stakeholders. The study managed to prove that the operational managers had a key role in the management of organisational tactical objectives. In this regard, the Maximum likelihood method was employed to estimate the model parameters. There are fit indices considered to assess the model for the goodness of fit (Kline, 2005; Hair et al., 2010). Both the qualitative and quantitative approaches when in the top-level managers confirmed that they believed that

social blogs such as Twitter were key in the management of corporate reputation through their superiority in the framing of messages and communicating with a wider audience. Further to this, they noted that the platform made it easy to communicate in an easy-to-understand way. This entailed that, as the link between the top-level managers and the employees, the operational managers understood the importance of management of corporate reputation in the contemporary age compared to the traditional approaches. The results are presented and discussed below.

5.4.1 Corporate reputation and operational issues affected by Twitter

The operations managers have a critical role in the management of corporate reputation on a day-to-day basis. This, therefore, resulted in the study assessing the operational activities that are affected by Twitter. These have been categorised in the form of reputational issues in conveying relational messages guided by the framing of headings, crafting of messages, providing news, and reaching the intended audience. The findings from the research are presented in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5. 5 :Corporate reputation and operational issues influenced by Twitter

Operational practices for positive corporate reputation in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
SA_Q1. Twitter is effective in displaying and communicating an attractive heading to the recipients	3.92	.951	-.932	.708
SA_Q2. Users of Twitter have an advantage to craft a message that is easily understood by the recipients with regards to corporate reputation	3.75	.881	-.951	2.360
SA_Q3. It is easy to frame news using Twitter when intending to improve on corporate reputation	3.73	.990	-.800	.996
SA_Q4. Issues to do with corporate reputation can easily reach the audiences using Twitter	3.66	1.309	-1.533	2.943

The results presented in Table 5.5 show that respondents perceived Twitter as an effective media platform in establishing and managing corporate reputation items (mean = 3.81, Std = 0.991). The results illustrate that Twitter as a media platform displays and effectively communicates an attractive heading to the recipients (mean = 3.92, Std = 0.95), enables users to craft messages in a manner easily understood by recipients (mean = 3.75, Std = 0.88), frames news content (mean=3.73, Std=0.99), and makes it easier for corporate reputation information to reach the audience (3.66, Std=1.31). In addition, the negative skewness indices across all items indicate that respondents positively view Twitter as an effective media platform in establishing and managing corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry. This indicates that Twitter plays a critical role in the framing of news that helps in the management of positive reputation. The unique capabilities of Twitter are viewed as framing angles in which news items are received by the audiences through features such as headlines and low number of characters, making the news digestible in today's characteristically rapid news cycle (Madziwa & Sibanda, 2018; Ngondo, 2019; Okonji, 2018; The Economist, 2019).

5.5 RO3: To understand how the employees influence and also influenced by Twitter in their execution for a positive corporate reputation

This objective was achieved through carrying out qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviews in order to understand how employees influence and influenced by twitter in executing their day-to-day activities. Employees are closer to the customers, as they directly communicate and exchange informational services in the telecommunication industry. In this regard, the following question was asked: how are employees influenced or influence Twitter use in the execution for a positive reputation?

5.5.1 Employees knowledge and use of Twitter

The findings from the in-depth interviews conducted with the 18 participants of the telecommunications companies concerned their employee knowledge, as well as the influence of Twitter in corporate reputation management. These are cited verbatim in what follows. A key finding emerged that Twitter as an effective tool for building positive corporate reputation management varies within and across organisations. Some of the participants claimed that employees are highly knowledgeable about the importance of Twitter in building positive corporate reputation, while others stated that the use of Twitter is limited to only a few key staff responsible for communications.

P 3 noted:*"…we employ more than two thousand people and I don't think everyone knows about Twitter. Probably a sizeable portion might be aware, maybe 30% know Twitter as an effective tool in managing*

reputation. I would like to think that the important groups amongst management as well as operational staff particularly those that have a client interface are very much aware of Twitter as an effective tool in that regard. What I do is, if sometimes I get some important client messages on our Twitter handle, I ask the responsible departments why they are not posting responses on time and that has really encouraged maximum awareness. Right now, I am happy when I see messages now it does not take an hour or even 20 minutes for people to be responded to…"

In addition to lack of knowledge about Twitter as one of the potential tools for interacting with clients, it seems that employees are also reluctant to use Twitter. This is due to organisational red tape, where management is still fixed in a traditional media mind-set, resulting in the organisation setting cumbersome procedures regarding what is disseminated through the platform, mainly out of the fear of reputational risk and fear that the organisation will not have control of messages posted and threads of conversation that will follow.

P13 informed that "…*we had a terrible incident whereby one of our employees thought that they were communicating in their personal accounts only to realise after they had communicated improper messaging that they were in the corporate account… the platform was clogged and we had to delete the message and the issue because a disciplinary matter…"*

Given such complex red tape and consequences associated with behaviour, there is a low propensity towards experimenting and fully utilising the platform, as both the employees and companies do not have guiding frameworks or models towards harnessing the best of what is offered online, while maintaining internal cohesion and organisational systems.

5.5.2 General responses by the senior executives on their perception about employees use of Twitter

Save for two interviewees by the executives, the rest of the respondents (16) noted that the matter of the use of social blogs in managing reputation is an assigned task. There is, therefore, limited use of Twitter outside official capacities, where employees avoid joining in on online conversations, as they are afraid of straying into the unknown and uncertain of the consequences. This emerged in the KII's responses when asked if all employees were aware of the benefits of using Twitter in the management of reputation: Participant 9 said that *"...we have many employees; some might know some might not…"* and Participant 6 concurred by stating that "…*everyone cannot be expected to use the platform, we will lose control of the message…"*

To develop and mainstream the use of Twitter in a cohesive and structured way, there is a need for the calibration of the internal stakeholders' use of the platforms to ensure a systematic process, which will lead to systematic outcomes. This is confirmed through the literature reviewed in Chapter 3, where it was found that social capital, social media, and social exchange theories support the need for internal stakeholders to competitively engage external stakeholders, and build a positive reputation in a more coherent and sustainable manner.

The results confirm the significance of the research, as it points to an industry that is not applying any structured approach towards ensuring that there is alignment towards the way in which the employees engage with the public via social media. Though Greyser (2016) argues that it is critical to utilise Twitter in linking customers with products and services, what remains clearly missing is how that is supposed to happen, therefore the construction of the research study framework to address both the practice and theoretical gaps. As revealed in the research, there seems to be a disjuncture between what the industry wants to happen, and the reality, regarding managing corporate reputation in the age of social media. Most of the responses show that there is a lack of trust from management to encourage the utilisation of social media. This lack of trust and controlling approach seem to emanate from the traditional era of communication, wherein through the traditional media, management would shape its reputation through controlled messaging (Kotler *et al.,* 2017; Davids & Brown 2021; Kotler , Kartajaya, & Setiawan, 2021). This points towards a need for a framework that guides the players in the industry and scholars on the role of employees in utilising social blogs, contributing to the social capital and contemporary approaches towards reputation management driven by employees online. This is supported by Davids & Brown (2021), who propose, through social blogs and social exchange theory, that employees play a central role in engaging customers online, where there is a need to establish an internal alignment process so as to ensure consistency in the use of these platforms, with the aim of building a competitive social capital that drives the management of reputation online (Davids & Brown 2021: 6).

As noted in the literature review in Chapter Two, for corporate reputation management to be effective online, the results point towards the development of a framework that can be utilised to ensure consistency, where employees are at the centre of driving the reputation management process and engage with the customers. This is supported by Kaul & Chaudhri (2017), who argue regarding social-mediated employee engagement that "In today's environment where there is an alarming lack of trust in all institutions, employees are increasingly the key prism for brand credibility and trust… Engaging them can provide

companies the best way to humanise and unify their enterprise voice – a strategic imperative in today's environment" (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2017: 82).

Yet, the result of the research shows that the companies generally understand the need for such engagement, but the practise is ad hoc. This is well articulated by one of the KII responses, namely that *"….everyone cannot be expected to use the platform, we will lose control of the message…."*, despite the clear benefits of social blogs engagement. As an example, employee engagement online unlocks positive business results such as high customer satisfaction as high as 40%; profitability increases of up to 30%, and overall performance increase of up to 36% (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2017: 82). The evidence from the industry interviews and survey shows an ad hoc process, which might be attributable to a lack of structural framework.

Before priming employees to engage external stakeholders in the management of reputation in the contemporary approaches towards management of reputation, there is a need to utilise the platforms in engaging and aligning the employees to the strategic goals of the organisation, for the employees to undertake their efforts effectively and efficiently (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020).

Given the ad hoc nature of employee's role in the practice of management of corporate reputation on social blogs, in this case, utilising Twitter, there is a need to drift towards investment in the internal process of positioning the employees as the drivers of contemporary approches in corporate reputation management, contrary to the broader fears of a loss of control. This can be achieved through developing guidelines for employee activism online as shown in the following seven steps outlined by Sarkar & Kotler (2020: 52):

> *1. Embrace employee activism as a positive force to propel your reputation and your business;*
>
> *2. Ensure your corporate purpose and culture are known from the point of applicant interview and onboarding through employee tenure;*
>
> *3. Be mindful of what is on employees' minds;*
>
> *4. Cultivate a culture of openess and transparency;*
>
> *5. Establish response protocol;*
>
> *6. Clearly articulate and communicate your company's values; and*
>
> *7. Make your company's values part of the solution.*

The proposed shift from traditional to contemporary approaches in reputation management that is driven by social blogs in building social capital, where employees are at the centre of such an approach equally requires a paradigm shift in the thinking and practice of companies in the telecommunications industry so as to ensure that the contemporary approach unlocks the value of being a highly engaging industry online. This will in turn ensure a sustainable competitive advantage for the industry itself. This addresses responses from the KII wherein there is no clarity, and where their employees are knowledgable of the benefits of the platforms or not, as representative of half of the KIIs *"...we have many employees; some might know some might not..."*. In this regard, guiding from the responses and the literature reviewed, it is crucial to propose a structured approach towards positioning employees at the centre of contemporary approaches towards corporate reputation in the age of social blogs as shown in Figure 5.5 below.
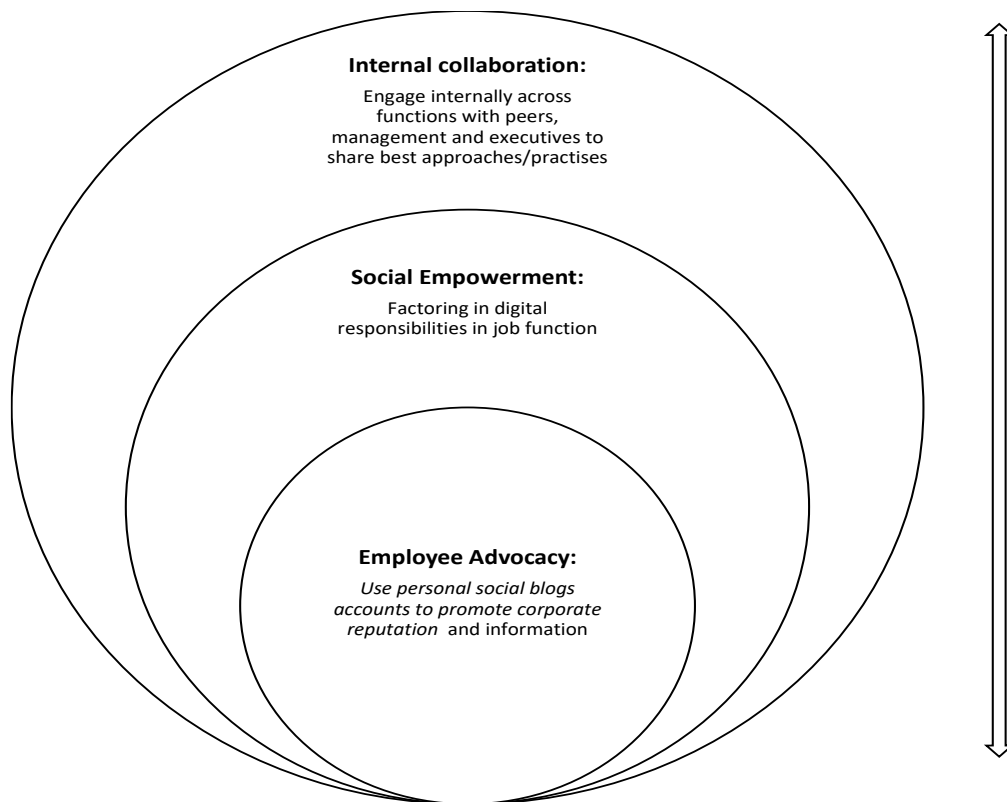
Figure 5. 5: The social blogs employee engagement towards contemporary reputation management in Zimbabwe telecommunications industry

(Source: Researcher's own construction)

As highlighted in Figure 5.5 above, influenced by the guidelines on employee activism and the results of the way in which employees sit at the periphery in the management of corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry, or at least where the responsibility is relegated to a specific function such as marketing and public relations, there is need for a structured approach. The illustration above motivates a total shift in the mindset and thinking of telecommunications industry players in Zimbabwe towards a deliberate process of exploring employees driving online engagement, utilising their social capital for the benefit of the companies in the sector. This is done through rethinking the design of the work itself and ensuring that the function of social blogs is part of the overall work design as illustrated by the arrow to the right that shows the influence on the variable in both directions.

5.6 RO4: To compare Twitter with other existing social blog platforms regarding the key elements expected in global communication for positive corporate reputation

This objective was necessary to rate the most effective social blog in the telecommunications industry in the management of corporate reputation. In that regard, the following research question pertains: Which of the following social blog is most effective in managing corporate reputation more than Twitter? In this regard, respondents were asked to rank social blogs, including Twitter itself, by comparing to other social blogs. The results critically present the most important social blogs in the management of the same by highlighting those factors that make one social blog platform more effective when compared to another. This was crucial, as it presented the information that may inform the development of a framework for the effective utilisation of social capital and social blogs in the telecommunications industry. The results are shown below.

5.6.1 Twitter in relation to other socio blogs in corporate reputation management

As another crucial focus of this study, it was important to invite other forms of socio platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram) in order to compare its determining factors of positive corporate reputation. These factors include conversation with the intended, global news coverage, being a source for word of mouth, hybrid text, a source of referrals, audio exchange, and visual display. The findings from the research are presented in Figure 5.6 below.
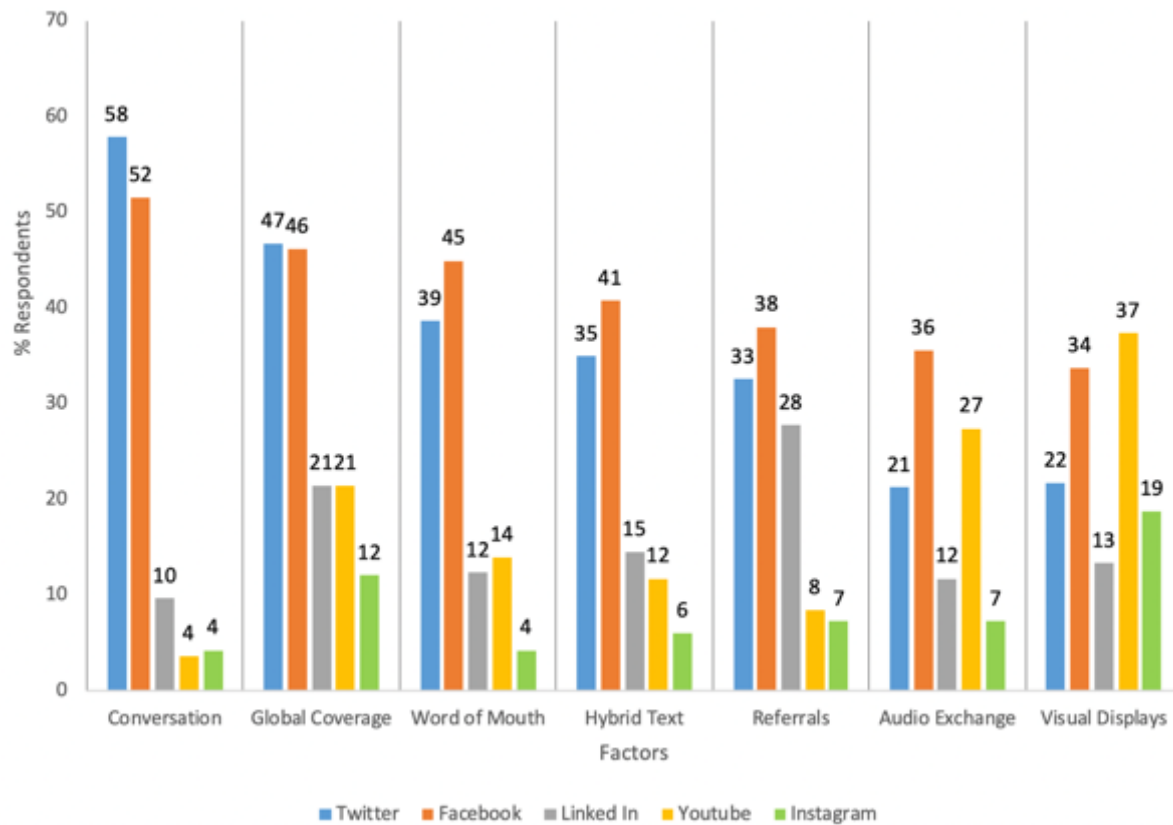
Figure 5. 6: Social blogs with an effect on corporate reputation management

(Source: Research survey)

The presentation in Figure 5.6 above shows that Twitter dominates many aspects, particularly as an effective tool for conversation (58%) in comparison to Facebook (52%), LinkedIn (10%), YouTube (4%) and Instagram (4%). It also confirmed it to have global coverage (47%) compared to Facebook (46%) and others, with a relatively lower level of recognition enjoyed by LinkedIn (21%), YouTube (21%) and Instagram (12%). In summary, there are three major social blogs that have proved to be dominating the use of the platforms by the players in the telecommunications industry based on the main elements that show that they enjoy benefits from the use of such platforms. Twitter dominates on conversational issues, and global coverage, while Facebook has proven to be more accepted across most aspects, including as a source of word of mouth, providing hybrid text, and acting as a platform for referrals and audio exchange. YouTube has shown itself to be more effective in visual displays for corporate reputation. For this reason, there is a need to recognise these three powerful contributors to corporate reputation as a construct towards positive reputation management.

As noted previously, social capital lies at the centre of contemporary approaches to corporate reputation management (Cao et al., 2016; Delavari & Badizadeh, 2018). The seven elements of social capital viz.: word of mouth; hybrid text factor; referrals; audio exchange (Facebook); conversations; global coverage (Twitter) and visual display (YouTube), are the critical drivers that shape and define the building a positive corporate reputation in the digital age. Though the research was primarily focusing on Twitter as the independent variable, the findings show that the two other social blogs are fundamental in the shaping of positive reputation, where there is a need for the players in the industry to take a holistic approach to the utilisation of the identifies social blogs in building their social capital and engaging with their stakeholders online. This is further supported by the literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three (Kotler et al., 2021; Stratcounter, 2021; Zhou & Chen, 2021).

5.7 RO5: To evaluate Twitter on its dominance to manage contemporary corporate reputation in comparison to other social blogs

The research asked which of the following social blogs are most effective in managing corporate reputation compared to Twitter guided the framing of the questionnaire design and the interview guide. There was a need to further interrogate Twitter and other social blogs (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube) to determine whether there might be an alternative means of improving corporate reputation. This was in reference to the transformational link between traditional and contemporary foundations, which would eventually lead to increased social capital. The survey questions were structured using an amalgam of both, with a focus on the newer ideas of boundary, social cognitive, and social exchange. The results from these surveys are as presented in Figure 5.7 below.
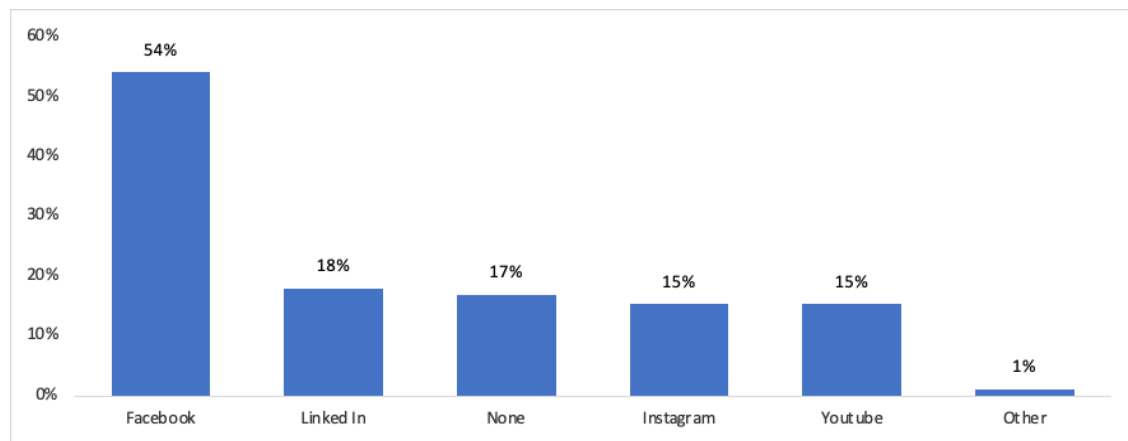
Figure 5. 7 : Most effective form of media in managing corporate reputation

(Source: Research survey)

The presentation in Figure 5.7 above shows the alternative forms of media that respondents think to be more effective than Twitter in managing corporate reputation. According to the data provided, Facebook is perceived by the majority of respondents (54%) as the most effective alternative to Twitter in managing corporate reputation. Other social blogs identified by respondents as better alternatives that could be used to manage corporate reputation were LinkedIn (18%), Instagram (15%) and YouTube (15%). However, a noteworthy proportion of respondents (17%) think that none of these other social blogs are able to surpass Twitter. This means that all the responses above 17% ought to be considered as the next best alternatives if not complementing Twitter in uplifting its corporate reputation.

To summarize, the five social blogs are considered, with the ones with dominant elements discussed in the previous objective being the primary consideration driving social capital and new perspectives to positive reputation management, while the other two, LinkedIn and Instagram, are closely monitored to inform their impact through future research as the social blogs environment is constantly evolving. The literature presented in Chapters Two and Three supports this, demonstrating how social blogs have evolved swiftly over the last two decades, necessitating close monitoring to inform the future study and contribute to a new body of knowledge. (POTRAZ, 2021; Stratcounter, 2021).

5.8 RO6: To determine and understand the internal views by managers and employees on the appreciation of Twitter as a social exchange tool in Zimbabwe

This objective considered the internal views of managers and employees on their appreciation of Twitter as a social exchange tool in Zimbabwe. This revealed their views on the regulation of telecommunications in the country. To address this objective, the research question: what are the internal stakeholder's views pertaining the levels of customer engagement with companies in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industries was developed to guide the development of the research questionnaire and the in-depth interview guide. Since corporate reputation issues are shared between the internal stakeholders and the customers, it was important to gain an understanding of their viewpoint on that matter. However, due to customers being everywhere and difficult to locate as individuals or groups the research then sourced insights from the managers and employees within the investigated telecommunication organisations. The research was therefore based on how Twitter is appreciated and used by the customers in line with reputational matters from the internal stakeholders' perspectives. The managers' and employees' views were generalised as acceptable as if they were to be sourced directly from the real customers. The results from the surveys carried out are presented in Table 5.6 below.

Table 5. 6 : Inter-item correlation matrix – Managers and employees responses about the customer usage of Twitter

Activities of customers using Twitter	SCQ1	SCQ2	SCQ3	SCQ4	SCQ5	SCQ6	SCQ7
SCQ1. Customers can easily interact with the organisation on any issues using Twitter more than any other blogosphere	1.000						
SCQ2. Customers can inform the business of their complaints using Twitter more than any other blog	.505	1.000					
SCQ3. Feedback for any requests by the customers can be received using Twitter more than any other platform	.411	.554	1.000				
SCQ4. Customers can shape corporate reputations through their actions on Twitter	.379	.485	.391	1.000			
SCQ5. Customers have improved word of mouth on corporate reputation using Twitter more than any other form of social media	.408	.445	.400	.433	1.000		
SCQ6. Customers can interact with any level of the organisation using Twitter more than any other blogosphere	.348	.374	.419	.344	.430	1.000	
SCQ7. Customers can discuss their concerns with the owners of the business using Twitter more than any other form of blogs	.374	.357	.299	.267	.326	.674	1.000

The presentation in Table 5.6 above shows an inter-item correlation matrix of seven items measuring customer uses of Twitter from the internal stakeholder's view, which have a bearing effect on corporate reputation. All the seven measurements have proven that they have a moderate correlation with each other. This suggests that the presented items have good construct validity, making the responses vital and conclusive to the matter at hand. Each element has a perfect co-relation when it stands alone, which confirms that the measured element is correct. In Table 5.6 above, the first component SCQ1 correlation measurement with itself (SCQ1=1) shows a perfect relationship on the interaction of customers using Twitter with the organisation compared to any other social blog. This is true with the rest of the variables in the matrix, which authenticates the outcome of the results of the research responses from these constructs as presented in the following Table 5.7.

Table 5. 7: Managers and employees responses about the customer usage of Twitter

Activities of customers using Twitter	Disagree / Strongly disagree	Neutral	Agree / Strongly Agree
SC_Q1. Customer can easily interact with the organisation on any issues using Twitter more than any other blogosphere	15%	19%	64%
SC_Q2. Customers can inform the business of their complaints using Twitter more than any other blog.	15%	23%	61%
SC_Q3. Feedback for any requests by the customers can be received using Twitter more than any other platform.	18%	22%	57%
SC_Q4. Customers can shape corporate reputations through their actions on Twitter.	12%	16%	70%

SC_Q5. Customers have improved word of mouth on corporate reputation using Twitter more than any other form of social media.	13%	16%	70%
SC_Q6. Customers can interact with any level of the organisation using Twitter more than any other blogosphere.	26%	26%	47%
SC_Q7. Customers can discuss their concerns with the owners of the business using Twitter more than any other form of blogs.	27%	22%	49%

The survey data presented in Table 5.7 shows that the respondents accepted that customers use Twitter in many aspects of corporate reputation. The majority of these responses (70%) agreed that customers can shape corporate reputations through their actions on Twitter and that they can use Twitter as a form for improved word of mouth on corporate reputation issues. These proved to be the most dominant factors for Twitter to connect telecommunication organisations and customers, such that if harvested, positive reputational issues might be resolved. All other factors that have been tested as in Table 5.7 above, have shown a great positive link between Twitter and customers' usage of this social blog: that is, customers easily interact with the organisation (on any issues) more than any other platform (64%); customers inform the business of their complaints more than any other platform (61%) and Twitter provides feedback for any requests by the customers more than any other platform (57%). Twitter also increases customer interaction with any level of the organisation (47%) and customers' discussion of their concerns with the owners of the business (49%) more so than any other form of a social blog. A positive corporate reputation can come from the Twitter engagement between telecommunications businesses and their customers.

This is in line with the literature review in Chapter 3, which highlights that internal stakeholders' views are critical in understanding how customers interact with the customers and stakeholders online. This is articulated in social media and social exchange theory, which influenced the design of the research instruments and interview guide (Davids and Brown, 2021). The results further validate the literature reviewed, where the quality of content from a given organisation is a key factor in deciding whether the

organisation will attract an online following or not. Hence, there is a need for a deliberate strategy as to how the organisation develops, shares and handles feedback online so as to enhance corporate reputation management (Wang et al., 2020a). The lack of both conceptual and practical research in this regard points to the need for organisations to invest in new approaches to understanding the needs, concerns, demands and experiences that require both a well-thought-out approach and tools to support the same, which will develop an inbuilt mechanism towards corporate reputation management (Wright and Hinson, 2013; Carim and Warwick, 2013; Li et al., 2020; Wang et al. 2020a). This further feed the last research objective, on the need for a study framework that guides both practice and answers the conceptual gap.

Accordingly, content on social blogs is wide-ranging and varies from one platform of use to another, which can include tweets on Twitter, status updates on Facebook, to publishing videos on YouTube. Therefore, platform users share their thoughts through different mechanisms. To conclusively determine the relationship between Twitter usage by customers and corporate reputation a further stepwise linear regression was done as presented in Table 5.8 below.

Table 5. 8: Customer use of Twitter and corporate reputation of Zimbabwean telecommunications industry

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics R Square Change	F Change	df 1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.351[a]	.123	.121	.71867	.123	44.621	1	317	.000
2	.399[b]	.160	.154	.70480	.036	13.601	1	316	.000
3	.419[c]	.176	.168	.69901	.016	6.256	1	315	.013

The presentation in Table 5.8 shows the outcome of the relationship between the usage of Twitter by customers and the overall reputation of telecommunication businesses in Zimbabwe. The stepwise linear regression analysis results show that all the engaged four models have positive and statistically significant standardised beta coefficients, suggesting that Twitter use by customers has a positive and significant effect on enhancing the corporate reputation of the telecommunications industry companies in Zimbabwe. The ability of customers to shape corporate reputations through their actions on Twitter makes up Model 1, and accounts for a total variability of 12.1 percent. Addition of the view that customers can easily interact with the organisation on any issues using Twitter more than any other blogosphere increased variability in corporate reputation to 15.4% in Model 2. The best model is a combination of all three factors, namely: 'customers can shape corporate reputations through their actions on Twitter, 'customers can easily interact with the organisation on any issues using Twitter more than any other social platform' and 'customers have improved word of mouth on corporate reputation using Twitter more than any other form of social media'. The three factors account for 16.8% of the total variations in corporate reputation due to Twitter's influence on customers.

Equally instructive is Table 5.9 below, which shows the influence that Twitter has on the customer's daily business transactions. The results of the one-sample t-test indicate that overall, Twitter has a positive impact on customers who use it daily to conduct business (mean = 3.47, Std = 0.84: t (331) = 10.31, p < 0.01). Respondents indicated that customers were found to positively and significantly shape corporate reputations through their actions on Twitter (mean = 3.70, Std = 1.16: t (331) = 6.04, p < 0.01), easily interacting with the organisation on any issues on the Twitter platform more than any other social blogs platform (mean = 3.58, Std = 1.15: t (331) = 11.10, p < 0.01), and customers also improved word of mouth on corporate reputation through the use of Twitter more than they did on any other social blogs platform (mean = 3.58, Std = 1.15: t (331) = 11.05, p < 0.01).

The computations were based on comparing the mean scores with a mean of 3 (neutral response). The one-sample t-test results indicate that consumers of social blogs have positive attitudes towards Twitter with regards to the promotion of good corporate images for most organisations.

Table 5. 9: Influence of Twitter on customers - T-test

	Mean	Standard deviation	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
SC_Q1. Customers can easily interact with the organisation on any issues using Twitter more than any other platform	3.58	1.175	3.205	331	.001	.11	.46
SC_Q2. Customers can inform the business of their complaints using Twitter more than any other platform	3.56	1.110	8.920	331	.000	.45	.70
SC_Q3. Feedback for any requests by the customers can be received using Twitter more than any other platform	3.43	1.291	9.197	331	.000	.44	.68
SC_Q4. Customers can shape corporate reputations through their actions on Twitter	3.70	1.162	6.039	331	.000	.29	.57

SC_Q5. Customers have improved word of mouth on corporate reputation using Twitter more than any other form of social media	3.58	1.152	11.050	331	.000	.58	.83
SC_Q6. Customers can interact with any level of the organisation using Twitter more than any other platform	3.25	1.230	9.150	331	.000	.45	.70
SC_Q7. Customers can discuss their concerns with the owners of the business using Twitter more than any other platform	3.22	1.233	3.748	331	.000	.12	.39
Overall effect of Twitter on customer perceptions	3.4746	.83899	10.308	331	.000	.3840	.5652

5.9 To develop a framework for social blogs and corporate reputation driven by Twitter as a tool for improved reputation in the telecommunications business

The objective proposes a framework that contributes towards addressing both the knowledge and practice gap for the target population, as well as future research. To achieve this goal, all the objectives were aggregated by collecting all the responses from the respondents and analysing the information through the

structural equation modelling, which was critical in testing the relationships and the fitness of the framework proposes. The outcome of the process was a technical presentation of the relationship through Figure 5.8 under section 5.9.5. This was then simplified into a framework that can be understood by practitioners and future researchers (see Figure 5.9 under section 5.10).

5.9.0 Framework for social and corporate reputation for improved reputation in telecommunications

The study sought to generate a framework for the effective use of social blogs to enhance corporate reputation in Zimbabwe. In order to achieve these relationships among constructs or latent variables in the proposed model were tested using structural equation modelling (SEM).

5.9.1 Goodness of Fit indices

The maximum likelihood method was employed in this to estimate the model parameters. There are fit indices considered to assess the model for the goodness of fit (Kline, 2005; Hair et al., 2010). The Chi-square test (X^2), Chi-square (X^2) to degrees of freedom ratio (X^2/df), Goodness of fit indices (GFI), Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) are the fit indices that evaluated, whether a match existed between survey data and the model (Hair, 2010). Table 5.10 below shows the results of the tests and conclusions drawn.

Table 5. 10: SEM Model Fit indices

Fit Index	Recommended value (Hair, 2010)	Value obtained	Decision
Chi-square (X^2)	p>0.05	437.234 (p=0.000, p<0.05)	No model fit
Chi-square (X^2) to degrees of freedom ratio (X^2/df)	<5 preferably<3	2.789	Model fit
Goodness of fit Indices (GFI)	>0.9	0.912	Model fit

Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA)	<0.08 preferably <0.05	0.049	Model fit
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	>0.9	0.930	Model fit

These results indicate that all the fit indices were within an acceptable range, suggesting a good fit between the survey data and the theory, except for the Chi-square, which was significant (p<0.05). The Chi-square is an unstable test and cannot be relied on when testing model fit. Its alternative, Chi-square (X^2) to degrees of freedom ratio (X^2/df) is more stable. The CMIN/df<3 indicates a good fit and is the more appropriate way today of measuring model fit. Since the computed CMIN/df <0.03, CFI>0.9, GFI>0.9 RMSEA<0.05 and CFI>0.9, the results suggest a match of fit between the theory and survey data, indicating a good fit for the proposed model. Since the data fit the model, the researcher proceeded to examine the hypothesised relationships within the model. The CMIN/df indicates an acceptable fit between the hypothetical model and sample data leading to a modelling of the variables at hand. Table 5.11 depicts the path coefficients for the hypothesised relationships within the proposed model.

Table 5. 11: Summary of the results for direct hypothesis for the survey

Proposed relationship	Effect type	Path co-efficient (B)	p-Value	Study results
Challenges➡ Twitter	Direct	-.183	.004	Accept
Orgstaopp➡ Twitter	Direct	-.071	.448	Reject
Customers➡ Twitter	Direct	-.247	.038	Accept
Twitter➡ Operational	Direct	.250	0.001	Accept
Twitter➡ general	Direct	.134	.006	Accept
Twitter➡ Top-level	Direct	.119	.137	Reject

Twitter → SocCap	Direct	-.272	.254	Reject	
Facebook → Orgstaopp	Direct	.063	.405	Reject	
Facebook → Toplevel	Direct	.060	.453	Reject	
Facebook → Operational	Direct	.280	.010	Accept	
Facebook → General	Direct	.180	.043	Accept	
Facebook → SocCap	Direct	-.315	.519	Accept	
Orgstaopp → Toplevel	Direct	1.056	***	Accept	
Display → Customers	Direct	.630	***	Accept	
SocCap → PosCopRep	Direct	.540	***	Accept	

As presented in Table 5.11 above, summarises the standardised regression estimates of the influence of social blogs (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) on the relationship between social capital and positive corporate reputation.

5.9.2 Twitter

The first relationship to be tested in relationship to *H1* was that challenges were negatively correlated to Twitter. Results indicate a weak negative and significant relationship between challenges and Twitter (B=-.183, p<0.05). As challenges increase, the effectiveness of Twitter to enhance a positive corporate reputation decrease.

The second relationship was that organisational strategic opportunities such as vision reputation, crafting strategy, strategy formulation, and strategic coordination of ideas improve reputation through Twitter in relation to *H2*. Findings reveal no significant link between organisational strategic opportunities and Twitter (p>0.05). Consequently, we reject the hypothesis and conclude that organisational strategic opportunities and Twitter are not related. This matches the outcomes of the literature reviewed and the Standard Deviation on the issues, which was negative when the top-level management use and roles on Twitter were measured. This might be due to the fact that the senior managers are fixated on the strategic issues of the institution to

practically manage and create content on the Twitter handles, but rather set the agenda for the long-term strategic goals achievement.

The third relationship examined the relationship between organisational strategic opportunities and Top-level managers. Results indicate a weak negative correlation between the two (B=-.247, p<0.05). Findings suggest top-level managers are not effectively implementing the organizational strategic opportunities, resulting in the negative corporate reputation of organisations. This further justifies the above in that there is a need for a structured approach to ensuring that the top-level managers are in sync with the rest of the internal stakeholder's perspectives and approaches towards the management of corporate reputation in the digital age.

The fourth relationship tested predicted customers use Twitter to promote a positive corporate reputation. In relation to *H2*. Results indicate a weak negative and significant association between customers and Twitter (B=-.247, p<0.05). Each time a customer uses Twitter the corporate reputation of organisations declines. Hence, there is a need for the players in the telecommunications industry to deliberately take steps towards mediating a positive reputation process to achieve positive outcomes. As noted in the responses on the internal stakeholders' use of platforms, there is no commonality of vision towards the use of social platforms. It seems managers hold a strong vision of the institution, but there is limited evidence to show how this is shared across the institutions to ensure that there is consistency and unity of purpose. Based on the gaps located in Chapters Two and Three, a framework for the players in the industry will benefit from building consistency on the prominent platforms and their key elements, and how they feed into contemporary approaches in building a positive reputation, thereby addressing both concepts and practice (Cao et al., 2016; Delavari & Badizadeh, 2018).

The fifth relationship tested under hypothesis one *(H1)* of this study was that Twitter is related to traditional corporate reputation management issues. Specifically, findings indicate a weak negative relationship between external customers and Twitter (B=-.247, p<0.05). Weak positive relationships were observed between Twitter and operational managers (B=.250, p<0.0001) and Twitter and general workers (B=134, p<.05). No significant associations were observed between Twitter and: top-level management (p>.05), and SocCap (p>.05). This entails that there is no internal harmony within the telecommunication industry regarding how to drift from the traditional processes in the management or reputation towards contemporary issues that are driven by social blogs. This in turn affects how the players in the industry utilise social blogs in managing their reputation. As shown in the results, although these players seem to be aware of the

existence of social media, they maintain an ad hoc approach in managing the process utilising the digital platforms. This is further supported by the literature reviewed, and the problem statement framing the reputational challenges facing the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe (TechZim, 2021).

5.9.3 Facebook

The sixth relationship was that organisational strategic opportunities such as vision reputation, crafting strategy, strategy formulation and strategy co-ordination of ideas improve Facebook's reputation in relation to *H3*. Findings reveal no significant link between organisational strategic opportunities and Facebook (p>0.05). Consequently, we reject the hypothesis and conclude that organisational strategic opportunities and Facebook are not related. The same results located for Twitter emerge, which requires a strategic framework to ensure that the top-level managers set the tone and direction of engagement for the entire organisation (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2017).

The seventh relationship tested examined the relationship between organisational strategic opportunities and operational managers in relation to *H3*. Results indicate a very strong positive relationship between the two (B=1.056, p<0.001). Findings suggest that Operational managers use Facebook to enhance the positive corporate reputation of organisations. Operational managers are consistent 'hands-on'. Yet this is the case without a set framework or guidelines that enable consistency towards the same.

The eighth relationship tested examined the relationship between social blogs' use and general employees on the impact of corporate reputation in relation to *H3*. Results indicate a very strong positive relationship between the two (B=1.180, p<0.001). Findings suggest that general employees use Facebook to enhance the positive corporate reputation of organisations. Hence, there is a need for a structured approach to guiding their use of the platforms to avert the suspicions shared by the KIIs in the in-depth interviews, who feared that the use of the platforms by all employees presents a reputational risk. The contemporary approach to the management of reputation requires a structured approach, ensuring that the maximum value of employees' social capital feeds into the corporates' social capital by extension. The fears and control-oriented approach by the key players in the industry further reveal that the industry is grappling with managing reputation using both traditional and contemporary approaches, where social blogs are playing a central role. For this reason, there is a need for a framework to assist the industry and unlock the value that comes with embracing and placing contemporary approaches to the management of corporate reputation at the centre of the industry's survival. This is supported by the literature reviewed in chapters Two and Three (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2017; Kotler et al., 2017; Sarkar & Kotler, 2020; Kotler et al., 2021; POTRAZ, 2021).

5.9.4 YouTube

The ninth relationship tested predicted YouTube and external customers to be positively related (*H3*). Results indicate a moderate-high positive and significant relationship between the two (B=.630, p<0.05). This is validated by the research results elements that show that YouTube has the strength of visual display, which therefore allows for the customers and employees to engage through the multiple elements of video, audio and graphics in engaging with products and services, which attracts both the literate and semi-literate, as outlined in chapters Two and Three.

5.9.5 Social Capital and positive corporate reputation

The major research relationship, *H2* tested the relationship between Social Capital (SocCap) and positive corporate reputation (PosCopRep). Results indicate that social capital is a moderate-high positive predictor of positive corporate reputation (B=.542, p<0.001). As noted in the literature reviewed, at the centre of the shift from traditional to contemporary approaches in corporate reputation management lies the interplay of social blogs and social capital. As revealed by the research results, this requires a shift in the mindset from control-centred traditional approaches towards a contemporary approach, which is predicated on collaborative efforts, being part of dynamic communities online, engagement, and investment in an employee, who by extension drive engagements with the public. As shown from the results, social capital as a driver of positive corporate reputation is a key factor in the performance and survival of a business, as the public sphere of online platforms compared increasingly replaces traditional means of communication, which further enhances business visibility and viability. Through this study, social capital, driven by social blog platforms has been revealed, which sets the foundation for future research in other industries. This is supported by the literature reviewed in chapters Two and Three (Cao et al., 2016; Delavari & Badizadeh, 2018; Yang, 2020; Davids & Brown, 2021). The study also established the mediating factors in the process of managing corporate reputation through an affirmation of relationships between top-level management, operational management, general employees, and external customers. The relationships are either direct or indirect, as shown in Table 5.12 below.

Table 5. 12 : Mediating effects of top-level managers, operational managers, general employees and external customers on Twitter and positive corporate reputation

Mediator	Direct	Indirect effect	Total effect	Conclusion
Top level managers	-.601	.714	.113**	Mediation
Operational managers	-.601	.373	-.228***	Mediation
General employees	-.601	.728	.127**	Mediation
External customers	-.601	.601	.000	Mediation

*Notes: **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 and NS: p>0.1*

The mediation effects of top-level managers, operational managers, and general employees, as well as their replies to external customers, on the relationship between Twitter and managers' and employees' social capital in the management of corporate reputation, are shown in Table 5.12 above. The standardised total (direct and indirect) effect of Twitter use by top-level management is .113. That is, due to both direct (unmediated) and indirect (mediated) effects of top-level management use of Twitter, which if increasing one standard deviation, led to a 0.113 standard deviation of the dependent variable. This suggests full mediation of top-level management of Twitter use in the management of corporate reputation.

The standardised total (direct and indirect) effect of Twitter on customers is .000. That is, when Twitter use increases by one standard deviation, it increases by zero standard deviation due to both direct (unmediated) and indirect (mediated) effects on customers. This shows that there was no direct mediation between Twitter use and customers' effect on corporate reputation. The actual relationship measured was the responses of how managers and employees view customers' use of Twitter, and how this affected corporate reputation management.

The standardised total (direct and indirect) effect of operational managers' use of Twitter is -.228. That is, the usage of Twitter by operational managers has both direct (unmediated) and indirect (mediated) consequences on the management of a positive corporate reputation. That is to say, when Twitter use goes up by one standard deviation, operational manager engagement would have gone down by 0.228 in standard deviations.

The standardised total (direct and indirect) effect of Twitter use by general employees is .127. That is, the usage of Twitter by general staff has both direct (unmediated) and indirect (mediated) consequences on the management of a positive corporate reputation. That is to say, when the use of Twitter goes up by one standard deviation, general employees' utilisation of the platform would have gone up by 0.127 standard deviations.

Table 5. 13 : Mediating effects of top-level managers, operational managers, general employees and external customers on Facebook and positive corporate reputation

Mediator	Direct	Indirect effect	Total effect	Conclusion
Top level managers	-.220	.369	.149**	Mediation
Operational managers	-.220	.440	.220***	Mediation
General employees	-.220	.256	.036*	Mediation
External customers	-.220	.412	.192**	Mediation

*Notes *p<0.1, **p<0.1 ***p<0.1 and NS: p>0.1*

The standardised total (direct and indirect) effect of Facebook use on customers is .192. That is, due to both direct (unmediated) and indirect (mediated) effects of Facebook on customers, when Facebook use goes up by 1 standard deviation, customers go up by 0.192 standard deviations which affect corporate reputation management.

The standardised total (direct and indirect) effect of Facebook on operational managers is .220. That is, due to both direct (unmediated) and indirect (mediated) effects of Facebook on operations, when Facebook goes up by 1 standard deviation, operational managers go up by 0.22 standard deviations.

The standardised total (direct and indirect) effect of Facebook on general employees is .036. That is, due to both direct (unmediated) and indirect (mediated) effects of Facebook on general employees, when Facebook goes up by 1 standard deviation, general goes up by 0.036 standard deviations.

The standardised total (direct and indirect) effect of Facebook on Top-level managers is .149. That is, due to both direct (unmediated) and indirect (mediated) effects of Facebook on Top-level managers, when Facebook goes up by one standard deviation, top-level managers go up by 0.149 standard deviations. The relationships and hypothesis being tested are highlighted in Figure 5.8 below.
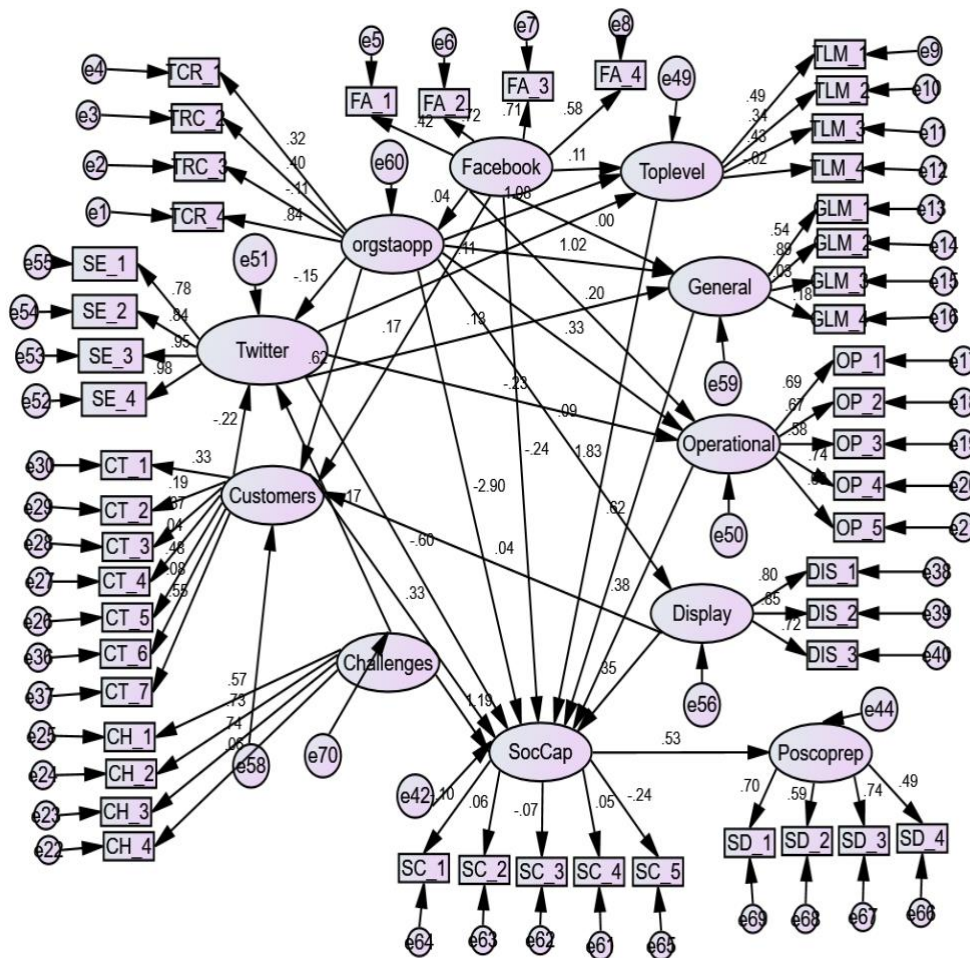
Figure 5. 8*: The Architecture of the contributing model*

(Source: NVivo Software Generated)

As highlighted in Figure 5.8 above, it presents the results of the structural equation modelling on the quantitative results on the effects of Twitter as a social blog on corporate reputation management in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry. The statistical relationships were key in the proposal of a

simplified framework for the industry and show contribution to knowledge while guiding future research and inquiry on the subject matter.

5.10 Final framework for the study

This framework of the study is a culmination of the technical outcome of Figure 5.8, which is the outcome of the structural equation modelling, which statistically shows the relationships between and among variables. However, there is a need for simplifying and operationalising the statistical presentation through interpretation. Figure 5.9 below shows the industry players and relevant stakeholders.

Figure 5. 9: *Framework on the effect of social blog platforms on positive corporate reputation management in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry*

5.10.1 Positive Corporate Reputation

The final framework of the research study proposes a dynamic relationship between social blogs and corporate reputation management. As articulated in Chapter Two, there are various types of social blogs, which can positively influence the formation and management of positive corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. However, the levels of influence and effects on corporate

reputation using the various social blogs differ from one platform to the other. To build positive reputation, there ought to be an understanding of the effect of various social blogs on the formation of corporate identity, personality, and strategy (Etter et al., 2018; Kaul & Chaudhri, 2019; Kotler et al., 2017), as per the discussion presented in Chapter Three. Secondly, the study shows that such a traditional approach to management of corporate reputation has been altered by contemporary views, specifically the effect of internal stakeholders' social capital and how this shapes their use of public social blogs towards contemporary management of corporate reputation as elaborated in Chapter 3.

This research established that there are three main social blogs that influence positive reputation management, namely Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. These three platforms have different strengths in the management of reputation. The study found that Twitter has a strong global reach and stimulates high levels of conversation when compared to other social media. On the other hand, Facebook stimulates word-of-mouth recommendations, has hybrid text capabilities, and improved referrals and audio exchange compared to the rest of the platforms. YouTube has a strong visual display capability compared to the rest.

5.10.2 Use of Twitter in corporate reputation management

In Zimbabwe, Twitter use has been on a consistent rise in the past five years, as was established in Chapter Two, where it was shown that in 2015 that Twitter use was at 1.6 percent. As of October 2021, it is the most popular platform in Zimbabwe, commanding 43.62% of all social platform users (Statcounter, 2021), thereby gaining 42.02% of users in less than six years. There was thus an alignment of this literature regarding the increase in the use of Twitter with the results found in this study, as both the in-depth interviews and the survey results revealed that Twitter was one of the three major platforms being used in the industry to manage corporate reputation. According to the results of this study, Twitter ranks strongly in terms of its global coverage and ability to stimulate conversations. These factors enable the platform to contribute to the creation of positive news through real-time publishing of headlines, framing of the issues, content generation and crafting of the messages, thereby attracting an extensive number of users to view messages. This in turn contributes to the users sharing the messages that have been posted on Twitter, increasing the chances of these messages to trend. The platform is thus a nerve centre for robust and intense conversations and is also a vehicle for eWOM, elements of which are foundational in the management of a positive reputation. Furthermore, Twitter contributes to the social capital base upon which a contemporary approach to corporate reputation emerges. This is supported by literature in Chapter 3 on the contemporary theories and their contribution to new perspectives in corporate reputation management. The research further

established that through top-level management Twitter plays a critical strategic role in the shaping of an organisation's vision and mission, crafting of strategic messages and formulation of organisational messages, which are critical components of the traditional approach towards the management of corporate reputation.

5.10.3 Use of Facebook in corporate reputation management

Facebook is the most used social blog platform globally, commanding more than 64% of the worldwide subscriber base (Stratcounter, 2021). In Zimbabwe, Facebook use is on the decline, but the platform is still highly competitive. As noted in the literature review in Chapter Two, in 2015, Facebook was a near monopoly, commanding 97.1% of social blogs users, but the use of the platform has dropped to 35.86% as of October 2021 as the social blogosphere market structure has shifted drastically (Statcounter, 2021). Nevertheless, the results found in this study indicate that Facebook is still highly preferred in the management of a positive reputation in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe, as both the participants and respondents in the study noted that the platform facilitates word of mouth, sharing of information through hybrid text, referrals for positive reputation, and has a superior advantage when it comes to audio exchange when compared to other platforms. The platform in terms of use in Zimbabwe comes second to Twitter, which dominates the space. According to Kotler et al. (2021), there is a positive relationship between interactive platforms and management of positive corporate reputation, which is evident in the findings, as Facebook is preferred due to its interactive capabilities and the resulting positive influence on corporate reputation. Accordingly, the study established that Facebook, through its four key drivers highlighted above, is a key enabler in the contemporary approach towards the management of corporate reputation. Its factors, namely word of mouth, facilitation of sharing of information through hybrid text, enabling referrals for positive reputation, and a superior advantage in audio exchange, contribute to the internal stakeholder's capacity to galvanise social capital of their networks in their use of social blogs to shape corporate reputation through new perspectives.

5.10.4 Use of YouTube in corporate reputation management

YouTube ranks fourth in terms of use in Zimbabwe, with 4.27% of the country's social blogs' users subscribing to the platform, yet only five years ago, it had no subscribers in the country (Statcounter, 2021). The results of this study showed that the platform was strongly recommended for its strength in visual display. As articulated in Chapter Four, this is the only social blog that is not included in the promotions

bundles offered by MNOs and ISPs in Zimbabwe, yet it has still managed to gain traction in the country. This is evident since the bulk of Zimbabwe's mobile telephony users utilise mobile data in the form of the promotional bundles offered by MNOs and ISPs (MISA, 2019) users are willing to pay fees out of the promotional bundles' bracket offering in order to utilise YouTube. This means that the platform has an exceptional value for the management of reputation. In so doing, the researchers discovered that the platform plays a critical role in shaping the new perspectives towards the development of social capital that is key in enabling a positive corporate reputation.

5.10.5 Organisational strategic opportunities

The research revealed that Twitter plays a key role in driving the organisational long-term reputation, including vision, crafting strategy, strategy formulation, and strategic coordination of ideas. This positions Twitter as a competitive platform for further harnessing both internal and external stakeholders' social capital in shaping a positive reputation in the age of social blogs. As noted in Table 5.15, all the internal stakeholders from the top-level, operational managers, employees, and the external stakeholders (customers) play a mediation role, which is confirmed through positive direct effect, where there is a need for players in the telecommunications industry to generate with internal guidelines to support coherent utilisation of this social platform to promote positive reputation in the industry.

The new media, in the form of social blogs, present an opportunity for the telecommunications industry to manage their respective reputations in more efficient and effective means as shown by how Twitter, Facebook and YouTube through their key factors present opportunities to consolidate the social capital which then drive new perspectives to reputation management. As such, the results of the study reveal that the social blogosphere has the capacity to go beyond the reach of huge audiences at a given time to that of stimulating conversations, encouraging transparency and openness, and promoting positive word of mouth. According to Arvidsson and Caliandro (2016), new paradigms have taken shape as social blog platforms have replaced traditional news communication approaches, which had been characterised by top-down communications, vertical flow of information, and one-to-multiplicity boomerang of information. Social blogs now offer an alternative avenue for the sharing of evaluations and judgements about a given company in the public sphere. For example, through embedded platforms in new media, such as blogs and debate forums, the online platform users are empowered to scrutinise, in public, the actions of organisations and to share, through their communities, comments which will permanently remain on public platforms (Brodie et al., 2013; Davids & Brown, 2021). Furthermore, scholars also argue that the online space enables the platform users the capacity to engage and share information, perspectives, lived realities, and experiential

treatment and to mobilise an unlimited audience on key issues of concern (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016; Yang, 2020).

Online platforms also allow for a permanent record to be maintained, which means that the internet does not 'forget' the actions of a given company. This also triggers co-production websites and blogs and allows online users to perpetually discuss corporate character and its footprint long after the issues have taken place. These discussions can span days, weeks, or even years after their initial occurrence (Etter & Nielsen, 2015). Online platforms are thus key enablers for eWOM, as reviews posted on various blogs that are accessed by billions globally allow for collective judgements and evaluations generated by fellow users. The strength of the number of followers within a specified community who are bound to access the reviews or the eWOM is the foundation of the influence of the evaluations given on social blogs (Etter et al., 2018). In other situations, such influence is dependent on the reaction of other users, through their actions such as sharing of posts, re-tweeting, liking, commenting and forwarding, among others (Barnett & Pollock, 2012). For this reason, in the new media landscape, individual evaluations are foundational to the establishment of reputations through their influence on communities and social groups, towards an organisation's services and products, thereby affecting the decisions of current and potential customers and employees (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014; Delavari and Badizadeh, 2018).

These perspectives on the changing power relations between brands and audiences, which lead to the co-creation of reputation between the company and stakeholders, were articulated and debated in chapters Two and Three. As noted in the literature review and the findings from both the in-depth interviews and the survey, the growth of social blogs brings to the fore the Zimbabwean telecommunications companies' responsibility of managing customer interface, protecting corporate reputation and management of the customers/stakeholder's touchpoints. As such, the levels of participation of consumers range from viewing messages to active participation, such as forwarding posts and information, making commentary, and creating, moderating and arbitrating messages, thereby presenting a huge opportunity for corporate reputation co-creation. This is further articulated and elaborated through the social media and social exchange theory which articulates the critical role of employees in managing conversations online through active engagements (Kaul & Chaudhri, 2019; Davids and Brown, 2021). This provides for new opportunities in the management of corporate reputation, in a more dynamic manner than can be achieved through traditional approaches.

In addition, there is an exponential growth of social blog usage in Zimbabwe, which is equally linked to high mobile telephone penetration. This shows that the telecommunications industry players serve a highly mobile stakeholder chain, where there is a need to manage apex levels of stakeholder engagement and content consumption (Mandiwanzira, 2016; MISA, 2018; Mudzingwa, 2019). Kotler et al. (2017) also note that the users of online platforms invest more trust in fellow user-generated information on their experiences in regard to corporates' services and products and view these reviews as more reliable than the corporates themselves (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), as they share the 'experiential credibility' from their shared realities as users gain greater power in speaking truth to power (Hussain et al., 2017). This suggests that there is a massive opportunity for organisations to tap into eWOM to position the organisation in online conversations that will help to shape the reputation of industry players.

Furthermore, social blog platforms contribute to reducing the cost of communication of the organisational vision, strategic goals, strategy coordination, handling of complaints and feedback to the stakeholders in the process of corporate identity, corporate personality and strategy formation, which are critical components of managing a positive corporate reputation for an organisation. The bulk of the responses from the in-depth interviews with KII indicated that social blog platforms are cost-effective as they enhance reputation management through word of mouth; hybrid text; referrals; audio exchange; visual display; stimulating conversations; and global reach. This is all the more crucial in an economically distressed country such as Zimbabwe. As established in both the literature review and the findings of the in-depth interviews and survey results, Twitter and other social blog platforms such as Facebook and YouTube present additional opportunities, as they are among the international online brand platforms most widely used, with a near-monopoly status. In addition, they are easily and frequently used, have wide audiences, are ubiquitous platforms, and are universally recognised.

5.10.6 Challenges in using social blogs for corporate reputation management

As noted in the component entitled "Challenges", these are moderating factors that mediate how Twitter use affects a positive reputation. These range from internet access, infrastructure-related challenges, literacy levels, financial constraints, and organisational culture, among others.

Social blog use is therefore determined by internet access in Zimbabwe through the broadband infrastructure derived from the connectivity of the regional state members. Zimbabwe's internet integration and connectivity remain restricted due to its weak national infrastructure (POTRAZ, 2018). The costs of data and communication services in Zimbabwe are some of the most expensive in the SADC region (POTRAZ,

2018). As outlined in Chapter Two, different social blog platforms have different strengths and limitations. Some of the limitations observed from the findings of the study are that social blogs are not regulated, they have limited reach in rural areas in Zimbabwe, and due to infrastructure challenges, the cost of accessing platforms is relatively high. As such, these challenges can become a barrier to the effectiveness of social blog platforms as a means towards the effective management of corporate reputation in Zimbabwe. As of 2019, Zimbabwe was one of the countries ranked as the most expensive mobile data on the continent at USD 15 per gigabyte compared to counties like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, which are less than a dollar per gigabyte (Howmuch.net, 2019), revealing the need for companies to support their internal stakeholders' capacity to use the internet through providing internet use facilities both at home and work.

The majority of KII of the telecommunications companies bemoaned a lack of regulation in the social blogs space as being a major weakness, which allows 'anyone' to open an account that may in the long run promote unethical use of the platforms, which will weaken the reputation chain of the industry players. The respondents noted that this feeds into the disinformation arena, where messages are circulated as factual, without proper verification. KIIs, especially those whose companies serve mass markets, as opposed to business-facing companies, noted that the platforms are limited in terms of their reach in the markets, specifically in the rural areas. This presents challenges to market reach and stakeholder representation on these platforms. As a result, the limited reach and lack of regulation of social blog platforms hamper the corporates' abilities to shape positive reputation, as companies are limited in their ability to influence positive image, positive perception, positive identity, and above all, in their ability to define the corporate strategy and corporate personality. Further to this, the cost of Internet access is high as Zimbabwe is landlocked and relies on importing its broadband from countries like Mozambique, South Africa, and Malawi among others. This entails that organisation in the industry support their employees and internal stakeholders with access to the Internet at home and at work, to allow for active participation in the use of social blogs in contribution to the management of corporate reputation. As noted in the literature review, specifically boundary theory, the home and work domains affect the use of social blogs, as most participants highlight that they experience challenges in accessing the internet outside office spaces due to the costs. Lastly, the moderating challenge of organisational culture plays a major role in supporting the use of social media, as noted by KII interviews that detail that there is a prevalent culture of control in the majority of players in the industry that are reminiscent of traditional approaches in managing reputation. There is thus a need for openness, transparency, and engagement internally from top-level managers to the general

employees towards building a digital compliant culture that encourages use and promotes standards of use and learning so that internal stakeholders are confident to engage customers online.

5.10.7 Traditional corporate reputation issues

Social blogs are changing the traditional approaches towards corporate reputation management, wherein corporate identity has traditionally been defined by scholars who argue that the identity of an organisation appears in four forms, namely: "actual identity; communicated identity; conceived identity; and ideal identity" (Stuart, 1999: 89). The study shows that top-level, operational managers and general employees contribute to the shaping of identity through their interface with social blogs referred to as the mediating factors to reputation management.

The corporate personality of a company comprises its corporate philosophy and values, and the corporate mission and vision statements. This study focused on improving corporate personality through social blogs as a means of managing a positive corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry. This research revealed that the personality of corporates in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe is influenced by the way in which they manage social blogs, towards creating a positive corporate reputation. This suggests that those corporates that had a well-liked 'personality' had a greater following on social blogs and tended to position the social blogs as strategic platforms for communication, thereby improving their respective reputations. This is affirmed by the organisational strategic issues highlighted in the framework according to which Twitter is the strategic driver of the strategic propositions.

Corporate strategy is foundational in the development of a positive corporate reputation (Kotler et al., 2017). In essence, corporate strategy refers to the deliberate direction set by the management's intentional and unintentional communications, which therefore articulate the company's vision, its portfolio of services and products, the structure of the organisation, and its corporate identity structural design (Stuart, 1999). The findings from this research show that management at top levels, as well as operational levels, play a critical role in the shaping of positive reputation through their utilisation of Twitter, Facebook and YouTube platforms.

Suffice it to note that it is critical to condition the employees, to make the shift from the traditional approaches that depended highly on traditional media and control of what goes towards an open digital ecosystem, where social blogs require instant and consistent engagement, breaking the traditional approaches of holding meetings to making decisions. This requires that the organisations embrace the digital/online processes of engaging with the external stakeholders., Kolter *et al.* (2017: 48) "In the digital

economy, customers are socially connected with one another in a horizontal web of communities. Today, communities are new segments… unlike traditional segments, online communities are naturally formed within the boundaries that they themselves define". It is therefore fundamental that corporate assume the horizontal nature of engagement internally and equally organise in the new approach of building internal communities to better understand and manage reputation in the digital age.

5.10.8 Current corporate reputation factors

The contemporary factors towards corporate reputation management emerged from the literature review of the contemporary thought in the discipline, which aided the construction of the final framework. Unlike traditional approaches towards corporate reputation, companies in the telecommunications industry ought to have a holistic understanding of the company and its customers, respectively. Most importantly, the notion that strong corporate reputation management online builds inside-out, which entails the need to first understand and support internal stakeholders before they start the process of managing reputation or engagement with stakeholders online (Sarkar & Kotler, 2020; Yang, 2020, Davids and Brown, 2021, Kotler et al., 2021). Therefore, contemporary factors regarding reputation management are cognisant of the effect of the environment on employees' social blogs usage, and how companies ought to create a strategic fit between use and the environment, as articulated through the social cognitive theory (Papadopoulos et al., 2013; Carlson et al., 2016; Moqbel & Kock, 2018). There ought to be internal harmony across the layers of internal stakeholders, literary on horizontal levels to better condition the internal stakeholders towards the realisation of a conducive and supportive environment for a positive corporate reputation. The second factor is the boundaries of work and home, which have an impact on the use of social blogs at any given time. As noted in the responses from the study, which is equally tied to the challenges/moderating factors, the players in the industry need to make deliberate efforts towards balancing a delicate issue of the home and work domain. What is key, though, is to ensure that the platforms are available so that internal stakeholders that need to utilise the platform in the home jurisdictions are able to do so and those that are working at home can still utilise the platforms. This is supported by literature in Chapter Three (Yang, 2020). Lastly, the research revealed that the internal stakeholders provided critical views on the customers, where there is a need for structured tools to allow for the engagement of internal stakeholders and the external stakeholders. What is key in this regard is to build advocates in the form of employees and activists, who deliberately utilise their personal accounts and work accounts to advance the management and protection of the organisation's reputation online. According to Kaul and Chaudri (2017), this builds a humane approach towards engagement with the stakeholders online. As noted through the social media and social exchange

theory, internal stakeholders play a critical role in the engagement of customers online through social blog platforms (Davids & Brown, 2021). The contemporary approach towards corporate reputation does not entail the replacement of traditional approaches, but rather the integration of the two as the stakeholders' consumption of information and engagement path interchanges, as in other circumstances they are also engaged in traditional communication methods, such as print newspapers. However, it is crucial for the players in the industry to start making structured shifts towards the contemporary approaches to the management of corporate reputation.

5.10.9 Other social blogs

There are other social blogs that do not show in a significant manner that they have an impact on the management of corporate reputation, yet the environment shows that social blogs' use and evolution is dynamic. In this case, there is a need to pay close attention to the development of social blogs, such as LinkedIn and Instagram, and accordingly adjust towards factoring them into the broader industry strategy on social blogs use in the management of corporate reputation. That is why they are linked to social capital through broken lines in Figure 5.9. The research asks, 'which are the alternative social blogs that are more effective in the management of corporate reputation than Twitter in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry?' The responses indicated that there is a compelling need to keep monitoring the two social blogs. As such, the respondents noted other platforms to be better alternatives that could be used to manage corporate reputation. These were LinkedIn (18%), Instagram (15%) and YouTube (15%). However, a noteworthy proportion of respondents (17%) think that none of these other social blogs can surpass Twitter. This therefore means that amongst all the response above 17% ought to be considered as the next best alternative, if not assisting Twitter in uplifting corporate reputation.

5.10.10 Social capital

All the components in structural equation modelling are linked directly or indirectly to social capital. This reveals that the relationships and norms that shape the quantity and quality of social interactions are a strategic asset to an organisation. This entails that the players in the industry, in their bid to bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary approaches towards a positive reputation need to strategically harness the social capital base by bringing together the employees' network, companies' and customers as the best way towards building trust and engagements that shape a positive reputation. The main forms of social capital come in the forms of structure, bonding, strong and weak ties, and horizontal and vertical networks. In relation to social capital, employees use public social blogs the following types of social capital are key: "bridging and bonding social capital; structural; rational and cognitive social capital; online bridging and

bonding social capital and shared vision and network ties" (Chen et al., 2020: 5). Both the industry and academia should remain alive to the fact that social capital cuts across traditional and contemporary practices, and that there is a need to harness both, with the aim of building a relevant social capital for the management of a positive reputation online.

Social capital is critical for the development of insights on the growth and utilisation of networks both at work and online. In this regard, online social platforms as a social base enable ease of coordination, communication and broader sharing of information about the trustworthiness of individuals or organisations, based on their reputations and reciprocity of the actors in the process. The process is a cycle, which begins with one's experiences, be these individual, community, or company. These lived experiences of working as a collective, which might be good or bad, ultimately form a reputation. Such reputation is shared with others either deliberately or subliminally, which then is endorsed by a community of persons as reality. If this happens online, as is the majority of cases, the eWOM spreads rapidly or 'virally', where telecommunications players need to remain online in order to positively influence their reputation there. This is further supported by the literature review on social capital theory on corporate reputation (Cao et al., 2016; Delavari & Badizadeh, 2018). Accordingly, employees' use of public social blogs is best understood in the context of social capital as playing a mediating role. According to Cao, Ding, and Zhang (2016), the use of public social blogs by employees for work purposes is instrumental in in the knowledge transfer and performance of employees at work due to the shared vision, networking, social ties, and trust.

5.10.11 Internal views on customer engagement

The views of internal stakeholders and KII shows that there is an appreciation that customers in the age of social blogs shape corporate reputation management as noted by the respondents (70%) who agreed that customers can shape corporate reputations through their actions on Twitter. They can use Twitter as a form for improving word of mouth on corporate reputation issues. As noted in the SEM which confirms that Twitter and social blog usage enhanced engagement online: that is, customers easily interact with the organisation (on any issues) more than any other platform (64%); customers inform the business of their complaints more than any other platform (61%); Twitter provides feedback for any requests by the customers more than any other platform (57%). Twitter also increases customer interaction with any level of the organisation (47%) and customers' discussion of their concerns with the owners of the business (49%) more so than any other form of social blog. A positive corporate reputation can come from the Twitter engagement between telecommunications businesses and their customers. Hence as shown in the model these affect Twitter use by the different structures in the company which points to the fact that the players

in the telecommunications industry require to adopt structured approaches towards effective utilisation of Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and the other social blogs highlighted earlier towards consolidating their communities online and shaping corporate reputation. The KII confirmed that the Social Media and Social Exchange theory is critical in building a structured approach that locates customers and stakeholders at the centre of the engagement strategy.

5.10.12 Operational Effects

Twitter's operations effects are those elements that have a positive impact on corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry through its strength in generating positive news. The positive news is derived through its ability to project headlines, frame content and craft messages through the use of only 240 characters. These capabilities in turn attract high numbers of audiences who view the messages, thus improving message sharing, encouraging conversations, eWOM and improved recommendations regarding the reputation of the corporates within the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. The characteristics of corporate reputation can be referred to as the attributes that make a corporate in the telecommunications industry easily identifiable in the target markets. In essence, a corporate, like a human, can be viewed in relation to the 'personality' it projects to the stakeholder chain. The players in the industry therefore should effectively factor in Twitter as one of the key blogs in the structured management of corporate reputation through examining both the traditional and new approaches to corporate reputation as it has strong capabilities to tap in the social capital which is a driver of new perspectives in reputation management.

5.11 Conclusion

This chapter engaged in the interpretation of the empirical findings from the study, where the data was taken from survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews. In this chapter, the general information profiling the respondents was presented. This entailed the response rate of the respondents, followed by their demographics. The demographic profile of the respondents analysed age range, gender, educational level, and industry categories. The chapter, therefore, represented results from the reliability test of survey instruments using a Cronbach's alpha. The main objectives of this study answered in this chapter included: establishing the relationship between Twitter and corporate reputation issues in the operation of telecommunication businesses in Zimbabwe; developing key roles of Twitter as a social capital driver for top-level managers in managing corporate reputation for the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry; establishing the operational effects of Twitter in managing corporate reputation of telecommunication business in Zimbabwe; understanding how the employees influence and also influenced by Twitter in their

execution for a positive corporate reputation; to evaluate Twitter and other social blogs on its dominance to manage contemporary corporate reputation matters; to compare Twitter with other existing social blogs on the key elements expected in global communication for positive corporate reputation, and to determine and understand the internal views by managers and employees on the appreciation of Twitter as a social exchange tool in consuming telecommunications services in Zimbabwe. All the objectives of the study were then analysed and discussed under various headings, which include: top-level management and use of Twitter as a driver of social capital leading to improved corporate reputation; how the operational manager's use of Twitter impacted on corporate reputation management; how employees are influenced and in turn influence the use of Twitter in management of corporate reputation; and comparison of social blogs with the aim of locating the dominant ones and structure a framework on contemporary approaches in the management of corporate reputation. The chapter presented a model to summarise the relationship between social blogs, namely Twitter, YouTube and Facebook, as drivers of social capital and shaping a new perspective in the contemporary management of corporate reputation. Finally, the chapter proposed a framework for use of Twitter and other social blogs as drivers of social capital and how to engage on them in the contemporary approach. The following chapter makes recommendations and conclusions of the research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter plays a critically important role in concluding the study by locating the linkages between the research objectives and the results revealed in the study. In this regard, the concluding remarks assist in making recommendations, which form part of the establishment of the framework for the management of social blogs and social capital in creating a positive corporate reputation in the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry. Further, the chapter proposes the emerging issues for future research in the area of social blogs and corporate reputation as derived to address the gaps located in the existing literature that focuses on the areas under investigation in the study.

The chapter begins with a recap of the objectives and key highlights of the study. This summative overview will be conducted in a systematic manner. In this regard, the first component will summarise Chapter One. This will be followed by a synopsis of the three literature gaps and then a focus on the use of social blogs in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry. This will be followed by an outline of the theoretical review of the traditional and contemporary views that have shaped the conceptual framing of the study and the knowledge gap. The study methodology which was employed for the purposes of data collection and analysis will then be summarised. Thereafter a cumulative presentation of the results and findings from the quantitative and qualitative aspects, as discussed in Chapter 4. A final recap of the results, discussion and proposed framework proposed in this study will then be provided, and finally, the recommendations for the telecommunications industry and for future research will be made.

6.2 Revisiting the study objectives

6.2.1 RO 1: To develop key roles of Twitter as a social capital driver for top-level managers in managing corporate reputation for the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry

This objective was to address senior executives in the telecommunications industry in terms of both the power and authority to put in place systems and structures that can enhance either a positive or negative corporate reputation. This is important, as the focus is to maintain a rewarding and sustainable social capital, which is expected when an organisation in the telecommunications industry moves from the traditional ways of managing corporate reputation into new ways driven by social blogs driven corporate reputation. This

speaks to the main element of the conceptual framework, which was to achieve positive social capital. This research went on to interrogate the top-level managers using both the quantitative and qualitative approaches in the form of a questionnaire and an in-depth interview guide. In this regard, the questionnaire was developed so as to answer the question on the roles of Twitter for top-level managers in the management of corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry. The results were then analysed through structural equation modelling in order to test the relationships and fitness of the framework developed for the industry and future research. To this end, their various responses are towards the uptake of social blogs as transformative in this development.

6.2.2 RO2: To establish the operational effects of Twitter in managing corporate reputation of telecommunication business in Zimbabwe

The goal of this mission was to build a tactical practice of inquiry. This was done by asking the research question: 'What are the effects of Twitter in managing corporate reputation in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry?' The focus of the objective was to establish how operational managers engaged in the shifts from the traditional approaches to contemporary approaches wherein the social blogs build social capital and shape new engagement processes with the stakeholders. The study managed to probe that the operational managers had a key role in the management of organisational tactical objectives. In this regard, the maximum likelihood method was employed in this to estimate the model parameters. There are fit indices considered to assess the model for the goodness of fit (Kline, 2005; Hair et al., 2010). The Chi-square test (X^2), Chi-square (X^2) to degrees of freedom ratio (X^2/df), Goodness of fit Indices (GFI), Root Mean Square Error Approximation (RMSEA) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) are the fit indices that evaluated whether a match existed between survey data and the model (Hair, 2010). Both the qualitative and quantitative approaches for top-level managers confirmed that they believed that social blogs such as Twitter were key in the management of corporate reputation, through their superiority in the framing of messages and communicating with a wide audience. Further to this, they noted that the platform made it easy to communicate in an easy-to-understand way. This entailed that, as the link between the top-level managers and the employees, the operational managers understood the importance of management of corporate reputation in the contemporary age, when compared to the traditional approaches.

6.2.3 RO3: RO3: To understand how the employees influence and also influenced by Twitter in their execution for a positive corporate reputation

This objective was achieved through carrying out qualitative research in the form of in-depth interviews in order to understand how employees influence and influenced by Twitter in executing their day-to-day

activities. Employees are closer to the customers, as they directly communicate and exchange informational services in the telecommunication industry. In this regard, the following research question was posed: 'How are employees influenced or influence Twitter use in the execution for a positive reputation?'

It is imperative to propose a shift from traditional to contemporary approaches in reputation management that are driven by social blogs in building social capital, wherein employees are at the centre of such an approach, and equally require a paradigm shift in the thinking and practice of companies in the telecommunications industry so as to ensure that the contemporary approach unlocks the value of being a highly engaging industry online. This serves to ensure a sustainable competitive advantage for the industry itself. This addresses responses from the KII, wherein there is no clarity, on whether their employees are knowledgable of the benefits of the platforms or not, as representative of half of the KIIs' responses *"......we have many employees; some might know some might not......"*.

6.2.4 RO4: To compare Twitter with other existing social blogs on the key elements expected in global communication for positive corporate reputation

This objective was key in rating the most effective social blog in the telecommunications industry in the management of corporate reputation. In that regard, the research question was posed: 'Which of the following social blog platforms is most effective in managing corporate reputation more than Twitter?' In this regard, respondents were given a list of social blog sites to rank, with the option of placing Twitter as the best, with the option of none of the platforms being better than the platform. The results critically present the most important social platforms in the management of positive corporate reputation, highlighting those factors that make a given social platform more effective compared to the others. This was key as it presents the information which would inform the development of a framework for the effective utilisation of the social capital and social platforms in the telecommunications industry. The results show that Twitter reveals its dominance in many aspects. Mostly it is an effective tool for conversation (58%) in comparison to Facebook (52%), LinkedIn (10%), YouTube (4%) and Instagram (4%). It is also validated in reference to Twitter and others on it having a global coverage (47%) compared to the challenging Facebook (46%) and others with a relatively lower recognition LinkedIn (21%), YouTube (21%), and Instagram (21%). In summary, the research reveals that Twitter dominates other social blogs on conversational issues, and global coverage, while Facebook has proven to be even more accepted in most aspects, including being a source of word of mouth, provision of hybrid text, platform for referrals, and audio exchange. YouTube appears to be more effective in visual displays for corporate reputation. Hence, there is a need to recognise these three powerful contributors to corporate reputation as a construct towards positive reputation management.

6.2.5 RO5: To evaluate Twitter and other social blogs on its dominance to manage contemporary corporate reputation matters

The objective was critical in understanding how Twitter relates to other social blogs, pertaining to its effects on the management of contemporary corporate reputation matters. This was critical to establish as it assists in the structuring of the study framework. The research asked: 'which of the following social platforms is most effective in managing corporate reputation compared to Twitter?' This guided the framing of the questionnaire design and the interview guide. There was a need to further interrogate Twitter and other social blogs (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube) to determine whether there can be another better alternative form to improving corporate reputation. This was in relation to the transformation link between traditional and contemporary means, which might ultimately result in an improved social capital. In the structuring of survey questions, there was an amalgam of both, mainly considering the newer theories, viz. the boundary, social cognitive, and social exchange. The questionnaire and survey were designed to probe how these social blogs contribute to the building of social capital, and new approaches towards corporate reputation.

6.2.6 RO6: To determine and understand the internal views by managers and employees on the appreciation of Twitter as a social exchange tool in consuming telecommunications services in Zimbabwe

The objective sought to understand the internal views of managers and employees on their appreciation of Twitter as a social exchange tool in consuming telecommunications services in Zimbabwe. This was a pivotal objective, as the research relied on the internal stakeholders' views on the customers' interaction and engagement with the telecommunications companies, due to the challenges pertaining to the exemptions and data handling procedures set by the government. To address this objective, the following research question was posed: 'what are the internal stakeholder's views pertaining to the levels of customer engagement with companies in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industries?' to guide the development of the research questionnaire and the in-depth interview guide. Since corporate reputation issues are shared between the internal organisation and the customers at large, it was important to gain some understanding of their viewpoint on that matter. However, due to them being everywhere and difficult to locate as individuals or groups, the research then sought insight from the managers and employees within the investigated telecommunication organisations. It was based on how Twitter is appreciated and used by the customers in line with reputational matters.

6.3 RO7: To develop a framework for social blogs and corporate reputation driven by Twitter as a tool for improved reputation in Telecommunications business.

Having engaged in the findings of the research pertaining to how the industry is grappling with the shifts from traditional to contemporary approaches in corporate reputation, which are driven by social blogs and social capital, it was imperative for the study to propose a framework for the industry. This framework was constructed to contribute to new knowledge, as highlighted in the problem statement and significance of the study in Chapter One. It further sought to fill in the knowledge gap identified through the analysis of traditional and contemporary theories in Chapter Three.

6.3.0 Final framework for the study
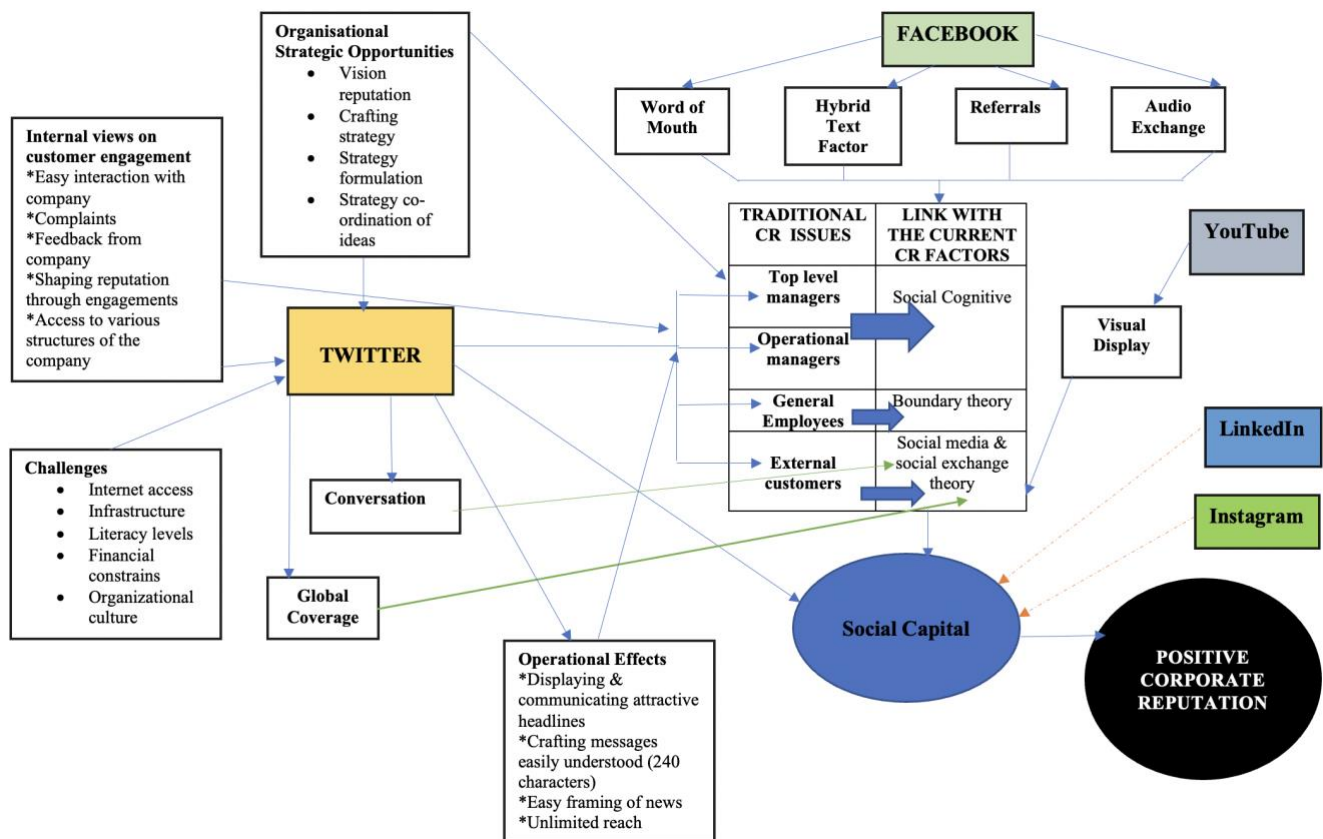
Figure 6. 1: *Framework on effect of social blogs on positive corporate reputation management in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry*

6.3.1 Effect of social blogs on corporate reputation

The final model of the research study proposes a dynamic relationship between social blogs and corporate reputation management. As articulated in Chapter Two, there are various types of social blogs, which can positively influence the formation and management of a positive corporate reputation in the

telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. Yet, the levels of influence and effects on corporate reputation using the various social blogs differ from one platform to the other. To build a positive reputation, there should be an understanding of the effect of various social blogs on the formation of corporate identity, personality, and strategy (Etter et al., 2018; Kaul & Chaudhri, 2019; Kotler et al., 2017), as per the discussion presented in Chapter Three. Secondly, the study shows that such a traditional approach to management of corporate reputation has been altered by contemporary views, specifically the effect of internal stakeholders' social capital, and how it shapes their use of public social blogs towards contemporary management of corporate reputation as elaborated in Chapter 3.

This research established that there are three main social blogs that influence positive reputation management, namely Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. These three platforms have different strengths in the management of reputation. The study found that Twitter has a strong global reach and stimulates high levels of conversation when compared to other social blogs. On the other hand, Facebook stimulates word of mouth recommendations, has hybrid text capabilities, and improved referrals and audio exchange when compared to the rest of the platforms. YouTube has a strong visual display capability compared to the rest.

6.4 Recommendations for telecommunications companies in Zimbabwe

The recommendations emanating from this study were founded on the information that was established from the review of the literature and the empirical findings. These recommendations will be discussed in the subsections to follow under the following headings: a strategic approach to corporate reputation; human touch; participation; social blog evangelism; favourable data pricing; social platform listening; re-thinking engagement; alignment of organisational and customer objectives; holistic view towards social blogs; digital employee engagement; dynamic social blogging policies; strategising social blogs communications; and strategising engagement.

6.4.1 Strategic approach towards corporate reputation

Corporate reputation in the age of social blogs and online communications ought to be treated as part of a company's business strategy. This is due to the crucial fact that the development of corporate reputation on social blogs enables the building of durable relations with customers, which contributes significantly to organisational loyalty and brand strength, and builds a sustainable competitive advantage for the company. This requires a strategic approach, as corporate image and the management of social blogs profile help in the shaping of the various perceptions of stakeholder's long term, whose online interactions then assist in endorsing the reputation of a company or denouncing the same. This, according to the literature reviewed

in Chapter Three, leads to increased sales, superior business financial performance, consolidated engagement with employees, and thus the retention of the talented pool of employees. This is highly pronounced in the connected world, in the sense that the customer's purchase decisions are also influenced by the reputation strength, which facilitates eWOM.

6.4.2 Human touch

In the aftermath of the outbreak of COVID-19, though there is a need to invest in online communication, there is no substitute for human interaction. Towards the conclusion of the research process, the majority of countries in the world were under lockdown, forcing customers and stakeholders to do business online. Organisations that maintain close communication with their stakeholders will gain strong reputations, as the corporate personality is highly dependent on human interaction, where there is the need for a healthy mix between online communication and human presence, which requires that there must be a balance between investing in technology and maintaining human contact. As established in the broader literature, and in the empirical evidence collected in this study, people trust people, not brands or corporates. Hence, there is a need to humanise engagement and communications.

6.4.3 Participation

The domain of social blogs and the management of corporate reputation management requires the corporates in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe to develop a culture and mindset that promotes participation online. Without participation at the centre of strategy, chances are high that corporates will remain behind in being included in and shaping the debates that take place on social blog platforms. Therefore, the corporate players in the industry must be fully geared toward total connectivity and must view participation in the online social blogosphere in a holistic way. This is the case due to the effect of the mobility of the stakeholders, especially customers. Accordingly, Kolter et al. (2017) have noted three forms of connectivity that corporates ought to employ to guide this process, namely mobile connectivity, experiential connectivity and social connectivity, where mobile connectivity refers to the basic infrastructural connectivity. The telecommunications industry must aspire to experiential connectivity, where they use incorporate numerous aspects to deliver superior customer service on social media. In addition, they must go the extra mile to achieve social connectivity, where they gain the capacity to be rooted in online communities, including social blogs (Kotler et al., 2017; Yang, 2020 Davids & Brown, 2021).

However, from the review of the literature as well as the data collected in this study, it was found that organisations and establishments still grapple with striking an appreciation of online and offline interactions. Thus, there is the need for organisations to understand the interplay of online and offline activities, as they complement each other in order to strike a balance between the two. For this reason, participation should not be confined to the online sphere, but ought to be mirrored in offline interactions and the experience of a company, allowing for a company to become competitive in the coexistence in participation to deliver a superior experience to the stakeholders. In that regard, it is recommended that corporates strive to achieve online-offline convergence in the participation of stakeholders. The future of corporate reputation management will be founded on the seamless blend of online and offline management of corporate reputation and unlocking superior experience across the journey of internal and external stakeholders. Positive corporate reputation management is a derivative of both social blogs and the experiential realities of the stakeholders offline. Participation of stakeholders in the telecommunications industry in the management of online positive reputation ought to be holistic, occupying the new media in the form of social blogs and should be achieved offline through good service at all touchpoints to do with services and products.

6.4.4 Social blogs evangelism

To gain traction and a strong reputation on social blogs, the players in the industry ought to consider the adoption of social blog 'evangelism'. This is a process whereby the organisation seeks to recruit both external and internal 'evangelists', or advocates who take a lead in the ambassadorial work towards promoting the organisation's services and products on social blogs, through stimulating discussion and eWOM for the organisation. This is achieved through a structured process of identifying such persons with a strong social blogs presence, and implementing the following: accepting and making their affiliation with the organisation public; riding on the opportunities presented through tagging them on the communications that the organisation makes; developing strong relations on the internet; and converting both the friends of the organisation, as well as those who have alternative views of the organisation, into corporate reputation advocates.

6.4.5 Favourable data pricing

Zimbabwe's data costs are the most expensive on the continent, which casts a negative reputation on the players in the telecommunications industry, as data usage is driven and provided for by the players in the sector. The telecommunications industry needs to adopt a stringent strategy of stimulating promotions through favourable pricing of the data, so that they promote growth in the industry and actively propel the

use of data in the newly emerging and competitive markets. This is because the revenue streams are shifting from voice to data as the sustainable industry revenue base. However, current pricing is very steep and there is an urgent need to find new models of pricing to stimulate use and grow a broader market base.

6.4.6 Social blogs listening

For the companies and players in the telecommunications industry to function and operate effectively, the industry players need to invest in the monitoring and tracking of their own reputation on the various social blog platforms. This can only be effectively monitored through social blogs' listening software, which identifies how the corporate's brands and services inform discussions on social blogs, be this negatively or positively. This process will greatly assist in guiding the organisation's agility in responding to emerging issues pertaining to the corporate's online reputation, and the management thereof.

6.4.7 Re-thinking engagement

As a way of the corporates consolidating their reputation on social blogs in the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry, there is the need for a re-think of the engagement processes that are facilitated in online social spaces. In essence, this process needs to begin with ensuring that the speed with which the corporate response to issues that arise on the platforms is extremely quick, as the online environment is a very fast-paced platform. For example, something trending on social blogs for an hour can then change completely in a matter of minutes or even seconds. Hence, the time taken in responding to online conversations is absolutely crucial. Secondly, there is a need for the corporate to look beyond the exclusive focus on the need for sales, and to broaden its focus to areas related to connecting with online conversations with a long-term view of maximising the benefits of these relationships.

Thirdly, in engagement on social blogs, the firms need to go the extra mile in the engagement processes through utilisation of platforms for crowdsourcing content from the stakeholders. Through seeking ideas and co-creating content with the stakeholders, the firms will strengthen their reputation equity as that of an organisation that is rooted in the market, and engaged on issues for mutual benefit between the stakeholders and the organisation, thereby increasing the ownership of the reputation with the internal and external stakeholders. Lastly, in re-thinking engagement on social blogs, the firms ought to engage as a process of building lasting relationships with the stakeholders, and attending to the stakeholders as individuals, rather than in a generalised fashion. This enhances the experiential response to the target markets by offering a superior experience and therefore building loyalty with stakeholders.

6.4.8 Alignment of organisation and customers' objectives

If the players in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe are to maximise the process of building a strong reputation online, there is a need to find a strategic fit between the company's objectives and that of the customers. This should be conducted in a cohesive manner through the process of the company setting objectives of engagement, loyalty and sales, and also through a clearly defined process of social listening, communication, and networking. These processes will lead to the achievement of customer objectives, as shown in Figure 6.2 below, which illustrates the researcher's propositions regarding the alignment of organisational objectives, process and customers' objectives.
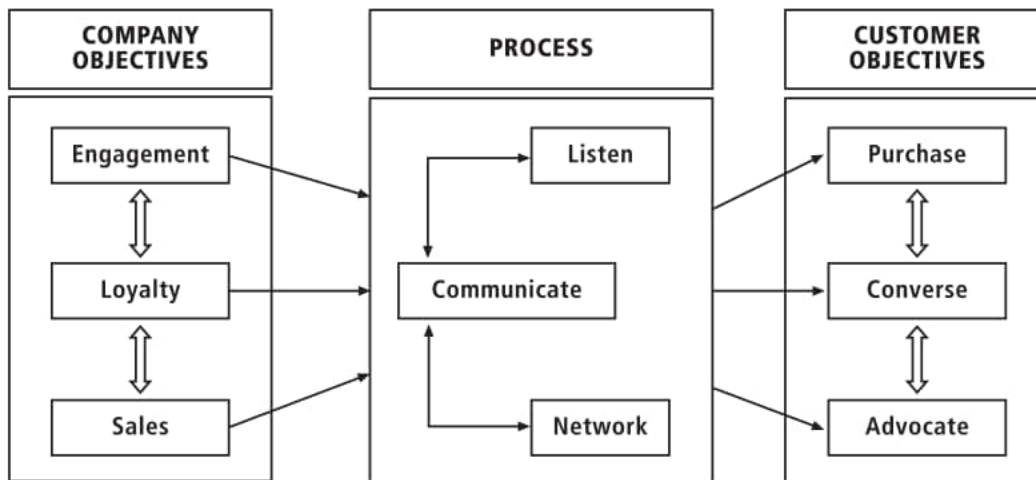
Figure 6. 2: Alignment of organisational objectives, process and customers' objectives

(Source: Constructed by the researcher)

6.4.9 Holistic view towards social blogs

The players in the telecommunications industry ought to take a holistic view of social platforms, wherein they mainly use three main social blogs. In the literature reviewed, it emerged that Pinterest is the most utilised social blog in Zimbabwe for business, where there is the need to experiment with the new platform in the country. Pinterest has eaten into Facebook's market, as presently it enjoys 38.04% use, with Facebook at 35.14% and Twitter at 16.5% (Statcounter, 2020). Despite this, social blogs are not being used by any of the corporates in the industry. A holistic assessment of the social blogosphere will present the industry with new platforms to further consolidate positive reputation management through following and further investigating the spaces in which users spend most of their time. In addition, there are platforms like WhatsApp that have encrypted end-to-end use, whose subscriber base is not public, yet these platforms

command a significant subscriber base in Zimbabwe and thus provide opportunities for the management of a positive corporate reputation in the country's telecommunications industry.

6.4.10 Digital employee engagement

Employees as the internal stakeholders are the ultimate drivers of the corporate reputation that is desired by an organisation. For the employees to play an active role in the management of corporate reputation in the age of social blogs, there is a need to build their digital capabilities so as to enhance a culture of working effectively on the digital platforms. This therefore requires that a company firstly facilitate the strengthening of internal digital collaborations by promoting peer-to-peer connectivity and collaborations and extends this capacity beyond peers to executives. This must span beyond individuals to teams and executives, and must go beyond geographical locations, so as to entail knowledge sharing and best practices that will guide online work and interactions. Secondly, the players in the telecommunications industry need to incorporate digital thinking in the respective job functions of all employees to enhance social networking empowerment for the employees, which will then proceed to shape the culture of work. Lastly, strong employee advocacy must be encouraged, whereby the employees are motivated and empowered to use their personal social blogging accounts to advance the organisation's mission and vision statements. When employees use their personal accounts for this purpose, they become the reputation ambassadors for the company as stakeholders trust fellow human beings, rather than corporate accounts. Employees will, therefore, through the measures outlined above, contribute to eWOM in terms of their online activities.

6.4.11 Dynamic social blogging policies

In setting up codes of online conduct, organisations ought to do so from the point of promoting responsive use in the new digital age, rather than controlling use, as was the case in the past traditional communication setup. The mutually beneficial code is that of building employee advocacy across the whole organisation, so that there is optimum use by virtually all the employees to advance and defend organisational interests online. This is critical for the unlocking of social-mediated employee engagement, where the organisation also employs social blogs in stimulating a culture of 'thinking digital'. Further to this, in the current environment where there is limited trust for institutions or brands, employees' voices introduce the human voice of the corporates and hence unlock the much-needed trust online. This results in the humanising of the company and building a cohesive enterprise voice as a strategic process. This is based on the underlying notion that people, not technologies, are the founding point of the social blogs ecosystem.

6.4.12 Strategising social blogs communication

Players in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe need to unlock value in the social blogging sphere through strategising the communication that happens on the platforms. This is a derivative of the purpose-driven strategies with the aim of stimulating high levels of company–customer discussion, establishing relationships, generating news, entertainment and creativity. Through these efforts, telecommunications players will be in a privileged strategic vantage point of consolidating the corporate personality through the cross-social blogs platform integration strategies. This is because social blogs present an opportunity for striking an equilibrium between the corporate objectives and those of customers. New perceptions or improvements on the existing perceptions of corporate reputation can be enhanced by taking note of customer tastes and tailor-making corporate communications through social listening.

6.4.13 Strategising engagement

A strategic approach to engagement entails that corporates take a calculated, planned decision for real-time customer engagement on the social blogosphere, through proper investment in knowing all their customers. For this reason, by taking the strategic decision of engaging with its customers, a company will form the foundation of securing knowledge on social blogs regarding current tastes, customers' state of mind and behavioural conditioning. These engagements can range from product idea generation, to testing and modification. The more frequent the engagements, the higher the likelihood that customers will promote positive word of mouth about the company in the online environment.

6.4.14 Artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithms

Corporates need to re-think their approach towards communication, especially with regard to the use of online platforms, due to the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithms, which allow for corporations to better personalise their communications and the management of reputation through the ethical use of software and intelligent technology. This will aid in establishing corporate competitive advantage, as corporations enhance responsiveness through automation on routine activities and data mining in order to tailor-make products and services that build a competitive reputation. This is the future, as the IoT is constantly expanding, hence the need for corporates to be engaged with and informed about the 'always on' platforms through utilisation of smart technologies.

6.5 Recommendations for further research

The six broad areas to be discussed in the following subsections in relation to social blogs and corporate reputation have been identified as areas to be concentrated on for future research. This study established social blogs and corporate reputation model, and although there is no guarantee that the model can lead to improved corporate reputation management, it can be applied to any industry that is attempting to enhance corporate reputation through leveraging new media such as social blogs. This aspect, as well as the four additional key areas identified for consideration in future research, will be outlined below.

6.5.1 Customers' perspectives on the effect of social blogs on corporate reputation management

The finding from this study was based on the internal stakeholder's perspectives, where there is a limited exploration of the customer's responses to the area of inquiry. Further research can be carried out from the perspective of the customers and other external stakeholders, based on the findings of the current research.

6.5.2 Development of the framework established in this study to be applied in any industry in any country with an underperforming economy

The findings of this study were used to develop an industry-specific framework/model, which can be applied in the understanding of the effect of social blogs on the management of positive corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe, a country with an underperforming economy. Future research can aid in the generation of new knowledge to further develop the framework and to broaden its approach towards addressing solutions to be implemented in industries facing challenges in corporate reputation management. For example, the outbreak of COVID-19 has shaken the conventional modes of operation across all industries in all countries around the world, where there is a need for future research to further develop the model for application to other industries, such as frontline industries, or those classified as essential services during the pandemic, in the attempt to quell the transmission of Covid-19.

6.5.3 The effect of online communities in corporate reputation management vis-à-vis the role of eWOM

Though the research briefly examined the interplay between eWOM and corporate reputation management, it did not extensively consider group dynamics and behavioural issues, and how these may impact the reputation management process, especially in the current age of the prevalence in the use of social media. Therefore, there is great scope for future research to focus on online group dynamics and the implications thereof in the creation and management of a positive corporate reputation.

6.5.4 The interface of traditional and social blogs in the management of corporate reputation in underperforming economies like Zimbabwe

Although this research mainly focused on the impact of social blogs (new media), these platforms do not operate in isolation from the broader communications ecosystem. Thus, there is a need for further research to focus on the future of communication as a whole in terms of the management of corporate reputation. There is indeed scope for future studies to examine the prominence of traditional media in comparison to the new media platforms that are currently emerging and evolving at a rapid pace.

6.5.5 The effect of social blogs on corporate reputation and its impact on the performance of corporates in emerging economies

Emerging economies like Zimbabwe and the bulk of the economies on the African continent present contexts where a new dynamic is evident in the sense that traditional media is more dominant compared to the forms of new media. Therefore, future research can place special focus on countries that are either in recession or economic meltdown, where the two forms of media, traditional and new media, can be explored. These investigations can proceed along the lines of determining how the two forms of media interrelate and how they can be harnessed to improve corporate reputation and thus the performance of corporates. There is a definite need to further examine the behavioural variables and economic factors that define the shift to an increased usage of new media platforms.

6.5.6 Impact of artificial intelligence (AI) and algorithms on corporate reputation management

Another topical area that can be studied in order to build on the framework proposed in this study is understanding the role of AI and algorithms in the management of corporate reputation. This entails that future research must focus on the role of machines and technology intelligence as variables towards the management of corporate reputation in Zimbabwe, as well as Africa at large.

6.7 Contribution to knowledge

The study fills in the knowledge gap conceptually and in practice. It answers the knowledge gap of how the telecommunications companies bridge the gap of traditional approaches to corporate reputation with the contemporary theoretical propositions on how the social blogs with a specific focus on Twitter contribute to the social capital of companies in the industry and shape the contemporary methods of improving corporate reputation. This study then investigated the effectiveness of Twitter as a contemporary social blog in improving corporate reputation for the telecommunication industry in Zimbabwe. That is, through comparing Twitter with other social blogs for improved social capital. The reason for choosing Twitter

specifically is because it is the fastest growing social blog in terms of use and currently the most used, commanding 43.62% as of October 2021 (Stratcounter, 2021), while Facebook is ranked second at 35.86 percent. An understanding of Twitter specifically will provide for generalisations in terms of both practice and theory.

The research, therefore, makes practical contributions to knowledge in the sense that it addresses the day-to-day issues that are being faced by the users of telecommunications services and products in Zimbabwe. Various newspapers (The Daily News, 2017; NewsDay, 2018; The Herald, 2017, TechZim, 2021) and other sources have reported on the malpractices being committed by telecommunications companies in Zimbabwe. Complaints have been regularly raised over poor customer service by the operators. Therefore, a conceptual framework was established based on the findings here, which was achieved through investigating the issues that people may discuss in relation to performance and reputation of the telecommunications companies.

Furthermore, the significance of the study is premised on the positive impact and the advantages that will present for the development of strategies by key beneficiaries in the telecommunications industry identified mainly as the government/policy-makers; the telecommunications industry itself; investors; the customers; the international community; and boards of academic knowledge, among others. As noted in the literature reviewed (Aaker, 2018; Benkler, 2006; Dunn, 2010; Loncander & Ladik, 2017; Kotler et al., 2017; Wright & Hinson, 2013; Xiong & Mackenzie, 2015), the major scholarly research has predominantly been centred on the Americas and Europe. This means that the African continent, and Zimbabwe specifically, remains under-examined in terms of how social blogs can be used to promote a positive corporate reputation. This, therefore, limits the generalisability of the findings in the Americas and Europe within the African and Zimbabwean contexts, a gap which has been narrowed by the study.

There is a mismatch between the realities faced in terms of the growth of ICTs and the consequent impacts on the developmental path of Zimbabwe, especially with regard to the telecommunications industry and scholarly examination of these impacts. The research therefore broadly dispels speculative approaches towards reputation management and allows for the generalisability of findings within the local context. For this reason, the study was crucial in providing an examination of current developments in the country, which have not previously been examined. With regard to the identified stakeholders, the findings of this study will be critical for the government of Zimbabwe, as the research enhances the scientific measurement of the performance of the telecommunications industry and the contribution of corporate reputation as a derivative

of social media. The study, therefore, contributes to informed policy development towards promoting the growth and regulation of the telecommunications industry through competitive policies.

The findings of this study are critical for investors, as they consider the strategies that the industry can employ so as to harness the influence of social blogs in shaping of a positive reputation for improved performance, customer loyalty, and employee retention. However, the major beneficiary of the study is the telecommunications industry itself, as the study has developed a framework as a tool to improve reputation management in the industry, especially by outlining the main platforms that are scientifically proven to be advantageous in the development of positive corporate reputation. Customers will ultimately be the major beneficiaries, as improved usage of Twitter and other blogs as a means to manage reputation will better serve them, as well as the employees in the telecommunications industry, as those key stakeholders who were considered. In addition, the study is beneficial to the international community as the wider global community will gain a comparative analysis of local trends and patterns of use of Twitter and other blogs in managing corporate reputation, while academia as a whole gains baseline information that can inform future studies.

In summary, therefore, this study makes a unique contribution to the current body of knowledge as it enhances an understanding of the effect of the social blogosphere, Twitter, on corporate reputation of the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. As highlighted in the review of the literature pertinent to the study, no research of this nature has been conducted in Zimbabwe or in Southern Africa. This study, therefore, contributes to developing a broader understanding of the telecommunications industry in the region and thus promotes the success of corporate reputation managers in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe and Southern Africa. The study also benefits the various stakeholders identified above within and without the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe.

6.7.1 Comparative analysis of results with previous research

The research's contribution to knowledge can best be highlighted through a comparative analysis of the previous research findings with the outcome of the study. Borchers & Enke, (2019) focused their research on the impact of social media influencers on strategic communication culminating in the development of Strategic Social Media Communication and its interlinkages with marketing and communications. The framework underpins the strategic need for organisations to be deliberate in engaging social media influencers as the third parties that influence the behaviour of stakeholders of the company through their content generation and distribution. This is foundational as it sets the broader framework for influencers,

where this current research focused on the effect of Twitter on corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry goes a step further in developing insights on how internal stakeholders can better engage customers and stakeholders through social blogs in Zimbabwe. The framework consolidates the previous literature on social blogs and corporate reputation and bridges the gap between traditional approaches to corporate reputation management by deliberately highlighting the most critical social blogs in the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry and how they can be utilised. This is done by highlighting the key elements and components of each social blog and how it builds the company's social capital and the transition from traditional approaches to new perspectives in corporate reputation management, thereby contributing to the development of new knowledge (Borchers & Enke, 2019:274). On the other hand, Eigler & Azarpour, (2020) analyse propounded the framework for creative freelancer workers in managing their reputation in the age of mass communication and social media and proposing how the creatives can build a reputation and utilise it for career development by being part of online networks. This is critical in locating the strategic importance of corporate reputation and how it is changing in the age of the new media. This research built on these two key issues and proposed how the social capital of employees can be utilised in both the traditional and new approaches towards corporate reputation, which has been a missing link in the bulk of the research in this area. This research blends traditional theories on corporate reputation with new perspectives such as social exchange and social media theory in building a new social capital base upon which corporate reputation is developing especially for the telecommunications sector in Zimbabwe (Brodie et al., 2013; Davids & Brown, 2021). The research outcomes by Carlson et al. (2016); Moqbel and Kock (2018) and Papadopoulos et al. (2013) were foundational in the design of the current contributing framework to the study. This is because their scholarly works are underpinned by the social cognitive theory noting that the behavioural patterns in the use of social blogs by top-level management and employees at work have implications for how they engage the broader stakeholders. This research further developed from this foundation by arguing it is critical for internal stakeholders to manage corporate reputation in from new perspectives. Therefore, the blending of the traditional theories and new theories such as the social media and social exchange theories in attempts towards contributing to the new knowledge gap on internal stakeholders developing a systematic approach to managing reputation online. Other scholars like Yang (2020) noted the critical thinking and frameworks on how the work and home domains affect the use of social media and other online platforms. This research filled in the research gap on how to close in on the domains through addressing the challenges faced by employees and how this when addressed can lead to the consolidation of social capital and ultimately the new perspectives and approaches in utilising social media for the improvement of corporate reputation.

Suffice to note that Kotler et al. (2017) argue that the internet has reconfigured the reputational mix from vertical to horizontal dynamics. Therefore, the study contributes to the conceptual understanding of the shifts and power dynamics borne out of the growth in the use of social blogs as they shape corporate reputation. The study further contributes to the development of an understanding of how the independent and dependent variables between the blogosphere and corporate reputation management respectively impact each other. In addition, the research delved into uncharted territory by proposing a framework to inform the management of corporate reputation in the blogosphere in Zimbabwe, which will influence future research on the subject and will thus improve and add to the existing body of knowledge. In closing, the overall contribution to knowledge is summarised below.

6.8 Contribution to theory, policy and practice

This study has made the following contributions to existing theory, policy and practice related to understanding the use of social blogs in the management of corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe:

➢ Existing theories and concepts were used to develop a framework for understanding corporate reputation, which assisted to explain the relationship between Twitter as a social blog and its use in corporate reputation management;

➢ The gaps in the existing literature regarding the use of Twitter and other platforms in the social blogosphere in corporate reputation management were bridged through the research process undertaken in this study;

➢ The study established the challenges and opportunities for employing social blogs in corporate reputation management;

➢ The study underscores the importance of understanding the effects of managing corporate reputation in the age of social blogs in the broader context of the Zimbabwean telecommunications industry;

➢ The study has established the important role of stakeholders in the creation of a sustainable reputation and the factors related to the mediation of this reputation through the use of Twitter as a social blog;

➢ The study has examined the impact of Twitter as a social blog in promoting corporate reputation and proffers recommendations for all stakeholders, the ultimate goal of which is to broaden the

knowledge base regarding the benefits of the use of social blogs in the management of corporate reputation.

➢ The research established the contemporary approaches towards corporate reputation management, specifically exploring and making recommendations on the role of social capital in shaping new perspectives in social blogs use and management of corporate reputation.

6.9 Concluding remarks

The research presented here examined the effect of Twitter as a social blog on corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. The findings show that Twitter as a social blog influences the management of corporate reputation in Zimbabwe. Further, it was discovered that two other blogs have a direct effect on corporate reputation management, namely Facebook and YouTube. A review of the literature on the various elements of Twitter showed that news headlines, framing and news content have a direct impact on positive reputation management. The findings of this study also show that the three social blogs with a direct impact on corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry, namely Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, have different unique capabilities that make them competitive in the management of reputation. Twitter's strengths are embedded in its global coverage and ability to stimulate conversations compared to the other two. Facebook, on the other hand, ranks strongly in terms of its capabilities to stimulate word of mouth, the use of hybrid text, its referrals strength and audio exchange. YouTube excels in its strength of visual display.

However, the study also revealed that some social blogs such as LinkedIn and Instagram have no direct effect on the management of corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry. The research showed that top management, operational management and general employees utilise social blogs, namely Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, through the communication of the corporate vision, strategic goals, strategy formulation, strategic communication, and through interactions, reaction to customers, employees and organisation, and word of mouth exchange. These actions influence and contribute to the formation and exchange of corporate personality, corporate strategy and corporate identity, which in turn contributes to the establishment of a positive reputation. In doing so, these factors lead to a positive image, perception and identity of the organisation. To better understand the effect of social blogs on corporate reputation management, a framework was developed based on a review of previous models proposed to address the issue of corporate reputation management, but also by taking the empirical findings of this study into consideration to formulate a unique model. The framework can be applied to strategic corporate reputation

management with particular focus on social blogs. The study concludes that social blogs can either promote or hinder the establishment of positive corporate reputation in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe in light of their global reach and capability to rapidly spread content.

REFERENCES

1. 2U Inc, 2020 2U, Inc., 2020. Introduction to Social Exchange Theory in Social Work. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from What is Social Exchange Theory? – Social Work Theories & Approaches (onlinemswprograms.com).

2. Aaker, D.A. (2018). *Creating signature stories* (1st ed.). New York: Morgan James Group.

3. Aaker, D.A. & McLoughlin, D. (2010). *Strategic market management: Global perspectives*. Barcelona: John Wiley and Sons.

4. Abiodun, A.J., Adeyemi, K.S., Oyeniyi, O., & Olayiwola, A.O. (2015). Do reputation and image matter for recommendations and switching intentions in the telecommunications industry? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Management Research and Innovation, 11*(2): 134-142.

5. Abrahams, L. (2017). Regulatory imperatives for the future of SADC's 'Digital Complexity Ecosystem'. *The African Journal of Information and Communication*, *20*: 1-29.

6. Abratt, R. (1989). A new approach to the corporate image management process. *Journal of Marketing Management, 5*(1): 63-76.

7. Abratt, R., & Kleyn, N. (2012). Corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate reputations: Reconciliation and integration. *European Journal of Marketing, 46*(7/8): 1048-1063.

8. Abratt, R., & Mingione, M. (2017). Corporate identity, strategy and change. *Journal of Brand Management, 24*(2): 129-139.

9. Adam, H. (2019). "The digital revolution in Africa: Opportunities and hurdles". Proceedings of 10th International Conference on Digital Strategies for Organizational Success*, 5 January: 239-267.

10. African Development Bank (AFDB) (2018). A*frica's infrastructure: Great potential but little impact on inclusive growth*. AFDB Group. Retrieved from: https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/2018AEO/African_Economic_Outlook_2018_-_EN_Chapter3.pdf [Accessed on 4 May, 2018].

11. African Development Bank (AFDB) (2019). *Zimbabwe infrastructure report 2019*. AFDB Group. Retrieved from: https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/document/_zimbabwe-infrastructure-report-2019-108794 [Accessed on 4 May, 2018].

12. Agarwal, J., Stackhouse, M., & Osiyevskyy, O. (2017). I love that company: Look how ethical, prominent, and efficacious it is – a triadic organizational reputation (TOR) scale. *Journal of Business Ethics, 153*(3): 889-910.

13. Aggerholm, H., Andersen, S.E., & Thomsen, C. (2011). Conceptualizing employer branding in sustainable organizations. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 16*(2), 105-123.

14. Aggerholm, H.K., & Andersen, S.E. (2018). Social media recruitment 3.0: Toward a new paradigm of strategic recruitment communication. *Journal of Communication Management*, *22*(2): 122-137.

15. Agnihotri, A. (2014). Corporate reputation based theory of choice between organic, hybrid and inorganic growth strategies. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 19*(3): 247-259.

16. Ahearne, M., Bhattacharya, C.B., & Gruen, T. (2005). Antecedents and consequences of customer–company identification: Expanding the role of relationship marketing. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*(3): 574-585.

17. Aitchison, G., & Peters, A. (2011). "The open-sourcing of political activism: how the internet and networks help build resistance". In D. Hancox (Ed.), *Fight back! A reader on the winter of protest* (pp. 44-60). London: Open Democracy.

18. Akar, E., Topcu, B., 2011. An examination of the factors influencing consumers' attitudes toward social media marketing. J. Inter. Comm. 10 (1), 35–67.

19. Alhaidari, A., Iyer, P., & Paswan, A. (2015). Personal level antecedents of eWOM and purchase intention, on social networking sites. *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, *14*(2): 107-125.

20. Allen, D. (2010). "Why social blogsprojects fail". The Brand Science Institute. [Online] Available at: https://daveallenbeta.squarespace.com/thinking/2010/8/24/ why-social-media-projects-fail-the-brand-science-institute.html [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

21. Alniacik, E., Alniacik, U., & Erdogmus. N. (2012). How do the dimensions of corporate reputation affect employment intentions? *Corporate Reputation Review, 15*(1): 3-19.

22. Amit, R., & Schoemaker, P. (1993). Strategic assets and organizational rent. *Strategic Management Journal, 14*: 33-46.

23. Anderson, E.W., & Sullivan, M.W. (1993). The antecedents and consequences of customer satisfaction for firms. *Marketing Science, 12*(2): 125-143.

24. Anderson, M., & Jiang, J. (2018). *Teens, social media and technology 2018*. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/05/31/ teens-social-media-technology-2018/ [Accessed on 5 August, 2018].

25. Andon, P., Free, C., & O'Dwyer, B. (2015). Annexing new audit spaces: challenges and adaptations. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal, 28*(8): 1400-1430.

26. Andreassen, C., and Pallesen, S. 2014. "Social Network Site Addiction-an Overview," Current Pharmaceutical Design (20:25), pp. 4053-4061.

27. Andriole, S.J., 2010. Business impact of web 2.0 technologies. Commun. ACM 53 (12), 67–79.

28. Ansoglenang, G., Awugah, S., & Thompson, J. (2018). Conceptual Tools for Building Higher Education Institutions Corporate Image and Reputation. *American Journal of Educational Research and Reviews, 3*(28): 1-16.

29. Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., Stephen, A.T., 2020. The future of social media in marketing. J. Acad. Mark. Sci. 48, 79–95.

30. Aral, S., Dellarocas, C., & Godes, D. (2013). Introduction to the special issue-social media and business transformation: a framework for research. *Information Systems Research, 24*(1): 3-13.

31. Araujo, T., & Kollat, J. (2018). Communicating effectively about CSR on Twitter: The power of engaging strategies and storytelling elements. *Internet Research, 28*(2): 419-431.

32. Argenti, P.A., & Barnes, C.M. (2011). *Digital strategies for powerful corporate communications.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

33. Argenti, P.A., & Druckenmiller, B. (2004). Reputation and the corporate brand. *Corporate Reputation Review, 6*(4): 368-374.

34. Arias, M., Arratia, A., & Xuriguera, R. (2014). Forecasting with Twitter data. *ACM Transactions on Intelligent Systems and Technology (TIST), 5*(1): 1-24.

35. Arvidsson, A. & Caliandro, A. (2016). Brand public. *Journal of Consumer Research, 42*(5): 727-748.

36. Ashcraft, K.L., Kuhn, T.R., & Cooren, F. (2009). Constitutional amendments: 'Materializing' organizational communication. *Academy of Management Annals, 3*(1): 1-64.

37. Aula, P. (2010). Social media, reputation risk and ambient publicity management. *Strategy and Leadership, 38*(6): 43-49.

38. Bagwell, K. (1992). Pricing to signal product line quality. *Journal of Economics and Management Strategy, 1*(1): 151-174.

39. Bahia, K., & Suardi, S. (2019). *The state of mobile internet connectivity, 2019*. Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA) Intelligence. Retrieved from: https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GSMA-State-of-Mobile-Internet-ConnectivityReport-2019.pdf. [Accessed 5 November, 2019].

40. Baker, M.J., & Foy, A. (2012). *Business and management research*. Helensburgh: Westburn Publishers.

41. Balmer J.M.T. (1998). Corporate identity and the advent of corporate marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management, 14*(8): 963-996.

42. Balmer, J.M.T. (2012). Strategic corporate brand alignment: perspective from identity based views of corporate brands. *European Journal of Marketing, 46*(7/8): 1064-1092.

43. Balmer, J.M.T. (2017). The corporate identity, total corporate communications, stakeholders' attributed identities, identifications and behaviours continuum. *European Journal of Marketing, 51*(9/10): 1472-1502.

44. Balmer, J.M.T. & Greyser, S.A. (2006). Corporate marketing: Integrating corporate identity, corporate branding, corporate communications, corporate image and corporate reputation. *European Journal of Marketing, 40*(7): 730-741.

45. Balmer, J.M.T. & Greyser, S.A. (Eds.) (2003). *Revealing the corporation: Perspectives on identity, image, reputation, corporate branding and corporate-level marketing*. London: Routledge.

46. Balmer, J.M.T., Stuart, H. & Greyser, S.A. (2009). Aligning identity and strategy: corporate branding at British Airways in the late 20th century. *California Management Review, 51*(31): 6-23.

47. Barclay, P. (2016). "Reputation". In D.M. Buss (Ed.), *Handbook of evolutionary psychology* (2nd ed.) (pp. 1-19). New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

48. Barlow, W.G., & Payne, S.L. (1951). A tool for evaluating company community relations. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 13*(3): 405-414.

49. Barnett, M.L., & Pollock, T.G. (2012). "Charting the landscape of corporate reputation research". In M.L. Barnett & T.G. Pollock (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of corporate reputation* (pp.1-15). Oxford: Oxford University Press

50. Barnett, M.L., Jermier, J.M., & Lafferty, B.A. (2006). Corporate reputation: The definitional landscape. *Corporate Reputation Review, 9*(1): 26-38.

51. Barney J.B. (1996). *Gaining and sustaining competitive advantage*. Reading: Addison-Wesley.

52. Basdeo, D.K., Smith, K.G., Grimm, C.M., Rindova, V.P., & Derfus, P.J. (2006). The impact of market actions on firm reputation. *Strategic Management Journal, 27*(12): 1205-1219.

53. Bastos, M., Piccardi, C., Levy. M., Levy, M., McRoberts, N., & Lubell, M. (2018). Core-periphery or decentralized? Topological shifts of specialized information on Twitter. *Social Networks, 52*: 282-93.

54. Baucus, M.S. & Cochran, P.L. (2016). "What kills a reputation? A post-mortem analysis of Jekyll-Hyde business leaders". In M.M. Torres, V. Cathro & M.A. Gonzalez-perez (Eds.), *Dead Firms: Causes and Effects of Cross-border Corporate Insolvency* (pp. 1-34). UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited

55. Baudrier, A. (2001). "Independent regulation and telecommunications performance in developing countries". Annual ISNIE Conference: Institutions and Governance, September 13-15. Berkeley, California, USA.

56. Baxter, L. 2011. *Voicing relationships: A dialogic perspective*. London, UK: Sage.

57. Becker, K., & Lee, W.J. (2019). Organizational usage of social media for corporate reputation management. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, *6*(1): 231-240.

58. Bedell, J. (2010). "What is the difference between social media and social networking?" [Online] Available at: http://jasontbedell.com/whatis-the-difference-between-social-media-and-social-networking [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

59. Bednar, M., Love, E., & Kraatz, M. (2015). Paying the price? The impact of controversial governance practices on managerial reputation. *Academy of Management Journal, 58*: 1740-1760.

60. Benkler, Y. (2006). *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

61. Benkler, Y. (2016). "Peer production and cooperation". In J.M. Bauer & M. Latzer (Eds.), *Handbook on the economics of the internet* (pp.1-29). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

62. Bennett, R., & Kottasz, R. (2000). Practitioner perceptions of corporate reputation: an empirical investigation. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 5(4): 224-235.

63. Bergh, D.D., Ketchen, D.J., Boyd, B.K., & Bergh, J. (2010). New frontiers of the reputation - performance relationship: Insights from multiple theories. *Journal of Management, 36*(3): 620-632.

64. Bermiss, Y.S., Zajac, E.J., & King, B.G. (2014). Under construction: How commensuration and management fashion affect corporate reputation rankings. *Organization Science, 25*(2): 591-608.

65. Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) (2020). *BTI 2020 Country Report - Zimbabwe*. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung. Retrieved from: https://www.bti-project.org/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2020_ZWE.pdf [Accessed on 5 July, 2020].

66. Bertram, C., & Christiansen, I. (2014). *Understanding research: An introduction to reading research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

67. Bhattacherjee, A. (2012), "Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices" Textbooks Collection. Tampa, Florida, USA.

68. Bitektine, A.B. (2011). Towards a theory of social judgments of organizations: The case of legitimacy, reputation, and status. *The Academy of Management Review, 36*:151-179.

69. Black, N. (2017). *Legal loop: Lawyers and social media in 2017*. Rochester, NY: Daily Record.

70. Blau, P., 1964. Exchange and power in social life. J Wiley & Sons, New York.

71. Boivie, S., Graffin, S., & Gentry, R. (2016). Understanding the direction, magnitude, and joint effects of reputation when multiple actors' reputations collide. *Academy of Management Journal, 59*(1): 188-206.

72. Bollen, J., Mao, H., & Zeng, X. (2011). Twitter mood predicts the stock market. *Journal of Computational Science, 2*(1): 1-8.

73. Borchers, N. S., & Enke, N. (2019). Social Media Influencers in Strategic Communication: A Conceptual Framework for Strategic Social Media Influencer Communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 261–277.

74. Boutinot, A., Ansari, S., Belkhouja, M., & Mangematin, V. (2015). Reputational spillovers: Evidence from French architecture. *Strategic Organization, 13*(4): 284-306.

75. Bouwman, H., Nikou, S., Molina-Castillo, F.J., de Reuver, M., 2018. The impact of digitalization on business models. Digital Policy Regulation and Governance.

76. Bowen, S.A., Hung-Baesecke, C., & Chen, Y. (2016). Ethics as a precursor to organization–public relationships: building trust before and during the OPR model. *Cogent Social Sciences, 2*(1): 1-19.

77. Boyd, B.K., Bergh, D.D., & Ketchen Jr, D.J. (2010) Reconsidering the reputation - performance relationship: a resource-based view. *Journal of Management, 36*(3): 588-609.

78. Boyd, D., Golder, S., Lotan, G., 2010. Tweet, tweet, retweet: Conversational aspects of retweeting on twitter. Proceedings of the 43rd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, Hawaii.

79. Boyd, D.M., & Ellison, N.B. (2018). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *3*: 210-230.

80. BPP Study Text. (2013). *Managing Corporate Reputation*. London: BPP Learning Media Ltd.

81. Brammer, S.J., & Pavelin, S. (2006). Corporate reputation and social performance: The importance of fit. *Journal of Management Studies, 43*: 435-455.

82. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London: Sage.

83. Bristow, A., & Saunders, M. (2016). "Understanding research philosophy and approaches to theory development". In M. Saunders, P. Lewis & A. Thornhill (Eds.), *Research methods for business students* (pp. 128-170). Essex: Pearson Education.

84. Brivo, M., Gendron, Y., & Guénin, H. (2017). Reinventing organizational control: Meaning contest surrounding reputational risk controllability in the social media arena. *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal*, *30*(4): 1-37.

85. Brodie, R.J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., & Hollebeek, L. (2013). Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: an exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, *66*(1): 105-114.

86. Brodie, R.J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., Hollebeek, L., 2013. Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: An exploratory analysis. J. Business Res. 66 (1), 105–114.

87. Bromberg, M., & Fine, G.A. (2002). Resurrecting the red: Pete Seeger and the purification of difficult reputations. *Social Forces, 80*(4): 1135-1155.

88. Brooks, S. 2015. "Does Personal Social Media Usage Affect Efficiency and Well-being?" Computers in Human Behaviour 46: 26–37.

89. Brooks, S., and C. Califf. 2016. "Social Media-Induced Technostress: Its Impact on the job Performance of IT Professionals and the Moderating Role of Job Characteristics." Computer Networks. doi: 10.1016/j.comnet.2016.08.020.

90. Brown, T.J., Dacin, P.A., Pratt, M.G., & Whetten, D.A. (2006). Identity, intended image, construed image, and reputation: an interdisciplinary framework and suggested terminology. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 34*(2): 99-106.

91. Brunn, S.D. (2000). Towards an understanding of the geopolitics of cyberspace: Learning, re-learning and un-learning. *Geopolitics, 5*(3): 144-149.

92. Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2007). *Business research methods* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

93. Bundy, J., & Pfarrer, M.D. (2015). A burden of responsibility: The role of social approval at the onset of a crisis. *Academy of Management Review, 40*(3): 345-369.

94. Business Ghana (2018). "GITGE inaugurates Ceiba-2 cable". [Online] Available at: https://www.businessghana.com/site/news/business/166331/GITGE-Inaugurates-Ceiba-2-Cable [Accessed on 20 July, 2019].

95. Calvo-Porral, C., & Levy-Mangin, J.-P. (2015). Switching behavior and customer satisfaction in mobile services: Analyzing virtual and traditional operators. *Computers in Human Behavior, 49*: 532-540.

96. Cambra-Fierro, J., Gao, L.X., Melero-Polo, I., Sese, F.J., 2019. What drives consumers' active participation in the online channel? Customer equity, experience quality, and relationship proneness. Electron. Commer. Res. Appl. 35, 100855.

97. Cao, X., X. Guo, D. Vogel, and X. Zhang. 2016. "Exploring the Influence of Social Media on Employee Work Performance." Internet Research 26 (2): 529–54. Carim, L., Warwick, C., 2013. Use of social media for corporate communications by research- funding organisations in the UK. Public Relations Review. 39 (5),521–525.

98. Capriotti, P., & Ruesja, L. (2018). How CEOs use Twitter: A comparative analysis of Global and Latin American companies. *International Journal of Information Management, 39*: 242-248.

99. Cardwell, L.A., Williams, S. & Pyle, A. (2016). Corporate public relations dynamics: Internal vs. external stakeholders and the role of the practitioner. *Public Relations Review, 43*(1): 152-162.

100. Carlson, J. R., S. Zivnuska, R. B. Harris, K. J. Harris, and D. S. Carlson. 2016. "Social Media Use in the Workplace: A Study of Dual Effects." Journal of Organizational and End User Computing 28 (1): 15–31.

101. Carmeli, A., & Tishler, A. (2004). The relationships between intangible organizational elements and organizational performance. *Strategic Management Journal, 25*(13): 1257-1278.

102. Carson S.J., Madhok, A., Varman, R., & John, G. (2003). Information processing moderators of the effectiveness of trust-based governance in inter-firm R&D collaboration. *Organization Science, 14*: 45-56.

103. Carter, S.M., & Ruefli, T.W. (2006). Intra-industry reputation dynamics under a resource-based framework: assessing the durability factor. *Corporate Reputation Review, 9:* 3-25.

104. Caruana, A., Cohen, C., & Krentler, K.A. (2006). Corporate reputation and shareholders' intentions: An attitudinal perspective. *Brand Management, 13*: 429-440.

105. Case, C.J., & King, D.L. (2011). Twitter usage in the Fortune 50: A marketing opportunity? *Journal of Marketing Development & Competitiveness, 5*(3): 94-103.

106. Castellano, S., & Dutot, V. (2017). Investigating the influence of E-Word-of-Mouth on E-reputation. *International Studies of Management & Organization, 47*(1): 42-60.

107. Castells, M. (2001). *The internet galaxy: Reflections on the internet, business and society*. London: Oxford University Press.

108. Castells, M. (2011). A network theory of power. *International Journal of Communication, 5*: 773-787.

109. Castells, M. (2014). The impact of the internet on society: A global perspective. *MIT Technology Review* [Online] Available at: https://www.technologyreview.com/ 2014/09/08/171458/the-impact-of-the-internet-on-society-a-global-perspective/ [Accessed on 5 April, 2018].

110. Caves, R.E., & Porter, M. (1977). From entry barriers to mobility barriers: Conjectural decisions and contrived deterrence to new competition. *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 91*: 241-262.

111. Cha, M.K., Yi, Y., Bagozzi, R.P. (2016). Effects of customer participation in corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs on the CSR-brand fit and brand loyalty. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, 57*(3): 235-249.

112. Chakauya, F. (2016). An analysis of the implementation of the Zim asset pillar on ICT development policy in achieving results through independent regulation of the telecommunications sector in Zimbabwe: A case study of mobile telephony. *The Dyke, Special Edition*: 201-217.

113. Chapanga, E., & Choto, I. (2015). A critical evaluation of persuasive communication discourses inspired by celebrity endorsement in the telecommunication sector in Zimbabwe. *Journal for Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences, 4*(2): 58-7.

114. Chaparadza, A. (2019). "Zimbabwe's politics and other reasons for the rise of Twitter usage". [Online] Available at: https://www.techzim.co.zw/2019/03/zimbabwes –politics-and-other-reasons-for-the- rise-of-Twitter-usage/ [Accessed on 18 September, 2019].

115. Charlton, J. P. 2002. "A Factor-Analytic Investigation of Computer 'Addiction'and Engagement," British Journal of Psychology (93:3), pp. 329-344.

116. Chartier, R. (Ed.). (1989). *A history of private life: Passions of the renaissance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

117. Chatora, A. (2009). "The role of the new media in fostering democracy in African dictatorships: Zimbabwe a case study". Unpublished Masters thesis. London: University of London. Retrieved from: https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/ 6367986/Chatora_Andrew_Final_Draft_Copy_of_MA_Dissertation.pdf [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

118. Chauke M.T. (2012). "An evaluation of the critical success factor for the adoption and utilization of ICTs to attain sustainable competitive advantage in Zimbabwe's hypercompetitive telecommunications industry: The case of TEL-ONE (PVT) LTD (2009 - 2012)". Unpublished MBA thesis. Harare: University of Zimbabwe. Retrieved from: http://41.175.146.201/bitstream/handle/10646/3442/Chauke [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

119. Chetty, R.L. (2018). "Liquid Telecom Cape to Cairo network first of its kind for Africa". HyperText. [Online] Available at: https://www.htxt.co.za/2018/09/11/liquid-telecom-cape-to-cairo-network-first-of-its-kind-for-africa/ [Accessed on 21 July 2019].

120. Chevalier, J.A., & Mayzlin, D. (2006). The effect of word of mouth on sales: Online book reviews. *Journal of Marketing Research, 43*(3): 345-354.

121. Chibuwe, A., & Ureke, O. (2016). 'Political gladiators' on Facebook in Zimbabwe: A discursive analysis of intra-Zimbabwe African National Union-PF cyber wars; Baba Jukwa versus Amai Jukwa. *Media, Culture & Society, 38*(8): 1247-1260.

122. Chifamba, M. (2013). "Mobile phones big hit in rural Zimbabwe". Online Press Services News Agency. [online] Available at: http://www.ipsnews.net/ 2013/09/ mobile-phones-big-hit-in-rural-zimbabwe/ [Accessed on 17 February, 2018].

123. Chigora, F., & Mutambara, E. (2019). Branding in the post-truth news era: A social media hegemony in Zimbabwe tourism brand equity modelling. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, *8*(2): 1-14.

124. Chigwende, S., & Govender, K. (2020). Corporate brand image and switching behavior: case of mobile telecommunications customers in Zimbabwe. *Innovative Marketing, 16*(2): 80-90.

125. Chigwende, S., & Govender, K. (2020). Corporate brand image and switching behavior: case of mobile telecommunications customers in Zimbabwe. *Innovative Marketing* , 1-12.

126. Chitanana, T., & Mutsvairo, B. (2019). The deferred 'democracy dividend' of citizen journalism and social media: perils, promises and prospects from the Zimbabwean experience. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture, 14*(1): 66-80.

127. Choi, J.H.J. (2006). Living in Cyworld: Contextualising cy-ties in South Korea. In A. Bruns, J. Jacobs (Eds.), *Uses of blogs* (pp. 173-186). New York: Peter Lang.

128. Choi, Y., Seo, Y., & Yoon, S. (2017). E-WOM messaging on social media: social ties, temporal distance, and message concreteness. *Internet Research, 27*: 495-505.

129. Chowdhury, I.A. (2015). Issue of quality in a qualitative research: An overview. *Innovative Issues and Approaches in Social Sciences*, 8(1): 142-162.

130. Christensen, L.T., & Cornelissen, J.P. (2011). Corporate and organizational communication in conversation. *Management Communication Quarterly, 25*(3): 383-414.

131. Chun, R., Argandoña, A., Choirat, C., & Siegel, D.S. (2019). Corporate reputation: Being good and looking good. *Business and Society, 58*(6): 1132-1142.

132. Cintamür, I.G., & Yüksel, C.A. (2018). Measuring customer based corporate reputation in banking industry: developing and validating an alternative scale. *International Journal of Bank Marketing. 36*(7): 1414-1436.

133. Clark, B.H., & Montgomery, D.B. (1998). Deterrence, reputations, and competitive cognition. *Management Science, 44*(1): 62-82.

134. Clement, J. (2019). "Number of monthly active Twitter users worldwide from 1st quarter 2010 to 1st quarter 2019". [Online] Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/282087/number-of-monthly-active-twitter-users/ [Accessed on 22 July, 2020].

135. Clement, J. (2020). "Number of global social network users 2017-2025". [Online] Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/ [Accessed on 22 July, 2020].

136. Cornelissen, J.P., Durand, R., Fiss, P.C., Lammers, J.C., & Vaara, E. (2015). Putting communication front and center in institutional theory and analysis. *The Academy of Management Review, 40*(1): 10-27.

137. Cornelissen, J.P., Thøger-Christensen, L., & Kinuthia, K. (2012). Corporate brands and identity: Developing stronger theory and a call for shifting the debate. *European Journal of Marketing, 46*(7/8): 1093-1102.

138. Corrada, M.S., Flecha, J.A., Lopez, E., 2020. The gratifications in the experience of the use of social media and its impact on the purchase and repurchase of products and services. Europ. Busin. Rev.

139. Cover, R. (2006). Audience inter/active: Interactive media, narrative control and reconceiving audience history. *New Media and Society, 8*: 139-158.

140. Crampton, J. (2004). *The political mapping of cyberspace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

141. Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

142. Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

143. Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

144. Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E.L., Daniels, S.R., Hall, A.V., 2017. Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies. Acad. Manage. Ann. 11 (1), 479–516.

145. Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: Sage.

146. Comyns, B.C., Franklin-Johnson, E. (2018). Corporate reputation and collective crises: a theoretical development using the case of Rana Plaza. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *150*: 159-183.

147. Culnan, M.J., McHugh, P.J., & Zubillaga, J.I. (2010). How large US companies can use Twitter and other social media to gain business value. *MIS Quarterly Executive*, *9*(4): 243-259.

148. Datareportal (2020). "Digital 2020: Zimbabwe". [online] Available at: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-zimbabwe [Accessed on 26 March, 2020].

149. Davids, Zane, and Irwin Brown. 2021. "The Collective Storytelling Organisational Framework for Social Media Use." *Telematics and Informatics* 62. doi: 10.1016/j.tele.2021.101636.

150. David, P., Kline, S. and Dai, Y., 2005. Corporate social responsibility practices, corporate identity, and purchase intention: A dual-process model. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, *17*(3), pp.291-313.

151. Davies, G., & Olmedo-Cifuentes, I. (2016). Corporate misconduct and the loss of trust. *European Journal of Marketing, 50*(7/8): 1426-1447.

152. Davies, G., Chun, R., Da Silva, R.V. & Roper, S. (2003). *Corporate reputation and competitiveness*. London: Routledge.

153. Davis, C., & Moy, C. (2007). Coming to terms with business transparency. *Admap Magazine, 487*: 19-22.

154. Davis, E.B., Kee, J., & Newcomer, K. (2010). Strategic transformation process: Toward purpose, people, process and power. *Organization Management Journal, 7*(1): 66-80.

155. De Bruyn, A., & Lilien, G. (2008). A multi-stage model of word-of-mouth influence through viral marketing. *International Journal of Research in Marketing, 25*(3): 151-163.

156. De Chernatony, L. (1999). Brand management through narrowing the gap between brand identity and brand reputation. *Journal of Marketing Management, 15*(1-3): 157-80.

157. De Vaus, D.A. (2014). *Surveys in social research* (6th ed.). Australia: UCL Press.

158. Deal, T.E., Kennedy, A.A. (1982). *Corporate cultures: The rites and rituals of corporate life*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

159. Deephouse, D. L., Newburry, W., & Soleimani, A. (2016). The effects of institutional development and national culture on cross-national differences in corporate reputation. *Journal of World Business, 51*(3): 463-473.

160. Deephouse, D.L. (2000). Media reputation as a strategic resource: An integration of mass communication and resource-based theories. *Journal of Management, 26*: 1091-1112.

161. Deephouse, D.L., & Carter, S.M. (2005). An examination of differences between organizational legitimacy and organizational reputation. *Journal of Management Studies, 42*(2): 329-360.

162. Deephouse, D.L., Bundy, J., Tost, L.P., & Suchman, M. (2017). "Organizational legitimacy: Six key questions". In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, T.B. Lawrence, & R. Meyer (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of organizational institutionalism*, (2nd ed.) (pp. 27-54). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage,.

163. Deighton, J., & Kornfeld, L. (2009). Interactivity's unanticipated consequences for marketers and marketing. *Journal of International Marketing, 23*: 4-10.

164. Del Vecchio, P., Laubacher, R., Ndou, V., & Passiante, G. (2011). Managing corporate reputation in the blogosphere: The case of Dell Computers. *Corporate Reputation Review, 14*: 133-144.

165. Delavari, M., and A. Badizadeh. 2018. "The Effect of Social Media Use at Work on Employees' Performance by Considering the Mediating Role of Trust, Shared Vision, Network Ties and Knowledge Transfer: An Empirical Case Study." Pacific Business Review International 10 (10): 110–119.

166. Delgado-García., J.B., de Quevedo-Puente, E. & Blanco- Mazagatos, V. (2017). The impact of city reputation on city performance. *Regional Studies, 14*: 1-13.

167. Deloitte in Zimbabwe. (2020). *Understanding COVID-19's impact on the telecom sector: Guidance for telecommunications executives*. Retrieved from: https://www2.deloitte.com/za/en/pages/about-deloitte/articles/understanding-covid-19-impact-on-the-telecom-sector.html [Accessed on 21 April, 2020].

168. Dennis, A. R., R. M. Fuller, and J. S. Valacich. 2008. "Media, Tasks, and Communication Processes: A Theory of Media Synchronicity." MIS Quarterly 32 (3): 575–600.

169. Denzin, N.K., & Lincoln, Y.S. (2011). "The discipline and practice of qualitative research" In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.) (pp. 1-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

170. Dewing, M. (2012). *Social media: An introduction*. Information and Research Service, Social Affairs Division. Canada: Library of Parliament.

171. Dickinson-Delaporte, S., Beverland, M., & Lindgreen, A. (2010). Building corporate reputation with stakeholders: Exploring the role of message ambiguity for social marketers. *European Journal of Marketing, 44*(12): 1856-1874.

172. Dierickx, I., & Cool, K. (1989). Asset stock accumulation and sustainability of competitive advantage. *Management Science, 35*: 1504-1511.

173. Dijkmans, Kerkhof, P., & Beukeboom, C. J. (2015). A stage to engage: Social media use and corporate reputation. *Tourism Management*, *47*: 58-67.

174. Dodge, M., & Kitchin, R. (2000). Exposing the 'second text' of maps of the net. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 5*(4). [Online] Available at: https://academic.oup.com/jcmc/article/5/4/JCMC543/4584188 [Accessed on 23 March, 2018].

175. Dowling, G. (1986). Managing your corporate image. *Industrial Marketing Management, 15*(2): 109-115.

176. Dowling, G. (2004). Corporate reputations: should you compete on yours? *California Management Review, 43*(3): 19-36.

177. Dowling, G., & Moran, P. (2012). Corporate reputations: Built in or bolted on? *California Management Review, 54*(2): 25-42.

178. Drucker, P.F. (1955). *The practice of management*. London : Heinemann

179. Ducharme, L.J., & Fine, G.A. (1995). The construction of nonpersonhood and demonization: Commemorating the traitorous reputation of Benedict Arnold. *Social Forces, 73*(4): 1309-1331.

180. Dunn, B.J. (2010). How I did it: Best Buy's CEO on learning to love social media. *Harvard Business Review*. [Online] Available at: http://hbr.org/2010/12/how-i-did-it-best-buys-ceo-on-learning-to-lovesocial-media/ar/1 [Accessed on 7 March, 2018].

181. Dutton , J.E ., Dukerich , J.M. & Harquail , C.V. (1994). Organization images and member identification. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 39*(2): 239-263.

182. Dutton, J.E., & Dukerich, J.M. (1991). Keeping an eye on the mirror: The role of image and identity in organizational adaptation. *Academy of Management Journal, 34*: 517-554.

183. Eckert, C. (2017). Corporate reputation and reputation risk: Definition and measurement from a (risk) management perspective. *Journal of Risk Finance, 18*(2): 145-158.

184. Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), African Development Bank (AFDB) Group, African Union Commission (AUC) (2017). *African statistical yearbook 2017*. African Centre for Statistics. Retrieved from: https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/ document/african-statistical-yearbook-2017-95662 [Accessed on 13 March, 2018].

185. Edosomwan, S., Prakasan, S.K., Kouame, D., Watson, J., & Seymour, T. (2011). The history of social media and its impact on business. *Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship, 16*(3): 79-91.

186. Eid, R. (2013). Factors affecting customer switching behavior in the mobile phone market: The case of Egypt. *International Journal of Technology Marketing, 8*(3): 337-354.

187. Eigler , J., & Azarpour, S. (2020). Reputation management for creative workers in the media industry. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 1-15.

188. Ekinci, Y. (2015). *Designing research questionnaires for business management students* (1st ed.). London: Sage.

189. Ellison, N., & Boyd, D. (2013). "Sociality through social network sites". In W. Dutton (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of internet studies* (pp. 151-172). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

190. Ellison, N.B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The benefits of Facebook 'friends': Social capital and college students' use of online social network sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication 12*: 1143-1168.

191. Ellyne, M.J., & Daly, M.R. (2016). "Zimbabwe Monetary Policy, 1998–2012" In G. Kararach & R.O. Otieno (Eds.). *Economic Management in a Hyperinflationary Environment: The Political Economy of Zimbabwe, 1980–2008* (pp. 249-289). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

192. Espeland, W.N., & Sauder, M. (2007). Rankings and reactivity: How public measures recreate social worlds. *American Journal of Sociology, 113*(1): 1-40.

193. Etter, M., Ravasi, D., & Colleoni, C. (2018). Social media and the formation of reputation. *Academy of Management Review, 44*(1): 28-52.

194. Etter, M.A., & Nielsen, F.Å. (2015). Collective remembering of organizations: Coconstruction of organizational pasts in Wikipedia. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 20*(4): 431-447.

195. Etter, M.A., & Vestergaard, A. (2015). Facebook and the public framing of a corporate crisis. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 20*: 163-177.

196. Farzanah, N. N. (2021). Corporate Reputation Management: A Case Study of Courier Service Provider. *Journal of Digital Marketing and Communication*, 19-23.

197. Feng, X., & Behar-Horenstein, L. (2019). Maximizing NVivo utilities to analyze open-ended responses. *The Qualitative Report*, *24*(3): 563-571.

198. Fillis, I. (2003). Image, reputation, and identity issues in the arts and crafts organization. *Corporate Reputation Review, 6*(3): 239-251.

199. Fine, G. (2008). Reputation. *Contexts, 7*(3): 78-79.

200. Fine, G.A. (1996). Reputational entrepreneurs and the memory of incompetence: Melting supporters, partisan warriors, and images of President Harding. *American Journal of Sociology, 101*(5): 1159-1193.

201. Fine, G.A. (2001). *Difficult reputations: Collective memory of the evil, inept, and controversial*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

202. Fink, S., & Zerfass, A. (2010). *Social media governance 2010. Results of a survey among communications professionals from companies, governmental institutions and non-profit organizations in Germany*. Leipzig, Wiesbaden: University of Leipzig, FFPR.

203. Fischer, E., & Reuber, R. (2007). The good, the bad, and the unfamiliar: The challenges of reputation formation facing new firms. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 31*(1): 53-75.

204. Fisher, J.F. (2010). *Pioneers, settlers, aliens, exiles: The decolonisation of white identity in Zimbabwe*. Canberra: The Australian National University.

205. Fiske, S., & Taylor, S. (1991). *Social cognition* (2nd ed.). New York: Random House

206. Flanagan, D.J., & O'Shaughnessy, K.C. (2005). The effect of layoffs on firm reputation. *Journal of Management, 31*: 445-463.

207. Flanagin, A.J. (2017). Online social influence and the convergence of mass and interpersonal communication. *Human Communication Research, 43*: 450-463.

208. Floreddu, P.B., Cabiddu, F., & Evaristo, R. (2014). Inside your social media ring: how to optimize online corporate reputation. *Business Horizons, 57*(6): 737-745.

209. Fombrun, C., & Shanley, M. (1990). What's in a name? Reputation building and corporate strategy. *Academy of Management Journal, 33*(2): 233-258.

210. Fombrun, C.J. (1996) *Reputation: Realizing value from the corporate image*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

211. Fombrun, C.J. (2006). Corporate reputations as economic assets. In M. Hitt, R. Freeman, & J. Harrison (Eds.), *The Blackwell handbook of strategic management* (pp. 289-312). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

212. Fombrun, C.J. (2012). "The building blocks of corporate reputation: Definitions, antecedents, consequences". In M.L. Barnett & T.G. Pollock (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of corporate reputation* (pp.94-113). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

213. Fombrun, C.J., & Gardberg, N. (2000). Who's tops in corporate reputation? *Corporate Reputation Review, 3*(1): 13-17.

214. Fombrun, C.J., & van Riel, C.B. (2004). *Fame & fortune: How successful companies build winning reputations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: FT Press.

215. Fombrun, C.J., Gardberg, N., & Sever, J.M. (2000). The reputation quotient: A multi-stakeholder measure of corporate reputation. *The Journal of Brand Management, 4*(7): 241-255.

216. Foremann, P., Whetten, D., & Mackey, A. (2013). "An identity-based view of reputation, image, and legitimacy: clarifications and distinctions among related constructs". In M. Barnett & T. Pollock (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Corporate Reputation* (pp. 179-200). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

217. Fournier, S., & Avery, J. (2011). Putting the 'relationship' back into CRM. *Sloan Management Review, 52*(3): 63-72.

218. Fransman, M. (2001). Analysing the evolution of industry: The relevance of the telecommunications industry. *Economics of innovation and new technology, 10*(2-3): 109-140.

219. Freedom House . (2021, December 07). *www.freedomhouse.org*. Retrieved from www.freedomhouse.org: https://freedomhouse.org/country/zimbabwe/freedom-net/2021

220. Freeman, R.E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Marshfield, MA: Pitman Press.

221. French, L., & Wickham, M. (2018). Exploring the reputation management process for events: The case of Targa Tasmania. *Event Management, 22*(2): 213-235

222. Fryxell, G.E., & Wang, J. (1994). The Fortune corporate 'reputation' index: Reputation for what? *Journal of Management, 20*: 1-14.

223. Fuchs-Kittowski, F., Klassen, N., Faust, D., Einhaus, J., 2009. A comparative study on the use of web 2.0 in enterprises. Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Knowledge Management and Knowledge Technologies, Graz, Austria.

224. Gambanga, N. (2015). "Here's Zimbabwe's 2015 draft National ICT Policy". [Online] Available at: https://www.techzim.co.zw/2015/12/heres-zimbabwes-2015-draft-national-ict-policy/ [Accessed on 23 March, 2018].

225. Gambanga, N. (2016). "Latest POTRAZ report shows an increase in Zimbabwe's mobile and internet penetration". [Online] Available at: https://www.techzim.co.zw/2016/03/latest-potraz-report-shows-increase-zimbabwes-mobile-internet-penetration/ [Accessed on 23 March, 2018].

226. Gangloff, K.A., Connelly, B.L., & Shook, C.L. (2016). Of scapegoats and signals: Investor reactions to CEO succession in the aftermath of wrongdoing. *Journal of Management, 42*(6): 1614-1634.

227. Gardberg, N.A., Symeou, P.C., & Zyglidopoulos, S.C. (2015). Public trust's duality in the CSP–reputation–financial performance relationship across countries. *Academy of Management Proceedings,* (1): 15705.

228. Geradin, D., & Kerf, M. (2003). *Controlling market power in telecommunications: Antitrust vs sector-specific regulation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

229. Gharib, R.K., Philpott, E., Duan, Y., 2017. Factors affecting active participation in B2B online communities: an empirical investigation. Informat. Manage. 54 (4), 516–530.

230. Ghobadian, A., Money, K., & Hillenbrand, C. (2015). Corporate responsibility research: past–present–future. *Group & Organization Management, 40*(3): 271-294.

231. Gholami, M. H., Asli, M. N., Nazari-Shirkouhi, S., & Noruzy, A. (2013). Investigating the influence of knowledge management practices on organizational performance: an empirical study. Acta Polytechnica Hungarica, 10(2), 205-216.

232. Gibb, J. (1961). Defensive communication. *The Journal of Communication, 11*: 141-148.

233. Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal*, *204*(6): 291-295.

234. Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA) Intelligence (2017). *The mobile economy 2017*. Retrieved from: https://www.gsma.com/subsaharanafrica/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2017-02-27-9e927fd6896724e7b26f33f61db5b9d5-1.pdf [Accessed on 19 May, 2018].

235. Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA) Intelligence (2019). *The mobile economy 2019*. Retrieved from: https://www.gsma.com/betterfuture/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-09-24-a60d6541465e86561f37f0f77ebee0f7-1.pdf [Accessed on 3 August, 2019].

236. Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA) Intelligence (2020). *The mobile economy 2020*. Retrieved from: https://www.gsma.com/mobileeconomy/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/GSMA_MobileEconomy2020_Global.pdf [Accessed on 6 June, 2020].

237. Goebel, D., Marshall, G., & Locander, W. (2004). An organizational communication-based model of individual customer orientation of non-marketing members of a firm. *Journal of Strategic Marketing, 12*(1): 29-56.

238. Goldring, D. (2015). Reputation orientation: Improving marketing performance through corporate reputation building. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning, 33*(5): 784-803.

239. Gómez-Carrasco, P., Guillamón-Saorín, E., & García Osma, B. (2020). Stakeholders versus firm communication in social media: The case of Twitter and corporate social responsibility information. *European Accounting Review*: 1-32.

240. Gomulya, D., & Boeker, W. (2014). How firms respond to financial restatement: CEO successors and external reactions. *Academy of Management Journal, 57*(6): 1759-1785.

241. Gomulya, D., & Mishina, Y. (2017). Signaler credibility, signal susceptibility, and relative reliance on signals: How stakeholders change their evaluative processes after violation of expectations and rehabilitative efforts. *Academy of Management Journal, 60*(2): 554- 583.

242. Goodman, D. (1992). Public sphere and private life: toward a synthesis of current historiographical approaches to the old regime. *History and Theory, 31*(1): 1-20.

243. Gotsi, M., & Wilson, A.M. (2001). Corporate reputation: Seeking a definition. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *6*(1): 1-18.

244. Greyser, S. (2016)The Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix – The case of the Nobel Prize. *J Brand Manag* **23,** 89–117

245. Guba, E. (1990). *The paradigm dialog*. California: Sage.

246. Gukurume, S. (2017). #thisflag and #thisgown: Cyber protests in Zimbabwe -reclaiming political space. *African Journalism Studies, 38*(2): 49-70.

247. Guptara, P.J. (1998). "Corporate culture and competitive advantage". In D. Lock (Ed.) *Handbook of management* (3rd ed.) (pp. 103-110). UK: Gower Publishing, Ltd.

248. Habermas, J. (2006). Political communication in media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research. *Communication Theory, 16*(4): 411-426.

249. Hall, R. (1992). The strategic analysis of intangible resources. *Strategic Management Journal, 13*: 135-144.

250. Hamel, G., & Prahalad, C.K. (1989) Strategic intent. *Harvard Business Review, 89*: 63-76.

251. Hanna, N.K. (2016) *Mastering digital transformation: Towards a smarter society, economy, city and nation* (1st ed.). Bingley: Emerald Publishing.

252. Hanna, R., Rohm, A., & Crittenden, V.L. (2011). We're all connected: The power of the social media ecosystem. *Business Horizons, 54*: 265-273.

253. Hansen, H., Samuelsen, B.M., & Silseth, P.R. (2008). Customer perceived value in B- t-B service relationships: Investigating the importance of corporate reputation. *Industrial Marketing Management, 37*(2): 206-217.

254. Hansson, M. (2007). *The private sphere: An emotional territory and its agent*. New York: Springer.

255. Hartshorn, S. (2010). "5 Differences between social media and social networking". [Online] Available at: http://www.socialmediatoday.com/SMC/194754 [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

256. Harvard Business Review Analytic Services (2010). *The new conversation: Taking social media from talk to action*. Cambridge, MA: HBR Analytic Services. Retrieved from http://www.sas.com/resources/whitepaper/wp_23348.pdf [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

257. Hatch, M. J., & Schultz, M. (2002). The dynamics of organizational identity. *Human Relations, 55*: 989-1018.

258. Hawkins, T., & Pilling, D. (2017). "How Zimbabwe's economy was brought to the brink of collapse". Financial Times. [Online] Available at: https://www.ft.com/ content/5fe10fea-cd13-11e7-b781-794ce08b24dc [Accessed on 14 April, 2018].

259. Hayes, A.F. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

260. Hennig-Thurau, T., Qwinner, K.P., Walsh, G., & Gremler, D.D. (2004). Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: what motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the Internet? *Journal of Interactive Marketing, 18*(1): 38-52.

261. Herbig, P., & Milewicz, J. (1993). The relationship of reputation and credibility to brand success. *Journal of Consumer Marketing, 10*(3): 18-24.

262. Highhouse, S., Broadfoot, A., Yugo, J.E., & Devendorf, S.A. (2009). Examining corporate reputation judgments with generalizability theory. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 94*(3): 782-789.

263. Highhouse, S., Brooks, M. E., & Gregarus, G. (2009). An organizational impression management perspective on the formation of corporate reputations. *Journal of Management, 35*: 1481-1493.

264. Ho ̈gberg, K., 2018. Organizational social media: A literature review and research agenda. Waikoloa Village, Hawaii, USA.

265. Hollier, P. (2009). "The 'intangible' benefits of social media". [Online] Available at: http://seowizardry.ca/The_Wizards_Blog/the-%E2%80%9Cintangible% [Accessed on 23 August, 2018].

266. Homans, G.C., 1958. Social behaviours as exchange. Am. J. Sociol. 63 (6), 597–606.

267. Horn, (2013). "Is the Reputation Quotient a valid and reliable measure for corporate reputation?" Unpublished Masters thesis. Kassel, Germany: Universität Kassel. Retrieved from: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c341/7b54ecd449f6fa292cd4e_4288f12a1ea4fd1.pdf [Accessed on 7 July, 2018].

268. HowMuch.Net (2019). "How much does mobile data cost around the world?" [Online] Available at: https://howmuch.net/articles/the-price-of-mobile-internet-worldwide-2019 [Accessed on 7 March, 2019].

269. Hu, L.T., & Bentler, P.M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling, 6*(1): 1-55.

270. Huang-Horowitz, N.C., & Freberg, K. (2016). Bridging organizational identity and reputation messages online: a conceptual model. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 21*(2): 195-212.

271. Huawei Marine (2018). "PEACE cable project enters into cable and material manufacturing stage". [Online] Available at: http://www.huaweimarine.com/ en/News/ 2018/press-releases/pr20181022 [Accessed on 20 July, 2019].

272. Huczynski, A., & Buchanan, D.A. (2016). *Organizational behaviour* (8th ed.). London: Blackwell.

273. Hussain, S., Ahmed, W., Jafar, R.M.S., Rabnawaz, A., & Jianzhou, Y. (2017). eWOM source credibility, perceived risk and food product customer's information adoption. *Computers in Human Behavior, 66*: 96-102.

274. Illia, L., & Lurati, F. (2006). Stakeholder perspectives on organizational identity: Searching for a relationship approach. *Corporate Reputation Review, 8*(4): 293-304.

275. International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2012). *The International Monetary Fund report 2012: Working together to support global recovery*. Washington, DC: IMF Publication Services.

276. International Telecommunications Union (ITU) (2017). *Measuring the information society report 2017, Volume 1*. International Telecommunications Union. Retrieved from: https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/publications/ misr2017/ MISR2017_Volume1.pdf [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

277. Internet Society (ISOC) (2015). Unleashing the potential of the internet for ASEAN economies. Retrieved from: https://www.internetsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/ 2017/08/ISOC_ASEAN_Digital_Economy_Report_Full_s.pdf [Accessed on 2 May, 2018].

278. Internet World Stats (2017). "Internet world stats – Usage and population statistics". [Online] Available at: https://www.internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm [Accessed on 4 April, 2018].

279. Jackson, M.H. (2009). The mash-up: A new archetype for communication. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *14*: 730-734.

280. Jahan, N., Kim, S.W., 2020. Understanding online community participation behaviour and perceived benefits: a social exchange theory perspective. PSU Research. Review.

281. Jamali, H.R., Nicholas, D., & Herman, E. (2016). Scholarly reputation in the digital age and the role of emerging platforms and mechanisms. *Research Evaluation*, *25*(1): 37-49.

282. Jansen, B.J., Zhang, M., Sobel, K., & Chowdury, A. (2017). Twitter power-tweets as electronic word-of-mouth. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology, 60*(11): 2169-2188.

283. Jin, L., & He, Y. (2013). Designing service guarantees with construal fit: effects of temporal distance on consumer responses to service guarantees. *Journal of Service Research, 16*(2): 202-215.

284. Jobber, D. (2017). *Principles and practices of marketing* (6th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

285. Johnson, D.E., Erez, A., Kiker, D.S., & Motowidlo, S.J. (2002). Liking and attributions of motives as mediators of the relationships between individuals' reputations, helpful behaviors and raters' reward decisions. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*(4): 808-815.

286. Johnson, G., Scholes, K., & Whittington, R. (2008). *Exploring corporate strategy*. (8th ed.). Harlow, Essex: FT Prentice Hall.

287. Jones, B., Temperley, J., & Lima, A. (2009). Corporate reputation in the era of Web 2.0: The case of Primark. *Marketing Management*, *25*(9-10): 927-939.

288. Kaplan A.M., & Haenlein, M. (2011). Two hearts in threequarter time: How to waltz the social media/viral marketing dance. *Business Horizons 54*(3): 253-263.

289. Kapoor, K.K., Tamilmani, K., Rana, N.P., Patil, P., Dwivedi, Y.K., Nerur, S., 2018. Advances in Social Media Research: Past, Present and Future. Informat. Syst. Front. 20, 531–558.

290. Kaul, A., & Chaudhri, V. (2015). Social media: The new mantra for managing reputation. *The Journal for Decision Makers, 40*(4): 455-491.

291. Kaul, A., & Chaudhri, V. (2019). "Communicating CSR on Twitter: Impact on rank and reputation". CSR Communication Conference, September 18-20. Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm.

292. Keh, H.T., & Xie, Y. (2009). Corporate reputation and customer behavioural intentions: The role of trust, identification and commitment. *Industrial Marketing Management, 38*: 732-742.

293. Kelemen, M., & Rumens, N. (2008). *An introduction to critical management research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

294. Keller, K.L., & Richey, K. (2006). The importance of corporate brand personality traits to a successful 21st century business. *Journal of Brand Management, 14*(1/2): 74-81.

295. Kellerman, A., & Thomas, L. (2002). *The internet on earth: A geography of information*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

296. Kelly, C. (2018). "Orange to invest in West African subsea initiative". [Online] Available at: https://www.totaltele.com/501052/Orange-to-invest-in-West-African-subsea-initiative [Accessed on 20 July, 2019].

297. Kemp, S. (2019). *Digital 2019: Global digital overview*. [online] Retrieved from: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2019-global-digital-overview?utm_source= Reportsandutm_medium=PDFandutm_campaign=Digital_2019andutm_content=Dual_Report_P romo_Slide [Accessed on 17 June, 2019].

298. Kemp, S. (2021, November 07). *Digital 2021: Global Overview Report*. Retrieved from datareportal.com: https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-global-overview-report

299. Kennedy, S.H. (1977). Nurturing corporate image: total communication or ego trip? *European Journal of Marketing, 11*(3): 119-164.

300. Khan, F.D., Ullah, H., Ullah, N. (2013). Challenges and importance of survey research. *PUTAJ-Humanities and Social Sciences*, *20*(1): 291-302.

301. Khan, S. (2019). Chief reputation officer (CRO): Envisioning the role. *Corporate Reputation Review, 22:* 75-88.

302. Kietzmann, J.H. (2017). Crowdsourcing: A revised definition and introduction to new research. *Business Horizons, 60*(2): 151-153.

303. Kietzmann, J.H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I.P., Silvestre, B.S., 2011. Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. Bus. Horiz. 54 (3), 241–251.

304. King, B.G., & Fine, G.A. (2000). Ford on the line: Business leader reputation and the multiple-audience problem. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 9*(1), 77-86.

305. King, M. (2014). "Corporate blogging and microblogging: An analysis of dialogue, interactivity and engagement in organisation-public communication through social media". Unpublished PhD thesis. Sydney: University of Technology, Sydney. Retrieved from: https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/bitstream/10453/35948/2/02whole.pdf [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

306. Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) (2011). *Social media: The voyage of discovery for business*. Research report. Retrieved from: http://www.kpmg.com/ au/en/issuesandinsights/ articles publications/Pages/social-media-the-voyage-of-discovery-for-business.aspx [Accessed on 6 May, 2018].

307. Ko, D., Seo, Y., & Jung, S. (2015). Examining the effect of cultural congruence, processing fluency, and uncertainty avoidance in online purchase decisions in the US and Korea. *Marketing Letters, 26*(3): 377-390.

308. Koech, J. (2011). "Hyperinflation in Zimbabwe". In *Globalization and Monetary Policy Institute 2011 Annual Report*. Retrieved from: https://econpapers.repec.org/ article/fipfeddgm/00008.htm [Accessed on 19 August, 2018].

309. Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Iwan, S. (2017). *Marketing 4.0 - Moving from traditional to digital*. (1st ed.). Hoboken: Wiley.

310. Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H. and Setiawan, I., (2021). *Marketing 5.0: Technology for Humanity* . Editorial LID.

311.

312. Kozinets, R., de Valck, C., Wojnicki, A., & Wilner, S. (2010). Networked narratives: understanding word-of-mouth marketing in online communities. *Journal of Marketing, 74*: 71-89.

313. Kreps, D.M., & Wilson, R. (1982). Reputation and imperfect information. *Journal of Economic Theory, 27*(2): 253-279

314. Kundishora, S.M.B. (2018). "The role of information and communication technology (ICT) in enhancing local economic development and poverty reduction". Zimbabwe Academic and Research Network. Retrieved from: **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** [Accessed on 23 February, 2018].

315. Kuss, D. J., and Griffiths, M. D. 2011b. "Online Social Networking and Addiction—a Review of the Psychological Literature," International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (8:9), pp. 3528-3552.

316. Laczniak, G.R., & Murphy, P.M. (2006). Normative perspectives for ethical and socially responsible marketing. *Journal of Macromarketing, 26*: 154-177.

317. Lafferty, B.A., & Hult, G.T.M. (2001). A synthesis of contemporary market orientation perspectives. *European Journal of Marketing, 35*: 92- 109.

318. Lang, G.E., & Lang, K. (1988). Recognition and renown: The survival of artistic reputation. *The American Journal of Sociology. 94*(1): 79-109.

319. Lang, G.E., & Lang, K. (1990). *Etched in memory: The building and survival of artistic reputation*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

320. Lange, D., & Pfarrer, M.D. (2017). Editors' comments: Sense and structure - The core building blocks of an AMR article. *Academy of Management Review, 42*(3): 407-416.

321. Lange, D., Lee, P.M., & Dai, Y. (2011). Organizational reputation: A review. *Journal of Management, 37*(1): 153-184.

322. Lee, S. Y., and S. W. Lee. 2018. "The Effect of Facebook Use on Office Workers' Job Performance and the Moderating Effects of Task Equivocality and Interdependence." Behaviour & Information Technology 37 (8): 828–841.

323. Leech, N.L., & Onwuegbuzie, A.J. (2011). Beyond constant comparison qualitative data analysis: Using NVivo. *School Psychology Quarterly, 26*(1): 70-84.

324. Lempert, P., 2006. Caught in the web. Progressive Grocer. 85 (12), 18.

325. Lerbinger, O. (1965). "The social functions of public relations". In O. Lerberger & J.A. Sullivan (Eds.), *Information Influence and Communication*. New York: Basic Books.

326. Lewis, C. & Abrahams, L. (2013). *The SADC communications environment: An assessment of communications policies, laws and regulations in SADC member states*. Hamburg, Germany: GFA Consulting Group.

327. Li, C., Cifuentes, J., Solis, B. (2014). "Strengthening employee relationships in the digital era - how digital employee engagement and advocacy transform organizations?" Altimeter Market

Overview Report. Retrieved from: http://www.villafane.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Cap-7_2014_Strengthening-Employee-Relationships_ Altimeter.pdf [Accessed on 5 July, 2018].

328. Li, F., Larimo, J., Leonidou, L.C., 2020. Social blogsmarketing strategy: definition, conceptualization, taxonomy, validation, and future agenda. J. Acad. Mark. Sci. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-020-00733-3.

329. Li, T., Berens, G., & de Maertelaere, M. (2019). Corporate Twitter channels: the impact of engagement and informedness on corporate reputation. *International Journal of Electronic Commerce, 18*(2): 97-126.

330. Liedong, T.A., Ghobadian, A., Rajwani, T., & O'Regan, N. (2015). Toward a view of complementarity: Trust and policy influence effects of corporate social responsibility and corporate political activity. *Group and Organization Management, 40*(3): 405- 427.

331. Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

332. Livingstone, S. (2005). "On the relation between audiences and publics". In S. Livingstone (Ed.), *Audiences and publics: When cultural engagement matters for the public sphere* (pp. 17-41). Bristol, UK: Intellect Books.

333. Locander, W.H., & Ladik, D.M. (2017). CEO Tweet behavior: The use of metaphors and gendered communication style. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 29*(4): 365-379.

334. Love, E.G., & Kraatz, M.S. (2009). Character, conformity, or the bottom line? How and why downsizing affected corporate reputation. *Academy of Management Journal, 52*: 314-335

335. Love, E.G., Lim, J., & Bednar, M. (2016). The face of the firm: the influence of ceos on corporate reputation. *Academy of Management Journal, 60*: 1462-1481.

336. Lovelock, P. (2018). *Framing policies for the digital economy: Towards policy frameworks in the Asia-Pacific*. UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence. Retrieved from: https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/global-centre-for-public-service-excellence/DigitalEconomy.html [Accessed on 6 November, 2018]

337. Luca, M. (2017). Designing online marketplaces: Trust and reputation mechanisms. *Innovation Policy and the Economy, 17*(1): 77-93.

338. Lund, N., Cohen, S., & Scarles, C. (2018). The power of social media storytelling in destination branding. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management, 8*: 271-280.

339. Lyons, K., Kim, H.M., Cunningham, M.A., 2008. Towards a theoretically grounded framework for evaluating immersive business models and applications: Analysis of ventures in second life. J. Virtual Worlds Res. 1 (1), 1–19.

340. MacMillan, K., Money, K., Downing, S., & Hillenbrad, C. (2004) Giving your organization SPIRIT: An overview and call to action for directors on issues of corporate governance, corporate reputation and corporate responsibility. *Journal of General Management, 30*: 15-42.

341. Macnamara, J., & Zerfass, A. (2012). Social media communication in organizations: The challenges of balancing openness, strategy, and management. *International Journal of Strategic Communication, 6*(4): 287-308.

342. Madamombe, R. (2017). "Why does every other Zimbabwean have a smartphone?" [Online] Available at: https://www.techzim.co.zw/2017/06/why-does-every-other-zimbabwean-have-a-smartphone/ [Accessed on 23 March, 2018].

343. Madden, M., & Smith, A. (2018). *Reputation management and social media*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet and American Life Project.

344. Madory, D. (2018). "First subsea cable across South Atlantic activated". [Online] Available at: https://hub.dyn.com/dyn-research/first-subsea-cable-across-south-atlantic-activated [Accessed on 20 July, 2019].

345. Madziwa, C., & Sibanda, V. (2018). An analysis of the impact of social media in the financial services sector in Zimbabwe: Customer perspective. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*, *6*(2): 248-272.

346. Mael, F.A., & Ashforth, B.E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *13*: 103-23.

347. Mahon, J., & Wartick, S. (2003). Dealing with stakeholders: How reputation, credibility and framing influence the game. *Corporate Reputation Review, 6*(1): 19-35.

348. Maidment, G. (2018). "SAIL the Atlantic with CAMTEL". [Online] Available at: https://www.huawei.com/ca/about-huawei/publications/winwin-magazine/31/sail-the-atlantic-with-camtel [Accessed on 20 July, 2019].

349. Makura, T., & Nyoni, T. (2017). The impact of social media marketing in the telecommunication industry: A case of NetOne Plc. Ltd, Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Advanced Research and Publications*, *1*(5): 128-134.

350. Malecki, E.J., & Moriset, B. (2008). *The digital economy: Business organization, production processes and regional developments*. New York: Routledge.

351. Mandiwanzira, S. (2016). "Fixed broadband in Zimbabwe". Presentation at Connect 2 Connect Summit, 19 July, Pretoria, South Africa. Retrieved from: **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

352. Mangold, W.G., & Faulds, D.J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business Horizons, 52*: 357-365.

353. Mare, A. (2018). Politics unusual? Facebook and political campaigning during the 2013 harmonised elections in Zimbabwe. *African Journalism Studies*, *39*(1): 90-110.

354. Marima, T. (2019). "In Zimbabwe, an economic crisis with 175% inflation drives discontent". National Public Radio. [Online] Available at: https://www.npr.org/ 2019/08/19/752329758/in-zimbabwe-an-economic-crisis-with-175-inflation-drives-discontent [Accessed on 7 September, 2019].

355. Markwick, N., & Fill, C. (1997). Towards a framework for managing corporate identity. *European Journal of Marketing, 31*(5): 396-409.

356. Martin, B., Gnoth, J., & Strong, C. (2009). Temporal construal in advertising: the moderating role of temporal orientation and attribute importance in consumer evaluations. *Journal of Advertising, 38*(3): 5-20.

357. Martins, L.L. (2005). A model of the effects of reputational rankings on organizational change. *Organization Science, 16*(6): 701-720.

358. Marumbwa, J. (2013). A pragmatic assessment of the determinants of consumer brand preferences in the mobile telecommunications services market in Masvingo Urban, Zimbabwe. *Management and Administrative Sciences Review, 2*(2): 144-155.

359. Marwick, A. & Boyd, D. (2010). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse and the imagined audience. *New Media and Society, 13*(1): 114-133.

360. Matingwina, S. (2018). Social media communicative action and the interplay with national security: Case study of Facebook and political participation in Zimbabwe. *Journal of African Studies*, *39*(1): 48-68.

361. Mboweni, D. (2017). Press Release – New Floor Pricing for Data [Interview] (15 January 2017).

362. McGuire J.B., Sundgreen, A., Schneewis, T. (1988). Corporate social responsibility and firm financial performance. *Academy of Management Journal, 31*(4): 854-872.

363. Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) (2018). "The affordability test of internet access in Zimbabwe". MISA Zimbabwe. [Online] Available at: http://zimbabwe.misa.org/2018/07/02/ affordability-test-internet-access-Zimbabwe/ [Accessed on 15 November, 2018].

364. Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) (2019a). "High Court sets aside internet shutdown directives". MISA Zimbabwe. [Online] Available at: **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** [Accessed on 15 March, 2019].

365. Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) (2019b). "Latest internet data price increases unjustified". MISA Zimbabwe. [Online] Available at:

https://zimbabwe.misa.org/2019/04/30/latest-internet-data-price-increases-unjustified/ [Accessed on 15 March, 2019].

366. Melewar, T.C., & Skinner, H. (2018). Defining and delimiting the scope of the corporate identity construct. *The Marketing Review, 18*(2): 115-129.

367. Men, L.R., O'Neil, J., & Ewing, M. (2020) Examining the effects of internal social media usage on employee engagement. *Public Relations Review, 46*: 101880.

368. Mendelow, A.L. (1981). "Environmental scanning-the impact of the stakeholder concept". Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Information Systems, December 7-9, 1981. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

369. Mertens, D.M. (2010). Transformative mixed methods research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*: 469-474.

370. Mhiripiri, N.A., & Mutsvairo, B. (2013). "Social media, new ICTs and the challenges facing the Zimbabwe democratic process." In A.A. Olorunnisola & A. Douai (Eds.). *New media influence on social and political change in Africa* (pp. 402-422). Hershey: IGI Global.

371. Mhizha. A., Nyaruwata, S., Munyanyiwa, T., & Mandebvu, G. (2015). The adoption of social media platforms in tourism and hospitality marketing: The case of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Harare. *International Journal of Development and Sustainability, 4*(6): 635-649.

372. Milgrom, P., & Roberts, J. (1982) Predation, reputation, and entry deterrence. *Journal of Economic Theory, 27*: 280-312.

373. Milgrom, P., & Roberts, J. (1986). Price and advertising signals of product quality. *Journal of Political Economy, 94*(4): 796-821.

374. Mintzberg, H. (1987). Crafting strategy. *Harvard Business Review, 65*(5): 66-75.

375. Mishina, Y., Block, E.S., & Mannor, M.J. (2012). The path dependence of organizational reputation: how social judgment influences assessments of capability and character. *Strategic Management Journal, 33*(5): 459-477.

376. Miyazaki, A.D., & Taylor, K.A. (2008). Researcher interaction biases and business ethics research: Respondent reactions to researcher characteristics. *Journal of Business Ethics, 81*(4): 779-795.

377. Mohajan, H. (2018). "Two criteria for good measurements in research: Validity and reliability". [Online] Available at: https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/83458/ 1/MPRA_paper_83458.pdf. [Accessed on 8 June, 2019].

378. Money, K., Saraeva, A., Garnelo-Gomez, I., Pain, S., & Hillenbrand, C. (2017). Corporate reputation past and future: A review and integration of existing literature and a framework for future research. *Corporate Reputation Review, 20*(3-4): 193-211.

379. Moqbela, M. Kock, N. (2018). Unveiling the dark side of social networking sites: Personal and work-related consequences of social networking site addiction: *Science direct.* 55 (1): pp 109-119. Available at: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0378720617303919?via%3Dihub [Accessed 8 June, 2020]

380. Morgan, D.L. (2007). Paradigms lost and pragmatism regained: Methodological implications of combining qualitative and quantitative methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*: 48-76.

381. Mothobi, O., Chair, C., & Rademan. B. (2017). *SADC not bridging digital divide. Policy Brief 6*. Retrieved from: https://researchictafrica.net/polbrf/ Research_ICT _Africa_Policy_Briefs/2017_Policy_Brief_6_SADC.pdf. [Accessed on 4 May, 2018].

382. Moyo, L. (2011). Blogging down a dictatorship: Human rights, citizen journalists and the right to communicate in Zimbabwe. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism 12*(6): 745-760.

383. Mpandare, M., Li, G., 2020. Utilising enterprise social media for product innovation: The role of market orientation. Sustainability 12 (9), 3913.

384. Mpondi, D. (2018). 'Opening up spaces': The politics of black economic empowerment and indigenization in the telecommunications industry in post-independence Zimbabwe. *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, *11*(2): 1-21.

385. Mudzingwa, F. (2019). "Global report: There are 1.2 million Zimbabweans on social media". [Online] Available at: https://www.techzim.co.zw/2019/04/global-report-there-are-12-million-zimbabweans-on-social-media/ [Accessed on 18 September, 2019].

386. Mullins, L. (2005). *Management and Organisational Behaviour* (7th ed.). Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

387. Musanhu, M. (2016). "The use of social media in political mobilization. Cases of ZANU PF AND MDC T". Unpublished Honours thesis. Gweru: Midlands State University. Retrieved from: http://ir.msu.ac.zw:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/ 11408/2423/MUSANHU%2cM.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y [Accessed on 31 August, 2018].

388. Musungwini, S., Zhou, T. G., Zhou, M., & Ruvinga, C. (2015). Harnessing social media for business success - case study of Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Computer Science and Business Informatics*, *11*(1): 80-89.

389. Mutsvairo, B., & Sirks, L. (2015). Examining the contribution of social media in reinforcing political participation in Zimbabwe. *Journal of African Media Studies, 7*(3): 329-44.

390. Nadeau, J., Rutter, R., Lettice, F., 2020. Social media responses and brand personality in product and moral harm crises: why waste a good crisis? J. Market. Manage. 36 (11–12), 1031–1054.

391. Namisango, F., Kang, K., 2018. Social media, organisation-community relationships and co-creation: A case of non-profit organisations. 24th Americas Conference on Information Systems, New Orleans, USA.

392. Nanfuka, J. (2019). "CIPESA and OpenNet Africa join public call against internet shutdown in Zimbabwe. Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa". [Online] Available at: https://cipesa.org/2019/01/cipesa-and-opennet-africa-join-public-call-against-internet-shutdown-in-zimbabwe/ [Accessed on 7 September, 2019].

393. Narayanan, V.K., Zane, L.J., & Kemmerer, B. (2011). The cognitive perspective in strategy: An integrative review. *Journal of Management, 37*(1): 305-351.

394. Nazari-Shirkouhi, S., & Keramati, A. (2017). Modelling customer satisfaction with new product design using a flexible fuzzy regression-data envelopment analysis algorithm. Applied Mathematical Modelling, 50, 755-771.

395. Nazari-Shirkouhi, S., Keramati, A., & Rezaie, K. (2013). Improvement of customers' satisfaction with new product design using an adaptive neuro-fuzzy inference systems approach. Neural Computing and Applications, 23(1), 333-343.

396. Neuman, W.L. (2009). *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Chandler: Pearson Education.

397. Newburry, W. (2010) Reputation and supportive behavior: Moderating impacts of foreignness, industry and local exposure. *Corporate Reputation Review, 12*(4): 388- 405.

398. NewsDay (2018). "Social media and Zimbabwe's 2018 election". [Online] Available at: https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/06/social-media-and-zimbabwes-2018-election/ [Accessed on 7 March 2018].

399. Ngondo, S.P. (2019). An exploratory study: digital and social media use by Zimbabwean public relations practitioners. *Public Relations Journal*, *12*(3): 26-42.

400. Nieuwenhuis, J. (2016). "Qualitative research designs and data-gathering techniques". In K. Maree (Ed.), *First steps in research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 71-102). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers).

401. Nyamadzawo, J. (2011). *Digital opportunities for economic growth and development for Zimbabwe*. ZEPARU Working Paper Series (ZWPS 05/11). Retrieved from: http://www.zeparu.co.zw/sites/default/files/2018-03/2011%20DIGITAL% 20OPPORTUNITIES%20FOR%20ECONOMIC%20GROWTH%20AND%20 DEVELOPMENT %20FOR %20ZIMBABWE.pdf [Accessed on 7 March, 2018].

402. Obloj, T., & Capron, L. (2011). Role of resource gap and value appropriation: effect of reputation gap on price premium in online auctions. *Strategic Management Journal, 32*(4): 447-456.

403. OfZimba (2016). "Social media influencer leads spirited campaign against Colcom Pork Pie". [Online] Available at: https://www.ofzimba.co.zw/social-media-influencer-leads-campaign-colcoms-pork-pie/ [Accessed on 6 August, 2018].

404. Oh, J., Bellur, S., Sundar, S., 2010. A conceptual model of user engagement with media. International Communication Association, Singapore.

405. Ohmae, K. (1983). *The mind of the strategist: Business planning for competitive advantage*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

406. Okonji, E. (2018). "Globacom to roll out Glo2 submarine cable in 18 months". [Online] Available at: https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2018/04/25/ globacom-to-roll-out-glo2-submarine-cable-in-18-months/ [Accessed on 20 July, 2019].

407. Orlikowski, W.J., & Scott, S.V. (2014). What happens when evaluation goes online? Exploring apparatuses of valuation in the travel sector. *Organization Science, 25*(3): 868-891.

408. Ott, L., & Theunissen, P. (2015). Reputations at risk: engagement during social media crises. *Public Relations Review, 41*: 97-102.

409. Page, G., & Fearn, H. (2005). Corporate reputation: what do consumers really care about? *Journal of Advertising Research, 45*(3): 305-313.

410. Papacharissi, Z. (2012). "A networked self: Identity performance and sociability on social network sites". In F. L. Lee, L. Leung, J. Qiu, & D. Chu (Eds.), *Frontiers in new media research* (pp. 12-45). London, UK: Taylor & Francis

411. Papacharissi, Z. (2015). We have always been social. *Social Media & Society, 1*: 1-2.

412. Papadopoulos, T., T. Stamati, and P. Nopparuch. 2013. "Exploring the Determinants of Knowledge Sharing Via Employee Weblogs." International Journal of Information Management 33 (1): 133–146.

413. Patel, K.K., & Patel, S.M. (2016). Internet of things-IOT: definition, characteristics, architecture, enabling technologies, application and future challenges. *International Journal of Engineering Science and Computing, May 2016*: 6122-6131.

414. Patrick, V. (2015). A modified theoretical framework to assess implementation fidelity of adaptive public health Interventions. BMC Springer [Online] Available at https://implementationscience.biomedcentral.com/articles/ [Accessed: 18 August 2021]

415. Perrin, A., & Anderson, M. (2019). "Share of U.S. adults using social media, including Facebook, is mostly unchanged since 2018". Pew Research Center. [online] Available at: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/10/share-of-u-s-adults-using-social-media-including-facebook-is-mostly-unchanged-since-2018/ [Accessed on 14 August, 2019].

416. Peters, T.J., & Waterman, R.H. Jr. (1982). *In search of excellence: lessons from America's best run companies.* New York: Harper & Row.

417. Pfarrer, M.D., Decelles, K.A., Smith, K.G., & Taylor, M.S. (2008). After the fall: Reintegrating the corrupt organization. *Academy of Management Review, 33*(3): 730- 749.

418. Pfarrer, M.D., Pollock, T.G., & Rindova, V.P. (2010). A tale of two assets: the effects of firm reputation and celebrity on earnings surprises and investors' reactions. *The Academy of Management Journal, 53*(5): 1131-1152.

419. Pfeffer, J., Zorbach, T., & Carley, T.M. (2014). Understanding online firestorms: Negative word-of-mouth dynamics in social media networks. *Journal of Marketing Communications, 20*(1-2): 117-128.

420. Philippe, D., & Durand, R. (2011). The impact of norm-conforming behaviors on firm reputation. *Strategic Management Journal, 32*: 969-93.

421. Phillips, D.C., & Burbules, N.C. (2000). *Postpositivism and educational research*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

422. Podnar, K. (2015). *Corporate communication: A marketing viewpoint*. New York: Routledge.

423. Podnar, K., & Golob, U. (2017). The quest for the corporate reputation definition: Lessons from the interconnection model of identity, image, and reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review, 20*(3-4): 186-192.

424. Pollock, T.G., Lee, P.M., Jin, K., & Lashley, K. (2015). (Un)tangled: Exploring the asymmetric coevolution of new venture capital firms' reputation and status. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 60*(3): 482-517.

425. Pollock, T.G., Rindova, V.P., & Maggitti, P.G. (2008). Market watch: Information and availability cascades among the media and investors in the US IPO market. *Academy of Management Journal, 51*(2): 335-358.

426. Porter, M.E. (1980). *Competitive strategy: Techniques for analyzing industries and competitors*. New York: The Free Press.

427. Post, J.E., & Griffin, J.J. (1997). Corporate reputation and external affairs management. *Corporate Reputation Review, 1*(1): 165-71.

428. Postal and Telecommunications Act [Chapter 12:05] 4 of 2000, as amended, ss 4, 59-65.

429. Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) (2017). *Abridged annual postal and telecommunications sector performance report*. Retrieved from: http://www.potraz.gov.zw/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Annual_ Sector_ Perfomance_Report_2017.pdf [Accessed 22 May, 2018].

430. Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) (2018). *Abridged postal and telecommunication sector performance report: Second quarter, 2018*. Available at: https://t3n9sm.c2.acecdn.net/wp-content/uploads/_2018/10/Abridged-Sector-Performance-report-Second-Quarter-2018-final.pdf [Accessed on 4 July, 2019].

431. Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ) (2019). *Abridged postal and telecommunications sector performance report: First quarter, 2019*. Retrieved from: http://www.potraz.gov.zw/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Abridged-Sector-Performance-report-1st-Quarter-2019_final-hmed.pdf [Accessed on 16 February, 2020].

432. POTRAZ. (2021, June 16). *http://www.potraz.gov.zw/*. Retrieved from http://www.potraz.gov.zw/: file:///Users/tabanimoyo/Downloads/Abridged-Sector-Performance-report-Q2-2021_000187059234909953260889.pdf

433. Preacher K.J., & Hayes, A.F. (2008). Asymptotic and resampling methods for estimating and comparing indirect effects. *Behavior Research Methods, 40*: 879-891.

434. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) (2020). "COVID-19 and the telecommunications industry: Practical steps for responding to the coronavirus crisis". [Online] Available at: https://www.pwc.com/us/en/library/covid-19/coronavirus-telecommunication-impact.html [Accessed on 6 June, 2020].

435. Proserpio, D., & Zervas, G. (2017). Online reputation management: Estimating the impact of management responses on consumer reviews. *Marketing Science*: 1-21.

436. Prosser, T. (2003). ''[GB] new Communications Act becomes law'', IRIS 8(10). [Online] Available at: http://merlin.obs.coe.int/iris/2003/8/article21.en.html [Accessed on 25 May, 2018].

437. Pruzan, P. (2001). Corporate reputation: Image and identity. *Corporate Reputation Review, 4*(1): 50-64.

438. Putnam, L.L. & Nicotera, A.M. (1999). *Building theories of organization: The constitutive role of communication.* New York: Routledge.

439. Ragusa, P., & Diehl, S. (2016). Social media and legal ethics – practical guidance for prudent use. *IP Litigator*, *September/October*: 12-14.

440. Raithel, S., & Schwaiger, M. (2015). The effects of corporate reputation perceptions of the general public on shareholder value. *Strategic Management Journal, 36*(6): 945-956.

441. Ranking the Brands (2019). "Brand rankings". [Online] Available at: https://www.rankingthebrands.com/The-Brand-Rankings.aspx?_rankingID=248_&year_=1254 [Accessed on 25 August, 2019].

442. Rao, H. (1994). The social construction of reputation: certification contests, legitimation, and the survival of organizations in the American automobile industry: 1895–1912. *Strategic Management Journal, 15*(1): 29-44.

443. Rao, H. (1997). Managing reputation: Pursuing everyday excellence: The rise of investor relations departments in the Fortune 500 industrials. *Corporate Reputation Review, 1*(2): 172-177.

444. Rao, H., Greve, H., & Davis, G. (2001). Fool's gold: Social proof in the initiation and abandonment of coverage by Wall Street analysts. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 46*(3): 502-526

445. Rashtchy, F., Kessler, A. M., Bieber, P. J., Shindler, N. H., Tzeng, J. C., 2007. The user revolution: The new advertising ecosystem and the rise of the internet as a mass medium. Piper Jaffray Investment Research, Minneapolis: MN.

446. Ravasi, D., Cornelissen, J., Rindova, V.P., & Etter, M. (2018). The formation of organizational reputation. *Academy of Management Annals, 12*: 574-599.

447. Regoniel, P.A. (2015). Conceptual Framework: A Step-by-Step Guide on How to Make One. Simply Educate. Me [online]. Available at: https://simplyeducate.me/2015/01/05/conceptual-framework- guide/ [accessed on 13 August 2021]

448. Rezaie, K., Byat, M., & Shirkouhi, S. N. (2009). Evaluating effective factors of implementing knowledge management based on FAHP method. In Modelling & Simulation, 2009. AMS'09. Third Asia International Conference on (pp. 398-403). IEEE.

449. Riahi-Belkaoui, A., & Pavlik, E. (1991). Asset management performance and reputation building for large US firms. *British Journal of Management, 2*: 231-238.

450. Rim, S., Amit, E., Fujita, K., Trope, Y., Halbeisen, G., & Algom, D. (2015). How words transcend and pictures immerse on the association between medium and level of construal. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 6*(2): 123-130.

451. Rindova, V.P. (1997). The image cascade and the dynamics of corporate reputations. *Corporate Reputation Review, 1*: 188-194.

452. Rindova, V.P. & Fombrun, C.J. (1999). Constructing competitive advantage: the role of firmconstituent interactions. *Strategic Management Journal, 20*(8): 691-710.

453. Rindova, V.P., Martins, L.L., Srinivas, S.B., & Chandler, D. (2017). The good, the bad, and the ugly of organizational rankings: A multidisciplinary review of the literature and directions for future research. *Journal of Management, 44*: 2175-2208.

454. Rindova, V.P., Pollock, T.G., & Hayward, M.L. (2006). Celebrity firms: The social construction of market popularity. *The Academy of Management Review, 31*(1): 50-71.

455. Rindova, V.P., Williamson, I.O., Petkova, A.P., & Sever, J.M. (2005). Being good or being known: an empirical examination of the dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of organizational reputation. *The Academy of Management Journal, 48*(6): 1033-1049.

456. Roberts, P.W., & Dowling, G.R. (2002). Corporate reputation and sustained superior performance. *Strategic Management Journal, 23*: 1077-1094.

457. Robinson, O.C. (2014). Sampling in interview-based qualitative research: A theoretical and practical guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 11*(1): 25-41.

458. Rokka, J., Karlsson, K., & Tienari, J. (2014). Balancing acts: Managing employees and reputation in social media. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *30*(7-8): 802-827.

459. Roper, S., & Fill, C. (2012). *Corporate reputation, brand and communication*. New York: Pearson Higher Ed.

460. Ryan, F., Coughlan, M., & Cronin, P. (2009). Interviewing in qualitative research: The one-to-one interview. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, *16*(6): 309-314.

461. Sarjana, S., Kartini, D., & Rufaidah, P. (2018). Reputation development strategy for corporate operating in industrial estate. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal, 17*: 1-11.

462. Sarkar, C., & Kotler, P. (2020). *Brand Activism from Purpose to Action* . London: IDEA BITE PRESS.

463. Sashi, C., 2012. Customer engagement, buyer-seller relationships, and social media. Manag. Decis. 50 (2), 253–272.

464. Sauder, M., & Fine, G.A. (2008). Arbiters, entrepreneurs, and the shaping of business school reputations. *Sociological Forum, 23*(4): 699-723.

465. Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2016). *Research methods for business students*. Essex: Pearson Education.

466. Schein, E.H. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

467. Schein, E.H. (2015). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.

468. Schwandt, (1998). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (pp. 221-259). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

469. Scott, D. (2011). *The new rules of marketing and PR: How to use social media, online video, mobile applications, blogs, news releases and viral marketing to reach buyers direct*. New York, NY: Wiley.

470. Sen, S., & Bhattacharya, C.B. (2001). Does doing good always lead to doing better? Consumer reactions to corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Marketing Research, 38*: 225-243.

471. Shamsie, J. (2003). The context of dominance: An industry-driven framework for exploiting reputation. *Strategic Management Journal, 24*(3): 199-215.

472. Shankar, V., Inman, J.J., Mantrala, M., Kelley, E., Rizley, R., 2011. Innovations in shopper marketing: Current insights and future research issues. J. Retail. 87, 29–42.

473. Shapira, N. A., Lessig, M. C., Goldsmith, T. D., Szabo, S. T., Lazoritz, M., Gold, M. S., and Stein,D. J. 2003. "Problematic Internet Use: Proposed Classification and Diagnostic Criteria," Depression and Anxiety (17:4), pp. 207-216.

474. Shapiro, C. (1983). Premiums for high quality products as returns to reputations. *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 98*(4): 659-679.

475. Shee, P.S.B., & Abratt, R. (1989). A new approach to the corporate image management process. *Journal of Marketing Management, 5*(1): 63-76.

476. Sheng, J., 2019. Being active in online communications: Firm responsiveness and customer engagement behaviour. J. Interact. Market. 46, 40–51.

477. Shenggao, Y. (2018). "WIC adds vitality to China's digital economy". Retrieved from http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201811/07/W_S5be2757ea310eff303287248.html [Accessed on 31 August, 2018].

478. Shirin, A., & Kleyn, N. (2017). An evaluation of the effects of corporate reputation on employee engagement: The case of a major bank in South Africa. *International Studies of Management & Organization, 47*(3), 276-292.

479. Shuttleworth, M. (2017). "Research bias". *Explorable*. Retrieved from: https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b15c/8b95eb663947ab93f35bf430d5646ffe1a4f.pdf [Accessed on 7 September, 2018].

480. Simões, C., & Dibb, S. (2002). Corporate identity management: Defining the construct. *Warwick Business School Research Papers, Number 350*: 36-38.

481. Sisson, D.C., & Bowen, S.A. (2017). Reputation management and authenticity: A case study of Starbucks' UK tax crisis and '#SpreadTheCheer' campaign. *Journal of Communication Management, 21*(3): 287-302.

482. Smith, A.E., & Humphreys, M.S. (2006). Evaluation of unsupervised semantic mapping of natural language with Leximancer concept mapping. *Behavior Research Methods, 38*: 262-279.

483. Smith, K.T., & Smith, L.M. (2019). Social media usage by law firms: Correlation to revenue, reputation, and practice areas. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, *40*(1): 66-81.

484. Smits, M., Mogos, S., 2013. The impact of social media on business performance. Information Systems, Utrecht.

485. Snowden, E. (2019). *Permanent record* (1st ed.). New York: Metropolitan Book.

486. Sobol, M.G., & Farrell, Y. (1988). Corporate reputation: a function of relative size or financial performance? *Review of Business and Economic Research, 24*(1): 45-59.

487. Solis, B. (2007). "Defining social media". [Online]. Available from: http://www.briansolis.com/2007/06/defining-social-media.html [Accessed on 6 April, 2018].

488. Solomon, M.R. (2003). *Conquering consumer space: Marketing strategies for a branded world*. New York: Amacom.

489. Song, S. (2019). "Africa telecoms infrastructure in 2018". [Online] Available at: https://manypossibilities.net/2019/01/african-telecommunications-infrastructure-in-2018/ [Accessed on 20 July, 2019].

490. Song, S., & Yoo, M. (2016). The role of social media during the pre-purchasing stage. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology, 7*(1): 84-99.

491. Sotiriadis, M.D., & van Zyl, C. (2013). Electronic word-of-mouth and online reviews in tourism services: the use of twitter by tourists. *Electronic Commerce Research, 13*(1): 103-124.

492. Spence, M. (1973). Job market signalling. *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 87*: 355-374.

493. Spencer, S., & Shandwick, W. (2010). "The rising CCO III". [Online] Available at: http://www.webershandwick.com/Default.aspx/Insights/ThoughtLeadership/ThoughtLeadership/2010/TheRisingCCOIIIOctober262010 [Accessed on 10 March, 2018].

494. Srivoravilai, N., Melewar, T.C., Liu, M.J., & Yannopoulou, N. (2011). Value marketing through corporate reputation: an empirical investigation of Thai hospitals. *Journal of Marketing Management, 27*(3/4): 243-268.

495. Standard. (2017, January 22). *www.thestandard.co.zw* . Retrieved from www.thestandard.co.zw: https://thestandard.newsday.co.zw/2017/01/22/data-pricing-crisis-nearly-floored-econet/

496. Statcounter (2019). "Social media Stats Zimbabwe May 2015 - Aug 2019". [Online] Available at: https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/zimbabwe/#monthly-201505-201908 [Accessed on 17 August, 2019].

497. Statcounter (2020). "Social media Stats Zimbabwe, June 2019-July 2020". [Online] Available at: https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/zimbabwe [Accessed on 29 July, 2020].

498. Staw, B.M., & Epstein, L.D. (2000). What bandwagons bring: effects of popular management techniques on corporate performance, reputation, and CEO pay. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 45*(3): 523-556.

499. Stokes, R. (2013). *eMarketing: The essential guide to marketing in a digital world* (5th ed.). Quirk eMarketing. Retrieved from: https://www.redandyellow.co.za/content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2017/10/emarketing_textbook_download.pdf [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

500. Stuart, H. (1999). Towards a definitive model of the corporate identity management process. *Corporate Communications Journal, 4*(4): 200-207.

501. Submarine Telecoms Forum (2018). "GITGE and Alcatel Submarine networks land submarine cable system linking Sao Tome to Annobon in Equatorial Guinea". Alcatel Submarine Networks Press Release. [Online] Available at: https://subtelforum.com/ gitge-asn-cable-sao-tome-annobon/ [Accessed on 20 July, 2019].

502. Swoboda, B., & Hirschmann, J. (2017), Perceptions and effects of cross-national corporate reputation: The role of Hofstede's cultural value approach. *International Marketing Review, 34*(6): 909-944.

503. Taylor, J.R., & Van Every, E.J. (2000). *The emergent organization: Communication at its site and surface*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

504. Taylor, S.E. (1981). The interface of cognitive and social psychology. *Cognition, Social Behavior and the Environment, 1*: 189-211.

505. Tazvivinga, L. (2019). "Internet shutdown disastrous for brand Zim". Zimbabwe Independent. [Online] Available at: https://www.theindependent.co.zw/2019/01/25/ internet-shutdown-disastrous-for-brand-zim/ [Accessed on 3 June, 2019].

506. TechZim. (2011, August 27). *www.techzim.co.zw*. Retrieved from www.techzim.co.zw: https://www.techzim.co.zw/2011/08/telone-responds-to-allegations-of-mismanagement/

507. TechZim. (2019, October 22). *www.techzim.co.zw* . Retrieved from www.techzim.co.zw: https://www.techzim.co.zw/2019/10/crisis-communication-is-not-just-for-corporates-the-zimbabwe-gender-commissions-missed-opportunity/

508. TechZim. (2021, December 3). *www.techzim.co.zw*. Retrieved from www.techzim.co.zw: https://www.techzim.co.zw/2021/12/getting-subpar-performance-on-econet-theyre-not-to-blame-mostly/

509. Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2010) "Overview of contemporary issues in mixed methods research". In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddie (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 1-41). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

510. Teddlie, C., & Yu, F. (2007). Mixed methods sampling: A typology with examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*: 77-100.

511. Telegeography . (2020, October 7). *www.telegeography.com*. Retrieved from www.telegeography.com: https://blog.telegeography.com/trouble-for-telcos-in-zimbabwe

512. Tennie, C., Frith, U., & Frith, C.D. 2010. Reputation management in the age of the world-wide web. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 14*(11): 482-488.

513. The Daily News (2017). "Outrage over mobile data tariffs hike". [Online] Available at: https://dailynews.co.zw/articles-2017-01-12-outrage-over-mobile-data-tariffs-hike/ [Accessed on 17 March, 2018].

514. The Economist (2019). "A global timepass economy: How the pursuit of leisure drives internet use". [Online] Available at: https://www.economist.com/briefing/ 2019/06/08/ how-the-pursuit-of-leisure-drives-internet-use [Accessed on 2 August, 2019].

515. The Harris Poll (2020). "Understanding the power behind today's leading brands". [Online] Available at: https://theharrispoll.com/equitrend/ [Accessed on 5 April, 2020].

516. The Herald (2017). "Potraz riled by quality of service". [Online] Available at: https://www.herald.co.zw/ potraz-riled-by-quality-of-service/ [Accessed on 17 March, 2018].

517. The Huffington Post (2009). "United breaks guitars: Did it really cost the airline $180 million?" [Online] Available at: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/united-breaks-guitars-did_n_244357 [Accessed on 6 April, 2018].

518. The Nielsen Company (2012). *Nielsen report: Global trust in advertising and brand messages*. Retrieved from: https://retelur.files.wordpress.com/2007/10/global-trust-in-advertising-2012.pdf [Accessed on 4 April, 2018].

519. The Standard (2020). "Does 1Gig of data cost US$75 in Zimbabwe?" [Online] Available at: https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2020/01/26/1gig-data-cost-us75-zimbabwe/ [Accessed on 3 August, 2020].

520. Thiessen, A., & Ingenhoff, D. (2011). Safeguarding reputation through strategic, integrated and situational crisis communication management: Development of the integrative model of crisis communication. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 16*: 8-26.

521. Tilly, R., Posegga, O., Fischbach, K., Schoder, D., 2017. Towards a conceptualization of data and information quality in social information systems. Busin. Informat. Syst. Eng. 59 (1), 3–21.

522. Tinhu, S. (2016). "#Zimshutdown2016 and the new protest politics taking root in Zimbabwe". The Guardian. [Online] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/ world/2016/jul/08/zimshutdown2016-and-the-new-protest-politics-taking-root-in-zimbabwe [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

523. Tobin, G.A., & Begley, C.M. (2004). Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 48*: 388-396.

524. Turban, D.B., & Greening, D.W. (1997). Corporate social performance and organizational attractiveness to prospective employees. *Academic Management Journal, 40*(3): 658-672.

525. Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. *Science, 185*: 1124-1131.

526. United Nations. (2020). "Covid 19 Response: General FAQs". [Online]. Available at: www.un.org: https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/covid-19-faqs [Accessed on 11 July, 2020].

527. Van Kersbergen, K., & van Waarden, F. (2004). Governance as a bridge between disciplines: Cross-disciplinary inspiration regarding shifts in governance and problems of governability, accountability and legitimacy. *European Journal of Political Research, 43*: 143-171.

528. Van Riel, C.B. (1997). Research in corporate communication: An overview of an emerging field. *Management Communication Quarterly, 11*(2): 288-309.

529. Van Riel, C.B. & Fombrun, C.J. (2007). *Essentials of corporate communication: Implementing practices for effective reputation management* (1st ed.). London: Routledge.

530. Van Riel, C.B., & Balmer, J.M. (1997). Corporate identity: the concept, its measurement and management. *European journal of marketing, 31*(5/6), 340-355.

531. van Zoonen, W., and S. Banghart. 2018. "Talking Engagement into Being: A Three-Wave Panel Study Linking Boundary Management Preferences, Work Communication on Social Media, and Employee Engagement." Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication 23 (5): 278–293.

532. van Zoonen, W., J. W. Verhoeven, and R. Vliegenthart. 2016. "Social Media's Dark Side: Inducing Boundary Conflicts." Journal of Managerial Psychology 31 (8): 1297–1311.

533. Veh, A., Göbel, M., & Vogel, R. (2018). Corporate reputation in management research: A review of the literature and assessment of the concept. *Business Research, 12*: 315-353.

534. Velamuri, S.R., Venkataraman, S., & Harvey, W.S. (2017). Seizing the ethical high ground: ethical reputation building in corrupt environments. *Journal of Management Studies, 54*(5): 647-675.

535. Vella K.J., & Melewar T.C. (2008). "Explicating the relationship between identity and culture: A multi-perspective conceptual model". In T.C. Melewar (Ed.), *Facets of Corporate Identity, Communication and Reputation* (pp. 3-34). London: Routledge.

536. Verčič, A.T., Verčič, D., & Žnidar, K. (2016). Exploring academic reputation: Is it a multidimensional construct? *Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 21*(2): 160-176.

537. Vernuccio, M. (2018). Communicating corporate brands through social media: An exploratory study. *International Journal of Business Communication*, *51*(3): 211-233.

538. Vollmer, C., Precourt, G., 2008. Always on: Advertising, marketing, and media in an era of consumer control. McGraw Hill Professional, New York.

539. Vuori, M.I., 2012. Exploring uses of social media in a global corporation. J. Syst. Informat. Technol. 14 (2), 155–170.

540. Waddock, S. (2000). The multiple bottom lines of corporate citizenship: Social investing, reputation, and responsibility audits. *Business and Society Review, 105*(3): 323-345.

541. Wahyuni, D. (2012). The research design maze: Understanding paradigms, cases, methods and methodologies. *Journal of Applied Management Accounting Research, 10*(1): 69-80.

542. Walsh, G., & Beatty, S.E. (2007). Customer-based corporate reputation of a service firm: Scale development and validation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 35*(1): 127-143.

543. Walsh, G., Dinnie, K., & Wiedmann, K.-P. (2006). How do corporate reputation and customer satisfaction impact customer defection? A study of private energy customers in Germany. *Journal of Services Marketing, 20*(6): 412-420.

544. Walsh, G., Schaarschmidt, M., & Ivens, S. (2017). Effects of customer-based corporate reputation on perceived risk and relational outcomes: empirical evidence from gender moderation in fashion retailing. *Journal of Product and Brand Management, 26*(3): 227-238.

545. Wang, L., Schuetz, C.G., Cai, D., 2020b. Choosing response strategies in social media crisis communication: An evolutionary game theory perspective. Informat Manage. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2020.103371.

546. Wang, P., Li, H., Liu, Y., 2020a. Disentangling the factors driving electronic word-of-mouth use through a configurational approach. Inter. Res.

547. Wartick, S.L. (1992). The relationship between intense media exposure and change in corporate reputation. *Business & Society, 31*(1): 33-49.

548. Watson, T. (2011). Ethnography, reality, and truth: the vital need for studies of 'how things work' in organizations and management. *Journal of Management Studies, 48*: 202-217.

549. Weber, L. (2009). *Marketing to the social web: How digital customer communities build your business*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.

550. Weigelt, K., & Camerer, C. (1988). Reputation and corporate strategy: A review of recent theory and application. *Strategic Management Journal, 9*(5): 443-454.

551. Welborn, L., Cilliers, J., & Kwasi, S. (2019). *Great Zimbabwe: Alternative prospects to 2040*. Institute for Security Studies Southern Africa Report 23. Retrieved from: https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Great_Zimbabwe_Alternative_prospects.pdf [Accessed on 7 September, 2019].

552. Whetten, D. (1997). Theory development and the study of corporate reputation. *Corporate Reputation Review, 1*(1–2): 26-34.

553. Whetten, D.A., & Mackey, A. (2002). A social actor conception of organizational identity and its implications for the study of organizational reputation. *Business & Society, 41*(4): 393-414.

554. Woodward, J.L., & Roper, E. (1951). The effective public for plant–community public relations effort. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 15*(4), 624-634.

555. World Bank (2017). *Zimbabwe economic update: Changing growth patterns -Improving health outcomes.* World Bank Group. Retrieved from: http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/184441468195017068/pdf/103061-WP-P155915-Box394849B-PUBLIC-Zimbawbe-Economic-Update-Single-Pages-FINAL-ONLINE-30-01-2016.pdf [Accessed on 28 March, 2018].

556. Worthington, I., & Britton, C. (2006). *The business environment.* Essex: Pearson Education Unlimited.

557. Wright, D.K., & Hinson, M.F. (2013). An updated examination of social and emerging media use in public relations practice: A longitudinal analysis between 2006 and 2013. *Public Relations Journal, 7*(3): 1-39.

558. Wright, E., Khanfar, N.M., Harrington, C., Kizer, L.E., 2010. The lasting effects of social media trends on advertising. J. Busin. Econom. Res. 8 (11), 73–80.

559. Xiang, Z., & Gretzel, U. (2010). Role of social blogs in online travel information search. *Tourism Management*, *31*(2): 179-188.

560. Xiong, F., & Mackenzie, K. (2015). The business use of Twitter by Australian listed companies. *The Journal of Developing Areas, 49*(6): 421-428.

561. Yang, Fiona X. 2020. "Social media Friending in Building Coworker Guanxi: A Study in the Hotel Industry." *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 84. doi: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.10.020.

562. Yeh, Y.H., & Choi, S.M. (2011). MINI-lovers, maxi-mouths: An investigation of antecedents to eWOM intention among brand community members. *Journal of Marketing Communications, 17*(3): 145-162.

563. YMarketingMatters (2019). "Twitter basics: How to get started on Twitter for business". [Online] Available at: https://ymarketingmatters.com/twitter-basics-how-to-get-started-on-twitter/ [Accessed on 7 September, 2019].

564. Yoon, E., Guffey, H.J., & Kijewski, V. (1993). The effects of information and company reputation on intentions to buy a business service. *Journal of Business Research, 27*(3): 215-28.

565. Zameer, H., Wang, Y., Yasmeen, H., Mofrad, A.A., & Waheed, A. (2018). Corporate image and customer satisfaction by virtue of employee engagement. *Human Systems Management, 37*(2): 233-248.

566. Zavyalova, A., Pfarrer, M.D., Reger, R.K., & Hubbard, T. (2016). Reputation as a benefit and a burden? How stakeholders' organizational identification affects the role of reputation following a negative event. *Academy of Management Journal, 59*(1): 253-276.

567. Zerfass, A., & Viertmann, C. (2017). Creating business value through corporate communication: A theory-based framework and its practical application. *Journal of Communication Management*, *21*(1): 1-15.

568. Zerfass, A., Fink, S., & Linke, A. (2011). "Social media governance: Regulatory frameworks as drivers of success in online communications". In L. Men & M. Dodd (Eds.), *Pushing the envelope in public relations theory and research and advancing practice, 14th International Public Relations Research Conference* (pp. 1026-1047). Gainesville, FL: Institute for Public Relations.

569. Zerfass, A., Verčič, D., Verhoeven, P., Moreno, A., & Tench, R. (2012). *European Communication Monitor 2012. Challenges and Competencies for Strategic Communication*. Results of an Empirical Survey in 42 Countries. Brussels: EACD, EUPRERA.

570. Zhang, X., L. Ma, B. Xu, and F. Xu. 2019. "How Social Media Usage Affects Employees' Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention: An Empirical Study in China." Information & Management 56 (6): 103–136.

571. Zhang, Y., & Wiersema, M.F. (2009). Stock market reaction to CEO certification: The signaling role of CEO background. *Strategic Management Journal, 30*(7): 693-710.

572. Zhangaza, T. (2018). "Social media and Zimbabwe's 2018 election". Newsday. [Online] Available at: https://www.newsday.co.zw/2018/06/social-media-and-zimbabwes-2018-election/ [Accessed on 1 July, 2018].

573. Zhelyazkov, P.I., & Gulati, R. (2016). After the break-up: The relational and reputational consequences of withdrawals from venture capital syndicates. *Academy of Management Journal, 59*(1): 277-301.

574. Zimbabwe All Media and Products Survey (ZAMPS) (2017). Pindula. Retrieved from: https://www.pindula.co.zw/Zimbabwe_All_Media_and_Products_Survey [Accessed on 5 June, 2018].

575. Zohrabi, M. (2013). Mixed method research: instruments, validity, reliability and reporting findings. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 3:* 254-262.

576. Zook, M.A., & Graham, M. (2007). The creative reconstruction of the internet: Google and the privatization of cyberspace and DigiPlace. *Geoforum, 38*(6): 1322-1343.

577. Zwinoira, T. (2017). "Zim data costs nightmare". The Standard. [Online] Available at: https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2017/01/15/zim-data-costs-nightmare/ [Accessed on 1 July, 2018].

578. Zyglidopoulos, S., & Phillips, N. (1999). Responding to reputational crises: A stakeholder perspective. *Corporate Reputation Review, 2*(4): 333-350.

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

QUESTIONNAIRE

DBA Research Project

Researcher: Tabani Moyo (00263772266430)

Supervisor: Dr Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)

:Dr Emmanuel Mutambara (0312608318)

Research Office: Ms P Ximba (0312603587)

Section A

Age

What is your age range?

18 – 30 ☐   ☐1 – 40   ☐41 – 50   ☐ 51 – 60   6☐nd above

Education level

What is your education level?

☐

Secondary education

☐

Diploma

☐

Undergraduate Degree

Masters Degree   ☐

Doctorate ☐

Gender

Male ☐

Female ☐

Industry type

Which of the sectors below do you work in?

Postal Services ☐

Fixed Voice ☐

Courier Services ☐

Mobile Services ☐

Internet Access Provider ☐

Section B

Twitter as an effective media in corporate reputation

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.Twitter is effective in displaying and communicating an attractive heading to the recipients					

2. Users of Twitter have an advantage to craft a message that is easily understood by the recipients with regards to corporate reputation				
3. It is easy to frame news using Twitter when intending to improve on corporate reputation				
4.Issue to do with corporate reputation can easily reach the audiences using Twitter				

Section C

Top level management and Twitter

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. The vision of the organization is imparted to the organization and external stakeholders using Twitter as compared to any other media platform					
2. Twitter helps in crafting of strategic goals for top level					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
management as compared to other forms of media					
3. Formulation of strategic goals in relation to corporate reputation can be enhanced using Twitter as compared to other forms of media					
4.Strategic coordination of ideas can be achieved using Twitter for improved corporate reputation compared to other blogosphere					

Section D

Customers and Twitter

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.Customer can easily interact with the organization on any issues using Twitter more than any other blogosphere					
2. Customers can inform the business on their complains using twitter than any other blog					

3. Feedback for any requests by the customers can be received using Twitter than any other platform					
4.ICustomers can shape corporate reputations through their actions on Twitter					
5. Customers have improved word of mouth on corporate reputation using twitter than any other form of social media					
6. Customers can interact with any level of the organization using Twitter than any other blogosphere					
7. Customers can discuss their concerns with the owners of the business using Twitter than any other form of blogs					

Section E

Please respond to the question below.

Which of the following forms of media is most effective in managing corporate reputation more than Twitter					
None	Facebook	YouTube	Instagram	LinkedIn	Any other (Please specify)

Section F

Which of the media can improve the factors listed below in relation to positive corporate reputation?

Corporate Reputation Issues	Twitter	Facebook	LinkedIn	YouTube	Instagram
1.Conversations					
2.Word of Mouth					
3.Referrals					
4.Visual displays					
5.Audio exchange					

6.Hybrid text					
7.Global coverage					

Which other factors affects corporate reputation in the industry?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

INTERVIEW GUIDE

DBA Research Project

Researcher: Tabani Moyo (00263772266430)

Supervisor: Dr Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)

:Dr Emmanuel Mutambara (0312608318)

Research Office: Ms P Ximba (0312603587)

1. Twitter can be used to improve corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry. Do you agree? Please comment further

_____

_____
_____

_____

_____
_____

2. Do you use Twitter in managing the reputation of your organization? If yes, how?

_____

3. Do all members of your organization know about Twitter as an effective tool for building positive corporate reputation management?

4. Do you take Twitter as an effective tool for improved corporate reputation management compared to any other form of blogs? If yes, how/why?

_____

_____

_____

5. Which other form of blogosphere do you think will help in improving corporate reputation?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. What are the advantages of using Twitter as of establishing corporate reputation

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. What are the challenges of using Twitter as a tool for improved corporate reputation management?

8. Do customers use Twitter to interact with your organization at any level of management?

9. Do you provide information for your customers using Twitter?

10. Do customers comment about your organization using Twitter? If yes, with regards to which specific issues?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. Do you provide instant feedback to your customers using Twitter?

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. How often do you post issues of your organization on Twitter?

_____

_____

13. Any further comments?

APPENDIX 3: GATEKEEPER'S LETTER

MINISTRY OF
INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY, POSTAL AND COURIER SERVICES

REF:

TELEPHONE: +263-4-706446
FAX: +263-4-763016
E-MAIL: ministryict@zarnet.ac.zw

Zimbabwe

SECRETARY'S OFFICE
INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
AND COURIER SERVICES
PRIVATE BAG CY419, CAUSEWAY
7TH FLOOR, BANK CHAMBERS BUILDING
76 SAMORA MACHEL AVE
HARARE

15 November 2018

Dr Muhammed Hoque
Academic Leader: Higher Degrees and Research
Graduate School of Business and Leadership
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville Campus

RE: CONFIRMATION OF TABANI MOYO'S RESEARCH TOPIC'S IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE TO THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR INDUSTRY IN ZIMBABWE

The above matter refers.

It gives me the pleasure to inform you that the proposed study by one of your students, Tabani Moyo, student number **218081273**, is a strategic study which is not only relevant to the industry but focuses on one of the critical areas that the Government of Zimbabwe is investing heavily in as a possible driver of the national economy.

The proposed topic: *The effect of Twitter as a social blog on corporate reputation management in the telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe* is a unique study which in a way is pioneering on the student's part as he seeks to unravel the complex concepts, which should be addressed by the industry players in order to retain competitive edge. Telecommunications is a cutthroat industry, which has the hazard of players competing on price as opposed to innovation. In such an intense competition, the players in the sector would be better positioned to compete if they are riding on solid corporate reputation. Unfortunately, this is no longer as straight forward a proposition as it used to be in the traditional communications era. The digital age exposes the reputation of the players to a very complex process in managing the same.

My ministry is the apex body that defines the regulatory framework for the telecommunications and ICT sector in which the study is anchored as a case study. As the parent Ministry and on behalf of the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), we are committed to assist the researcher in any way possible including granting him assess to interviews within both the ministry and the industry.

We do so, in the full understanding that in the knowledge economy policies and industry decisions are made from a well informed position which ultimately makes the industry competitive and sustainable. This is critical as we enter the fourth industrial revolution which is led by technological developments. Having noted the forgoing, my ministry, on behalf of the Government of Zimbabwe and the telecommunications industry, cannot overstate the importance of such a research topic and do hereby wish the researcher and your esteemed institution the very best.

PERMANENT SECRETARY'S OFFICE
Ministry of Information Communication
Technology & Cyber Security
7th Floor, Bank Chambers Building

1 5 NOV 2018

76, Samora Machel Avenue
Private Bag CY 419, Causeway, Harare
Tel: 04-706 446
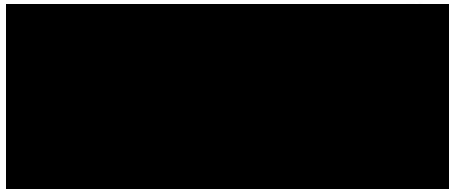
Eng. Samuel M Kundishora (Dr)
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Information Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services

APPENDIX 4: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Informed Consent

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

DBA Research Project
Researcher: Tabani Moyo (00263772266430)
Supervisor: Dr Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)
:Dr Emmanuel Mutambara (0312608318)
Research Office: Ms P Ximba (0312603587)
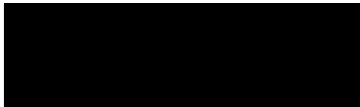
Dear Respondent,

I, Tabani Moyo am a Doctor in Business Administration (DBA) student, at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: "The effect of *Twitter* as a social blog on corporate reputation management in the telecommunication industry in Zimbabwe". The aim of this study is to determine how *Twitter* can be used as a social blog in order to improve corporate reputation of organisations operating in Zimbabwe's telecommunications industry.

Through your participation I hope to understand the relationship between *Twitter* and corporate reputation management for telecommunications industry in Zimbabwe. The results of the interviews and questionnaires are intended to contribute to new knowledge through both practical and theoretical/conceptual modeling towards management of Corporate Reputation in the age of new media.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this interview or completing the questionnaire. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the interview or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisors at the numbers listed above. The interview should take about 45 minutes to an hour, and the questionnaire about 10-15 minutes to complete. I hope you will take the time to participate.

Sincerely

Investigator's signature ███████████████ Date___ 21 June 2019

APPENDIX 5: CONSENT FORM

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

DBA Research Project
Researcher: Tabani Moyo (00263772266430)
Supervisor: Dr Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)
:Dr Emmanuel Mutambara (0312608318)
Research Office: Ms P Ximba (0312603587)

CONSENT

I……………………………………………………………………….(full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby consent/do not consent to record the interview.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

………………………………………………………………………………………………………

APPENDIX 6: ETHICAL APPROVAL FROM UKZN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE AND AMENDMENT

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

21 February 2019

Mr Tabani Moyo (218081273)
Graduate School of Business & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Moyo,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0069/019D
Project title: The effect of *Twitter* as a social blog on corporate reputation management in the telecommunication industry in Zimbabwe

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 18 January 2019, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL.**

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

███████████████ ....

Dr Shamila Naidoo (Deputy Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches and Dr Emmanuel Mutambara
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Muhammad Hoque
cc School Administrator: Ms Zarina Bullyraj

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

29 June 2020

Mr Tabani Moyo (218081273)
Graduate School of Business & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Moyo,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0069/019D
Project title: The effect of *Twitter* as a social blog on corporate reputation management in the telecommunication industry in Zimbabwe

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 11 May 2020 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in Co-Supervisor (New Co-Supervisor: Dr Upasana Singh)

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd
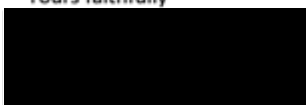
Cc Supervisor: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches and Dr Upasana Singh
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Muhammad Hoque
cc School Administrator: Ms Zarina Bullyraj

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/
Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood   ■ Howard College   ■ Medical School   ■ Pietermaritzburg   ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

302

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL ™
INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

12 October 2020

Mr Tabani Moyo (218081273)
Graduate School of Business & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Moyo,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0069/019D
Project title: The effect of Twitter as a social blog on corporate reputation management in the telecommunication industry in Zimbabwe

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 22 September 2020 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in Supervisor (New Supervisor: Dr Emmanuel Mutambara (additional Co-supervisor)

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd
Cc Supervisor: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches, Dr Upasana Singh and Dr Emmanuel Mutambara
cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Muhammad Hoque
cc School Administrator: Ms Zarina Bullyraj

INSPIRING GREATNESS