

The use of social media by organisations when engaging with their online  
community: The collective storytelling phenomenon



By

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the **Degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy in Information Systems**

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**January, 2016**

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# Social media in organisations: Finding ways to make it work



*“The power of the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) as articulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is generating a grounded theory through which researchers are able to close the gap between formal abstract theories and detailed sociological studies; reducing the danger of researchers being guided by formal theories that are too abstract” (Urquhart, 2013, p. 131).*

# Declaration

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## Acknowledgements

To my heavenly father, for the guidance and the flashes of inspiration when I felt most lost; staying positive and believing that all the individual parts will eventually come together. Thank you for your blessings.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the following people:

First and foremost, I would like to say a big thank you to Professor Irwin Brown. As my supervisor, I really appreciated all your support and guidance. Having you in my corner and willing me along made my PhD journey easier. May God bless you abundantly.

Professor Cathy Urquhart a well-respected Grounded Theorist and IS academic. I had the unbelievable privilege to attend and be mentored by Professor Urquhart at the Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS) 2014 Doctoral Consortium. A big thank you for all your constructive feedback and guidance on how to improve my research study. The sessions together had an invaluable impact on my research.

All Grounded Theorists who wrote and are writing academic books and papers on grounded theory methodology and methods. Your academic writing was a great source of inspiration to me throughout my PhD journey. Thank you.

Thank you to the University of Cape Town (UCT) and UCT IS academics for the support throughout my PhD journey. Your feedback on my research study was much appreciated. I am grateful for the financial assistance, without which I would not have been able to pursue my PhD study.

Thank you to Professor Ojelanki Ngwenyama who is a visiting professor at UCT and each year takes PhD students through two programmes: (1) The Philosophy of Science, and (2) Data Analysis and Theory Development. These engagement opportunities with Professor Ojelanki were very helpful in equipping me with the academic tools needed to conduct my research study.

Thank you to the staff of the doctoral degrees board for their continued support.

Thank you to all the individuals who participated in this study, your valued contribution made this research study possible.

Last but not least: To my loving family for sticking with me, through all the ups and downs. I am eternally grateful for your unconditional support.

## ABSTRACT

The pervasive nature and use of social media has transformed society and this transformation has attracted significant attention from both industry and academia. The organisational implementation and use of social media are plagued with many challenges, leaving managers frustrated at not achieving the desired results. This emergent and complex nature of the social media phenomenon requires researchers to consider novel approaches when conducting social media research. As the number of Information Systems (IS) researchers conducting research on the social media phenomenon increases, so too does the need to develop relevant and rigorous social media theories. This challenge must be addressed by IS researchers who are contemplating, or are busy conducting research on the social media phenomenon. My PhD thesis responds to the call made by academics and practice for the development of relevant and rigorous social media theories, with the aim of providing a better explanation than what is currently found in the social media literature on social media use within an organisational context.

Owing to the emergent nature of the social media phenomenon, the grounded theory method (GTM) is used to develop a substantive theory that increases understanding of this particular phenomenon. Two organisations are selected as the case studies. Both are industry leaders in South Africa, with one being a prominent retailer with a very visible social media presence and the other, being a leading university in South Africa, which is actively growing its social media presence.

The results show that organisations enter into a collective storytelling process with their online community. Risk to reputation and the need for online community engagement are identified as reasons for this. Organisations using social media need to be aware of the following conditions that impact on social media use: (1) the social media landscape, (2) the characteristics of social media for use, (3) the relationship between content and social media, (4) content quality, (5) the online community-organisation power dynamic, and (6) the provision of a seamless online experience for the community. Challenges during the collective storytelling process lead to organisations experiencing social media use failures. To overcome these failures, organisations implement education interventions. An evolving supportive social media strategy that provides formal guidelines for social media use ultimately leads to a reduction in the organisational risk to reputation and an improvement in online community engagement, initially identified as the reasons why organisations decide to use social media. The main theoretical contribution is the development of a holistic theoretical framework using the GTM to better explain social media use within organisations when engaging with their online community.

**Keywords:** social media, digital content, engagement, organisations, online community, grounded theory methodology, collective storytelling.

Zane Davids, Cape Town, January 2016

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# Chapter 1 - Introduction

## 1.1. Setting the context of the research problem

Social media, use offers new ways for an organisation to engage and build relationships with its employees and online community (Akar & Topcu, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Organisations, however, are still experiencing challenges in terms of how to use social media platforms effectively within an organisational context (Vuori, 2012). Business value is not generated by the social media platform itself, but by how effectively organisations use these platforms (Culnan, McHugh & Zubillaga, 2010).

Organisational implementation and use of social media are plagued with many challenges (Denning, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Noone, McGuire & Rohlf, 2011). These challenges leave managers frustrated at not achieving the desired results from implementation (Fitzgerald, Kruschwitz, Bonnet & Welch, 2014). Key challenges include: (1) who to make responsible for social media activities within the organisation (Denning, 2010), (2) how to integrate social media across organisational functions (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour, 2011), (3) how to measure the effectiveness of social media implementations and their performance, (4) the inability to control the content being shared by the public on social media (Harrigan, 2011; Pike, Bateman & Butler, 2013; Saldanha & Krishnan, 2012), and (5) identification of the best management structure to facilitate social media use within an organisation (Kunz & Hackworth, 2011; Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Although research studies on the social media phenomenon are increasing, there has been limited research into organisation-wide management and use of social media. These few studies are further constrained by being narrow in focus and examining single aspects linked to social media, such as: (1) knowledge management (Levy, 2013), (2) adopting social media platforms (Ratliff & Kunz, 2014), (3) a focus on how individual platforms differ in use, but not on how the functionality can be applied across the departments of an organisation (Fuchs-Kittowski, Klassen, Faust & Einhaus, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and (4) industry-specific issues which affect the generalisability of the research results (Nah & Saxton, 2012). This makes conducting research into the organisational use of social media an important, compelling and interesting proposition.

## 1.2. The purpose of the research study

Social media adoption and use by organisations has brought about new and exciting challenges in Information Systems (IS) for both academics and practitioners (Kane, Alavi, Labianca & Borgatti, 2012a). The emergent and complex nature of the social media phenomenon has created a need for researchers to consider novel approaches when conducting social media research. As the number of IS

researchers conducting research on the social media phenomenon increases, so too does the need for developing relevant and rigorous social media theories. This challenge must be addressed by IS researchers who are contemplating or are busy conducting research on the social media phenomenon (Albert & Salam, 2013; Urquhart & Vaast, 2012; Vaast & Walsham, 2013).

Baskerville and Myers (2002) and Markus and Saunders (2007) identify theory development as a key requirement to further develop the IS field. The Grounded Theory Method (GTM) answers this call by providing researchers with a theoretical toolset through which researchers can build IS theories (Seidel & Urquhart, 2013; Urquhart, 2013; Urquhart & Fernandez, 2006, 2013; Urquhart, Lehmann & Myers, 2010). The IS discipline is well-situated to theorise about the social media phenomenon. IS researchers are unique in understanding both the technical and the social/ human dimensions of the dynamics related to social media. This uniqueness is underpinned by the many years IS researchers have investigated the challenges associated with Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in organisations and society (Orlikowski, 2007; Urquhart & Vaast, 2012; Vaast & Walsham, 2013). IS researchers theorising about the phenomenon such as social media will positively impact on the relevance of the IS discipline to practitioners (Straub & Ang, 2011).

My research study responds to the call for the development of relevant and rigorous social media theories with the aim of providing a better explanation than what is currently found on social media use within an organisational context. The purpose of this research study is thus to: (1) explore the use of social media within an organisational context, and (2) understand how this use impacts on the engagement process between the organisation and its online community. This research purpose is reflected in the core research question of “*How do organisations use social media when engaging with their online community?*” The development of a holistic theoretical framework through the use of the GTM that addresses the research question is intended to shed more light on how best to use social media within an organisational context for engagement with its online community. Prior to formulating this research question, a review of the extant literature on the social media phenomenon was conducted. Engagement with the current discourse on the social media phenomenon assisted in uncovering the research problem related to the social media phenomenon (Dey, 1999; Andrews, 2006).

### 1.3. The research objectives

The following are the research objectives of the study:

- To document how social media are used within an organisational context, with the focus on the engagement processes.
- To understand and explain how the use of social media within an organisational context influences engagement processes that occur between an organisation and its online community.
- To determine how social media can effectively support the engagement processes that occur between an organisation and its online community.

- To provide a set of suggestions for organisations on how best to use social media when engaging with their online community.

#### 1.4. The importance of the research study

Social media are changing how people work and relate to one another (Urquhart & Vaast, 2012). Consumers want to be socially engaged. The challenge is how organisations can facilitate interactions that generate value for these consumers. It is insufficient for organisations to just have an online profile. Organisations must find ways to improve their online presence to generate a sense of ‘stickiness’ associated with the organisation and increase customer loyalty (Zhang, Guo, Hu & Liu, 2017).

In online environments, user participation is unconstrained and the online community can freely spread both positive and negative opinions about an organisation. A single negative online review about an organisation can cause reputational damage (Aula, 2010; Tripp & Gregoire, 2011). Being able to effectively manage the fallout from negative social media reviews has been recognised by organisations as a significant challenge (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012). Poor and inadequate social media training is still negatively affecting the adoption and use of social media within an organisational context. This challenge is exacerbated by limited funding allocated to social media initiatives (Chung, Andreev, Benyoucef, Duane & O’Reilly, 2017).

Organisational use of social media has both positive and negative consequences. It is imperative for IS researchers to conduct research that addresses both the positive and the negative aspects associated with the organisational use of social media. Additionally, it is important to provide explanations and resolutions for the challenges associated with social media use that will enable growth in effective social media use (Ngai, Tao & Moon, 2015).

The current research will add value by providing a better explanation of social media use in an organisational context, both extending the academic knowledge and providing practical and relevant insights for organisations and IS professionals who are using social media or are planning on using social media as an engagement tool. The main theoretical contribution will be a theoretical framework that better explains social media use within an organisation when engaging with their online community. Owing to the emergent nature of the social media phenomenon, GTM will be used to develop a substantive theory that will increase the understanding of this particular phenomenon. Grounded theory as a methodology is well-suited to developing new, substantial theories that are grounded in the empirical observations of electronically mediated social contexts, making sense of the processes emerging out of them (Vaast & Walsham, 2013). The GTM will help facilitate the move from describing a phenomenon towards the theoretical understanding of the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008). The contribution to practice will be a set of suggestions for organisations on how best to use social media when engaging with their online community.

## 1.5. Summary of chapters to follow

The chapters that follow contain a discussion of how my research study proceeded. The thesis is organised into six chapters, a reference list and appendices.

Chapter 1: Outlines the context to the research problem, the purpose for conducting the research, the research objectives and the importance of conducting the research study.

Chapter 2: Focuses on the literature review related to the research problem with the aim of building a tentative conceptual framework to provide some guidance for the study.

Chapter 3: Contains a discussion on GTM as the research methodology followed in the research study and describes how the study was conducted.

Chapter 4: The research results are discussed in detail with the supporting analysis underpinned by the GTM coding procedures. Additionally, data is analysed for process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008) which is an essential step in the theory building process.

Chapter 5: Compares my resultant theory with existing theories in the field. The aim is to ‘scale up the theory’ by integrating the resultant theory with those theories existing in the field and discussing how my theory confirms, extends or contradicts existing theories (Urquhart, 2013).

Chapter 6: Provides the conclusion, focusing on the contribution made by the research study (Theoretical, Methodological and Practical), evaluating the theory contribution made (Urquhart et al., 2010; Whetten, 1989), and highlighting the research limitations and future research opportunities.

# Chapter 2 – Literature Review

## 2.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on scanning the literature on social media to develop theoretical sensitivity concerning the phenomenon under investigation. Additionally, the chapter focuses on developing a tentative conceptual framework that both informs and supports the research study, as it gives direction to the research design. It signifies what is going on with the phenomenon being studied and helps to justify the research. The next section discusses the role of literature reviews in GTM studies. The subsequent sections elaborate on the following emergent themes, i.e. social media definitions, social media use in organisations, digital content, community engagement and social media strategy respectively. Finally, the conceptual framework will be visually presented reflecting the main ideas that emerged from the literature review and the relationships amongst these ideas.

## 2.2. Conducting literature reviews in grounded theory methodology studies

There is a misconception that the GTM researcher is a “*blank slate*” who moves onto data collection without first engaging with the literature (Andrews, 2006; McCallin, 2003). The root of this misconception can be found in the misinterpretation of the statement made by Glaser and Strauss (1967) that the researcher must set aside the extant theory. This tenet does not mean that GTM researchers must become a *tabula rasa* by ignoring existing literature. On the contrary, central to GTM is the use of systematic procedures, analytical skills and theoretical sensitivity to rigorously generate theory (Urquhart & Fernandez, 2006, 2013). Literature reviews can serve to enhance theoretical sensitivity and provide a theoretical perspective through which to extract the most important categories from the data.

GTM researchers achieve this theoretical perspective by phasing their review of the literature (Andrews, 2006; Martin, 2006; McCallin, 2003). The first phase, reported in this chapter, is referred to as the non-committal literature review in which the researcher develops theoretical sensitivity by scanning the literature. During this time, the researcher is also illuminating the research problem and learning about the grounded theory methodology. The second phase of literature review is focused on integration where the emergent theory is compared with extant theories. By making this comparison the researcher contextualises the new theory within the existing knowledge making the substantive theory more valuable. The relevance of the literature is determined by the generated grounded theory and not the other way around (Urquhart & Fernandez, 2006, 2013).

The search for related literature focused primarily on full-text academic studies (Bandara, Miskon & Fielt, 2011). As social media studies are being conducted across different disciplines, the search captured articles from different disciplines (Ngai & Wat, 2002), which is common when studying

contemporary IS phenomenon (Sabherwal, Jeyaraj & Chowa, 2006). The definition of social media appeared varied in the literature, and so was examined in more detail.

### 2.3. Social media definitions and platforms

In the last two decades, there has been a significant growth within the Web and related technologies. A shift has taken place from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0. Web 1.0 is seen as the web of cognition or the read-only web (the web that connects information) and Web 2.0 as the web of communication or the read-write web (the web that connects people) (Aghaei, Nematbakhsh & Farsani, 2012; Almeida & Lourenço 2011; Barassi & Trere, 2012; Spivack, 2007), giving rise to the social media phenomenon.

The definition of social media has evolved over time. One of the earliest descriptions of social media is as “*a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers, intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities and issues*” (Blackshaw & Nazzaro, 2006, p. 2). Making human connections has been identified as a characteristic of social media. These online connections are made by social media users with online profiles (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) state that social media platforms are Internet-based applications built on the technological foundations of Web 2.0. The use of these applications allows users to create and exchange user generated content. Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) identified seven functional building blocks associated with social media which are: (1) identity, (2) conversations, (3) sharing, (4) presence, (5) relationships, (6) reputation, and (7) groups. Having conversations and an online reputation are more recent social media dimensions. The conversation and engagement aspects of social media are extended by Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) who see social media as an engagement tool that facilitates “*relational and dialogic models of communication*” (p. 288). Aral, Dellarocas and Godes (2013) view social media as a tool that is changing the way we “*communicate, collaborate, consume and create. They represent one of the most transformative impacts of information technology on business that is revolutionising how organisations relate to the marketplace and society*” (p. 3). Online content features prominently in social media and is defined by Andres and Woodard (2013) as “*user-generated information, opinion, video, audio and multimedia*” (p. 8).

When looking for commonality amongst these evolving definitions, the following patterns resonate across time. Firstly, social media platforms have a common theme of being a web application where communication takes place through the sharing of user-generated content amongst interconnected online users (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; DesAutels, 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Secondly, social media, social networking sites (SNSs) and web 2.0 are terms used interchangeably (Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007a; Iriberry & Leroy, 2009). The definitions point to the shared characteristics of: (1) openness, (2) participation, (3) conversation, (4) connectedness, and (5) community (Fuchs, 2013; Mayfield, 2008). For the purpose of this research study, social media are

hence viewed as socio-technical systems, and are defined as a group of online engagement applications used by both the general public and by organisations to send and receive messages and media files in real-time through the Internet and web-based platforms. They share the characteristics of: (1) openness; (2) participation, (3) conversation, (4) connectedness, and (5) community. A variety of social media platforms exist.

Social media platforms can be grouped by the functionality they give to users. For instance, Facebook and Myspace are referred to as social networking sites because they allow users to connect with one another and form social networks (Grasmuck, Martin & Zhao, 2009). Wikis like Wikipedia are websites that allow users to collaborate and generate content (Niederer & Van Dijck, 2010). Blogging and microblogging are additional online activities used in social collaboration and the generation of online content (Macias, Hilyard & Freimuth, 2009; Aggarwal, Gopal, Sankaranarayanan & Singh, 2012). Second life is referred to as a virtual world. To create this virtual world, users come together to custom-build their online virtual world where this online community collaborate socially (Berente, Hansen, Pike & Bateman, 2011; Schultze & Orlikowski, 2010). Users can also share content through tagging, bookmarking and writing reviews on the things they like. Digg and Del.icio.us are social media platforms that allow online users to find content that other users with similar interests like (Scott & Orlikowski, 2010; Arriaga & Levina, 2010). Visual media like photos and videos play an important role in social media collaboration. Youtube, Pinterest and Instagram are social sites where the main focus is on sharing visual media (Lange, 2007; Mull & Lee, 2014; Bakhshi, Shamma & Gilbert, 2014).

#### 2.4 Social media use in organisations

The use of social media is growing in popularity, and coupled with the constant innovations associated with social media platforms and applications, is transforming how people interact, work and innovate (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Damer, 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Messinger, Stroulia, Lyons, Bone, Niu, Smirnov & Perelgut, 2009; O' Reilly, 2007). Social media allows for the creation, sharing and exchange of information in a virtual community, thus shaping the connections between individuals, communities and organisations (Colliander & Dahlen, 2011). With social media use, private individuals become sources of online information by "*sharing opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives with others*" (Marken, 2007, p. 10). The importance of social media users is aptly stated in the following statement: "*While social media provides never ending avenues for communicating, it is the individuals who serve as the influencers and not the technology*" (Gonzalez, 2010, p. 23). The use of social media in an organisation has changed its relationship with any entity that has an impact on the organisation or on which the organisation has an impact, which includes: employees, customers, their online community, competitors, suppliers, investors and the media (Culnan et al., 2010; Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Yang & Lim, 2009). The increasing use of social media is further underpinned by the relatively low cost of using social media (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000).

### Internal Use of Social Media in Organisations

Internal uses of social media within organisations are many and varied. Internal communications amongst staff is a popular use of social media (Vuori, 2012). Business development has seen the value of using social media as a tool to develop new business models (Lyons, Kim & Cunningham, 2008). Online collaboration by staff on work activities like product development is growing and social media are being used as the tool for these collaborations (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, Porter & Donthu, 2008). The flexible and adaptive nature of social media facilitates internal communications and online collaborations by overcoming the traditional departmental barriers within an organisation (Aral et al., 2013; Fernando, 2010; Kasavana, Nusair & Teodosic, 2010; Yates & Paquette, 2011; Vuori, 2012). Social media provides organisations with faster ways to collect and disseminate information. This increase in speed helps improve the internal organisational decision-making process (Wright, Khanfar, Harrington & Kizer, 2010).

### External Use of Social Media related to Organisations

Like the internal uses, the external uses of social media are many and varied as well. Consumers are turning away from traditional sources of information like the radio, television and newspapers (Rashtchy, Kessler, Bieber, Shindler & Tzeng, 2007; Vollmer & Precourt, 2008) to social media for information searches on organisations, their products and services (Lempert, 2006; Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). Information shared online by consumers on their experiences when engaging with organisations and on the use of their products and services, is seen as being more trustworthy than corporate-sponsored information (Foux, 2006). The use of social media has therefore become a major factor in influencing consumer behaviour as it relates to generating an awareness, acquiring information and sharing opinions on organisations, their products and their services (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This consumer shift has made organisations take an interest in social media sites as another way to reach the online community, and through social media use, sell their products and services (Shankar, Inman, Mantrala, Kelley & Rizley, 2011). Management within organisations hence sees social media as a promising engagement tool which could be used in marketing and public relations (Kaganer & Vaast, 2010; Leidner, Koch & Gonzalez, 2010).

### Organisational Benefits of Social Media Use

Social media use is touted as increasing the quality of engagement and communication between organisations and their online community, helping to facilitate the building of relationships (Naylor, Lamberton & West, 2012). Online user generated content is also used within organisations to help better understand their online community (Akar & Topcu, 2011; Smits & Mogos, 2013). Growing this understanding is supported by building consumer databases and using these databases for online research activities (Barnes, 2010; Wright et al., 2010).

Organisations use social media in marketing to increase their brand exposure (Andriole, 2010; Cha, 2009; Jin, 2012; Laroche, Habibi & Richard, 2013; Swanepoel, 2007; Vuori, 2012). Organisations

are also using social media in public relations as part of their corporate dialog processes (Bonson & Flores, 2011; Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012). As the use of social media increases, so too does the levels of engagement between organisations and their online community (Akar & Topcu, 2011; Barnes, 2010; Burson-Marsteller, 2012; Chui, Manyika, Buguin, Dobbs, Roxburgh, Sarrazin, Sands & Westergren, 2012; Di Gangi, Wasko & Hooker, 2010; Gallagher & Ransbotham, 2010; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Sinclair & Vogus, 2011; Vuori, 2012; Wright et al., 2010). Consumers use social media to interact with their peers on topics of interest. These same consumers are then able to follow up their interest in a product or service with an organisation that is able to meet this need (Wang, Yu & Wei, 2012). Social media also allow consumers to actively follow and respond to what organisations are doing without having to depend on a third party for access to media (Cormode & Krishnamurthy, 2008; O' Reilly, 2007).

Through social media use, organisations are collaborating with external stakeholders on the development of products (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Porter & Donthu, 2008). These collaboration opportunities allow for the formation of knowledge sharing communities amongst organisations and external stakeholders (Aral et al., 2013; Fernando, 2010; Kasavana et al., 2010; Yates & Paquette, 2011; Vuori, 2012). The levels in service delivery are also enhanced through these collaboration opportunities (Barnes, 2010; Wright et al., 2010). Social media networks encourage digital creativity and learning opportunities amongst social media users within virtual worlds which organisations can access, participate in and leverage for their benefit (Peppler & Solomou, 2011).

### Challenges of Social Media Use

This increase in popularity and use of social media brings about challenges for organisations. The diversity of social media platforms brings about a complex scenario of attributes and characteristics which amplify the confusion for both researchers and organisations alike (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media are not well arranged one-way communication channels, but rather spaces in which participation is unconstrained and where the online community can without restriction spread opinions about an organisation that stands in conflict with the organisation's interests. It only takes one unhappy customer venting on social media about an organisation, its products and services to cause reputational damage (Aula, 2010; Tripp & Gregoire, 2011). It is becoming increasingly difficult for organisations to recover from a reputational crisis (Bridgeman, 2008; Gaines-Ross, 2008; Griffin, 2007; Philips, 2009). Social media use is challenging traditional business processes and operations. The prominent difference is that the one-to-one mass communication model is now an organisational norm, replacing the more traditional one-to-many communication model (Hanna et al, 2011; Peters, 1998). There is the distraction of employees using social media for personal reasons rather than for the benefit of the organisation (Fuchs-Kittowski et al., 2009; Papworth, 2009; Kuikka & Akkinen, 2011). The Web 2.0 mindset rarely conforms to the predominant organisational culture which limits the priority top management allocates to social media initiatives (Fuchs-Kittowski et al., 2009). This lack of control

over how social media are used by employees and the online community in creating and spending online content fuels security risks linked to an organisation's brand image and the need for reputation management (Broughton, Higgins, Hicks & Cox, 2009; Cox, Martinez & Quinlan, 2008; Fuchs-Kittowski et al., 2009; Helm, Liehr-Gobbers & Storck, 2011; Papworth, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Kuikka & Akkinen, 2011; Grimes 2012). Reputational risk comes across as important to organisations using social media where Jones, Temperley and Lima (2009) see reputation management as *"the process of positioning, monitoring, measuring, talking and listening as the organisation engages in a transparent and ethical dialogue with its various online stakeholders"* (p. 934).

## 2.5. Digital content

The diversity in social media platforms and applications discussed above, creates a problem where large volume of unstructured data are created and shared on social media. This data can be referred to as digital text (Van Dijck, 2009). The large volumes, and its unstructured nature make it difficult for organisations to extract high quality social media content from that is relevant and can be used by the organisation to improve its product and service offering (Mayeh, Scheepers & Valos, 2012). Additionally, the ease of social media accessibility and the low barriers to publication further exacerbates the problems related to social media use and the creation of quality content (Agarwal & Yiliyasi, 2010).

Videos and images are increasingly used with or within text that may accompany it, which extends the notion of what constitutes digital text (Urquhart & Vaast, 2012). Additionally, digital text is constantly evolving where the use of special characters like emoticons is blurring the distinction between iconic representations and discourse (Wolf, 2000). Digital text on its own, and without interpretation, however has no meaning. Using language as a filter helps to make sense of, interpret and assign meaning to digital text (Urquhart & Vaast, 2012). Assigning meaning to digital text leads to the creation of digital content.

Social media cannot exist without digital content, where content is the reason individuals decide whether to follow an organisation and its social media accounts. For this reason, the process of content creation has increasingly become more professional, with social media account owners also being focused on sharing relevant content (Verhoeven, Tench, Zerfass, Moreno & Verčič, 2012). Three current threads related to the creation and use of digital content are: (1) sharing tailored- made content with the online community, (2) content that includes entertainment, which allows the users to have an online experience, and (3) the gathering of content from the online community that expresses opinions about an organisation, its products and its services. The analysis of digital content being shared assists organisations in determining the concerns, needs and preferences of their online community (Carim & Warwick, 2013; Wright & Hinson, 2013). High quality content has the tendency to boost word-of-

mouth<sup>1</sup> (WOM), as it relates to creating an awareness and increasing the online visibility of an organisation and its brands (Ferguson, 2008). Simply providing informational or promotional messages is not enough to generate public interest that leads to engagement and discussion. Content that has an emotional appeal or that is funny or engaging like Youtube videos that creates an online experience for the user, is increasingly being used by organisations to attract the online community to their social media accounts (Men & Tsai, 2013). Organisations search and track the conversations taking place on social media.

Social media users also create digital content. This content can be created individually or collaboratively and either shared, modified or consumed (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media content varies from tweets on Twitter, updating a status on Facebook to publishing videos on Youtube (Smith, Fischer & Yongjian, 2012). Social media users share their thoughts on a particular piece of content by: (1) adding to the stream of ‘comments’, (2) using the ‘like’ (thumbs-up) button to show they agree with the content, or (3) to ‘retweet’ someone else’s tweet (Kietzmann et al., 2011). By adding a ‘comment’ the user is giving the indication of wanting to enter into conversation with other parties (Zarella, 2009). By ‘retweeting’ the user is validating and publicly agreeing with the content ‘tweeted’ by someone else. ‘Retweeting’ builds feelings of friendship and loyalty (Boyd, Golder & Lotan, 2010). Similarly, when ‘liking’ content the user is showing appreciation and support for the content being shared (Kietzmann et al., 2011)

Social media content created by consumers about a particular product or service is considered to be more credible by other consumers than information that originates from the providers of these products and services. The reason for this is that the information shared by consumers is seen to be a more balanced representation of the product or service, presenting both positive and negative aspects (Cheong & Morrison, 2008; Grimes, 2012). Interesting content stimulates engagement and also positively influences its acceptance levels (Burgess, Sellitto, Cox & Buultjens, 2009). This positive sentiment forms the basis for the relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders (Kelleher, 2009; Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012).

## 2.6 Community engagement

Digital content is created during social media engagement which is explained as “*the progression from interacting with the interface physically to becoming cognitively immersed in the content offered by it (e.g. social media platforms) and then onto proactively spreading the outcomes of this involvement*” (Oh, Bellur & Sundar, 2010, p. 25). Active positive engagement with an online community through using the interactive features of social media tends to build and develop the personal relationship between the organisation and their online community (Andriole, 2010; Kietzman et al.,

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<sup>1</sup> The passing of information by electronic means from a consumer to prospective consumers concerning a brand, a product, or a service.

2011). Using social media to build a personal relationship with an online community that is based on strong emotional bonds has a positive impact on the organisation's performance (Mitic & Kapoulas, 2012; Pagani & Mirabello, 2011; Sashi, 2012). To build long-lasting personal relationships between an organisation and its online community, their engagements need to be grounded in mutual trust and commitment (Sashi, 2012; Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2013).

Social media engagement is not without challenges. For instance, web 2.0 applications are shifting the balance of power from the organisation to the online community (Li & Bernoff, 2008). The advances in social computing are bringing about the empowerment of the online community to "*engage in social interaction, contribute their expertise, share content, collectively build new tools and disseminate information*" (Parameswaran & Whinston 2007b, p. 763). This shift in power relates to the organisation's brand as well (Li & Bernoff, 2008; Fisher & Smith, 2011), leaving organisations struggling to keep control of their online brand image. Online crises generated on social media that affect organisations threaten the legitimacy of the organisations concerned (Vielhaber & Waltman, 2008).

Through social media the opinions and attitudes, either positive or negative, held by an online community can spread very quickly. Negative opinions and attitudes, also referred to as negative WOM, are generated by consumers after having had a bad experience with an organisation's products or services (Grimes, 2012). Being one of the most influential information sources, WOM is being used by consumers, when deciding whether to engage with a potential organisation, with the intention of procuring products or services (Liu, 2006). The challenge for organisations is to find ways in which to shape these online engagements with their online community to fit the organisation's mission, its values and performance goals (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

To manage such crises of confidence and protect their image, organisations need to enter into dialogue with those stakeholders responsible for precipitating these crises with the aim of protecting its image. A crisis situation generates a large amount of discussion and organisations need to be an active participant and not a passive observer of the ongoing conversations. Stakeholders also expect organisations to take full responsibility for a crisis situation and to be completely engaged. Constructive dialogue intensifies organisational effectiveness when responding to a crisis (Coombs, 2014; Romenti, Murtarelli & Valentini 2014). Active and sustained engagement between organisations and their online community reduces the impacts of negative WOM (Hanna et al., 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2011; Vargo, Maglio & Akaka, 2008).

## 2.7. Social media strategy

Prior IS research has highlighted how effective IS strategizing can overcome challenges associated with IS adoption and use in organisations (Henderson & Venkatraman, 1993). Strategy can be described as "*a consciously intended course of action, a guideline (or set of guidelines) to deal with*

*a situation*” (Mintzberg, 1987, p. 11) focused on achieving a particular action. Li and Bernoff (2008), Delerue and He (2012) and Kuikka and Äkkinen (2011) agree that in order for organisational adoption and use of social media to be successful, the organisation needs to create strategies and set guidelines that will aid social media use. Organisations need to learn how to use social media in a manner that is consistent with their business strategy (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). To have any relevance, the use of social media has to provide organisations with strategic benefit (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012).

A social media strategy is hence becoming an important concept to organisations using social media as a business tool. The traditional way organisations used to communicate with their consumers was through creating one-way messages. Now, with social media, focus is on generating a two-way conversation (Howard, Mangold & Johnston, 2014). Social media are constantly evolving and so too is the organisation’s strategy. Both the online community and organisations are adapting to these changes. Organisations need to also think about how the new social media functionality can be used within their organisational context and how current business processes will be impacted. This constantly evolving nature of social media are problematic to organisations trying to assess the most appropriate role for social media within their organisational strategy. Strategic role clarity of social media stakeholders within an organisation is also becoming crucial. A lack of role clarity coupled with the ambiguous use of social media within organisations, leads to the inappropriate use of social media within the organisational context (Kunz & Hackworth, 2011; Kunz & Werning, 2013; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). These strategic challenges to the organisation are forcing managers and policy makers within the organisation to consider the complexities associated with regulating social media use (Huang et al., 2013).

The philosophy of openness as it relates to social media incorporates access, participation and content. This dynamic nature of social media applications and platforms purport that organisations need to act consciously when managing their employees’ use of social media, especially when engaging with the online community. Macnamara and Zerfass (2012) suggest that organisations should employ a social media strategy supported by a governance framework that provides organisational guidelines on the accepted use of social media. Zerfass, Fink and Linke (2011) describes social media governance as “*the formal and informal frameworks which regulate the actions of the members of an organisation within the social web*” (p. 1033). Social media strategies are important in supporting the use of social media applications and platforms within an organisational context, and have the potential to positively influence the interaction and engagement amongst social media stakeholders (Howard et al., 2014; McCarthy, Rowley, Ashworth & Pioch; 2014).

A social media strategy needs to facilitate the security, privacy, regulatory compliance and reputation management of an organisation. It should not, however, be restrictive but rather take on an open approach (Macnamara & Zerfass; 2012). The social media strategy should also clarify the plan for

content creation (Howard et al., 2014). Organisations lacking a social media strategy expose themselves to risks that include: (1) having confidential information and trade secrets being released, (2) employees embarrassing the organisation with inappropriate online posts, and (3) legal action taken against the organisation for defamation or damages resulting from inappropriate posts (Fink & Zerfass, 2010).

A social media strategy supports organisations in managing and delivering to the interests of the organisation, their employees, organisational stakeholders and the society at large. For this reason, more research into how organisations relate their social media strategy and governance framework to organisational engagement and communication will further the collective understanding of social media use within an organisational context (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012). How organisations cope with the challenges brought about by the digital evolution and the social web will determine their successes in engagement and communication management (Zerfass, Tench, Verhoeven, Vercic & Moreno, 2010).

## 2.8. Summary of chapter

Miles and Huberman (1994) and Robson (2011) describe a conceptual framework as a system of concepts, expectations, beliefs and theories that both informs and supports research and is key to the research design. A conceptual framework could be represented visually or in written form discussing the main ideas and presumed relationships amongst these ideas that will be studied. It signifies what is going on with the phenomenon being studied and helps to justify the research.

Key themes that emerged from the literature review were: (1) The organisational use of social media, (2) the creation and posting<sup>2</sup> of digital content, (3) social media engagement between an organisation and its online community, and (4) the influencing role of the social media strategy. Based on these themes, a conceptual framework of social media use within organisations for community engagement is proposed and presented in Figure 1 below. The framework shows that organisational *use* of social media leads to the creation of digital content and the *posting* of it onto the organisation's social media platforms. This brings about *engagement* between the organisation and their online community. Throughout this process, the social media strategy is *influencing* and being influenced by organisational use and community engagement. This conceptual framework was used as a lens to guide data collection and analysis within the research study (Creswell, 2009). The use of a conceptual framework or 'theoretical model' also ties into the notion of theoretical sensitivity as stated by Glaser (1978); its benefit is as a lens to view the emergent findings from a GTM study (Urquhart, 2013).

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<sup>2</sup> Posting is an act of publishing a message in an online forum like Facebook or Twitter.

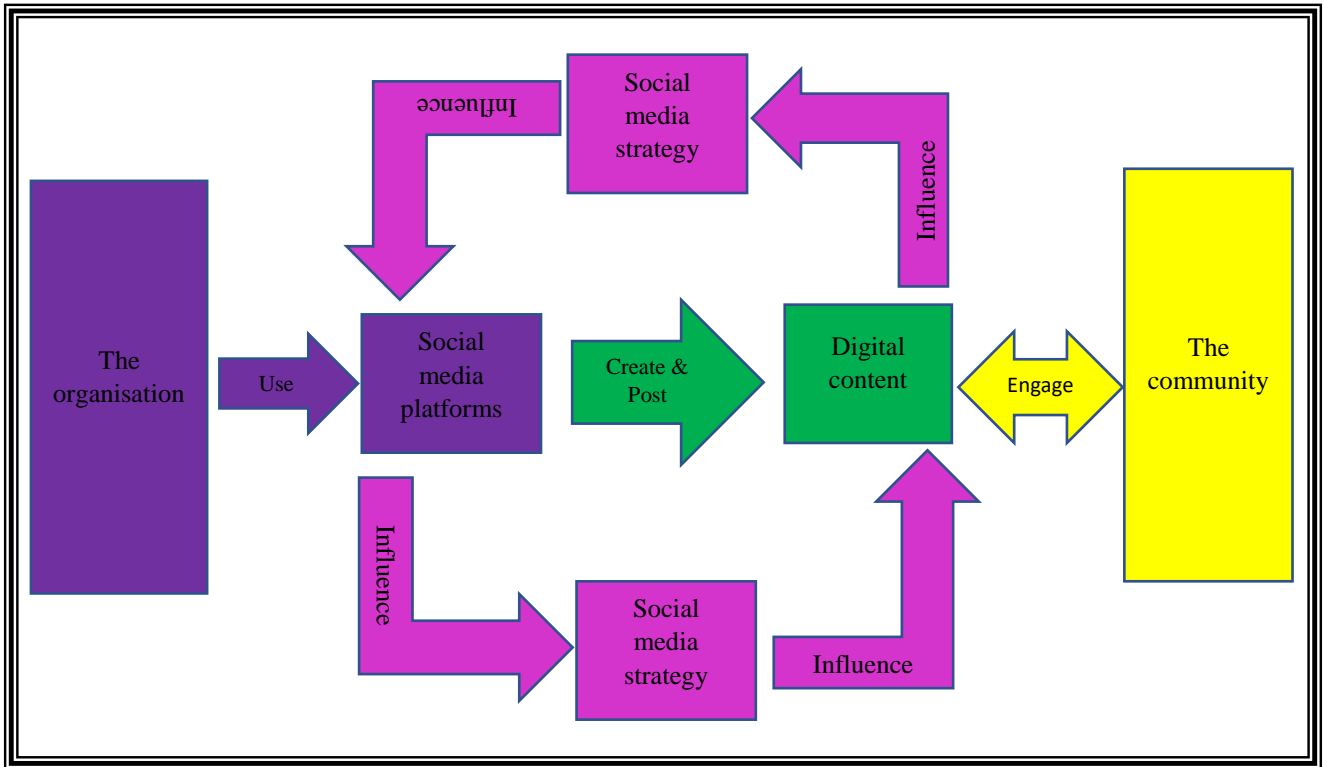


Figure 1: The proposed conceptual framework of social media use within organisations for community engagement

# Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

The research study is aimed at explaining how social media are used by organisations for community engagement. No substantive theory was found that explains this specific phenomenon. The GTM is an appropriate method to explore and theorise in such situations (Glaser, 1978). GTM does not proscribe any philosophical positions, hence the next section describes the philosophical stance adopted by the researcher. Thereafter, GTM and then more specifically the “Straussian” GTM is briefly elaborated on and justified as appropriate for the investigation, followed by discussion of procedures and issues related to data collection and data analysis in the study.

## 3.2. Philosophical position

GTM “*is a neutral research procedure and inherently multi-paradigmatic*” (Lehmann, 2012, p. 310). The method makes no prescription for any specific philosophical position. The philosophical position is that which is explicitly adopted by the researcher. Hence GTM studies in IS have been found to be positivist, interpretive and even critical realist (Matavire & Brown, 2013; Strong & Volkoff, 2010). Interpretive research helps IS researchers understand human thought and action within a social and organisational context. The result is a deeper understanding of the IS phenomenon as embedded within its context (Klein & Myers, 1999). An interpretivist paradigm was deemed appropriate for answering my research question of “*How do organisations use social media when engaging with their online community?*” The justification is that knowledge of organisational social media use is intrinsically linked to those organisational actors using social media and their subjective understanding of organisational social media use dynamics.

In addition, interpretive research resonates with the manner in which GTM is used to develop theory. Klein & Myers (1999) propose several principles for conducting and evaluating IS research. Three principles stand out as especially compatible with GTM, these being the principle of the hermeneutic circle, the principle of contextualisation and the principle of abstraction and generalisation.

The principle of the hermeneutic circle states that “*we come to understand a complex whole from preconceptions about the meanings of its parts and their interrelationships*” (Klein & Myers, 1999, p. 71). This principle resonates with GTM research, whereby discrete concepts and relationships emerge through fracturing empirical data about some phenomenon. By constantly comparing data incident to data incident to generate concepts, and then comparing concept to concept in the light of data incidents, a holistic theory is then assembled (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The principle of contextualisation “*requires critical reflection of the social and historical background of the research setting, so that the intended audience can see how the current situation under investigation emerged*” (Klein & Myers, 1999, p. 71). The importance of context in GTM is apparent through the use of tools such as the coding paradigm that facilitates theorising the link between context and process (Seidel & Urquhart, 2013).

The principle of abstraction and generalisation “*requires relating the idiographic details revealed by the data interpretation...to theoretical, general concepts...*” (Klein & Myers, 1999, p. 71). GTM, once again, provides procedures and techniques useful for deriving concepts and theory from data.

### 3.3. Grounded theory methodology (GTM)

GTM is defined as “*an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data*” (Martin & Turner, 1986, p. 141). The methodology provides a number of techniques by which data is collected and analysed to reach an internally valid conceptualisation (Birks, Fernandez, Levina & Nasirin, 2013). The building blocks for conceptualisations and theorising are concepts, categories, relationships and propositions. Please refer to Appendix A1 for the definitions of these building blocks linked to theory development. Three overarching principles of GTM that underpin the theory development process are: (1) the principle of emergence, (2) constant comparative analysis, and (3) theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The ***principle of emergence*** states that theory emerges from the data, and that the data be allowed to tell its story. This statement implies that the researcher should, in the data analysis process, “*ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated*” (Glaser, 1992, p. 37).

***Constant comparative analysis*** in GTM studies is a process of continuously contrasting data collected in the current ‘slice-of-data’ with data collected previously, where the focus is on finding similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Alternating data collection and the constant comparison of the emerging theory with data collected from successive data slices during the research study forms the cornerstone in the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This same process of alternating between data collection and constant comparison is stated by Urquhart, Lehmann and Myers (2010) as being a long-kept standard in the social sciences. Validating concepts and relationships associated with the emerging theory through constant comparison with data helps build an empirically valid theory (Lehmann, 2012; Urquhart, 2013). Concept validity is achieved by ensuring that the definition of each emerging concept accommodates the diverse sources of evidence related to a particular concept. Similarly, the emerging relationships between concepts must fit the diverse data

sources. Ensuring concept and relationship validity helps establish the internal validity of a research study (Eisenhardt, 1989).

**Theoretical sampling** is “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyses his/her data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his/her theory as it emerges. This process of data collection is controlled by the emerging theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). Both sampling bias and having an insufficient variation in data is addressed through theoretical sampling (Jones & Noble, 2007).

GTM is viewed as a family of approaches (types) (Birks et al., 2013; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Walsh, 2015). Four approaches to GTM use identified by Matavire and Brown (2013) are:

- (1) Classic GTM – also referred to as “Glaserian” GTM (Glaser & Holton, 2004). It is that approach which is deemed by Glaser to be most faithful to the original formulation in Glaser & Strauss (1967) and which is expounded upon in Glaser (1978), Glaser (1992) and other writings by Glaser (e.g. Glaser & Holton, 2004)
- (2) Evolved GTM – refers to GTM approaches that have evolved from Glaser & Strauss (1967), such as the approach advocated by Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1998, 2008) termed “Straussian”, and that recommended by Charmaz (2006, 2008), termed constructivist GTM.
- (3) Mixed Methods – Several studies combine methods, e.g. GTM and action research (DeLuca, Gallivan & Kock, 2008) or GTM and case study research (Eisenhardt, 1989), and
- (4) Analytical GTM – This refers to using the analytical techniques of GTM, but more as data analysis techniques rather than to develop theory (Urquhart & Fernandez, 2006).

### 3.4. Why GTM for this study?

The novelty and originality of electronically mediated social contexts such as social media use have left IS researchers with a lack of existing theories capable of making sense of and understanding the socio-technical processes associated with these contexts (Vaast & Walsham, 2013). Social media as a fairly new phenomenon offers opportunities for IS researchers to theorise about it in its context of use, as well as to theorise the associated practices it brings about (Kane, Levina, Pikorski, Ransbotham, Griffith, Majchrzak, Borgatti, Faraj & Jarvenpaa, 2012b; Majchrzak, 2009; Orlikowski, 2007; Urquhart & Vaast, 2012; Vaast & Walsham, 2013). Theory building methods that are qualitative and inductive, work well in domains where no prior theories or theories with limited explanation exist. The strength of GTM is developing new theory grounded in the empirical data obtained from the research setting and related processes (Lehmann, 2012; Urquhart et al., 2010). On this basis, the use GTM for my research study is justified because limited theoretical studies in the context of this research problem and research question exist.

While organisational case studies were used as data collection sites in my study, GTM and its principles guided the investigation (Fernandez, 2003). So, GTM was the driving methodology with in-depth case studies supporting the research study (providing the empirical data for the research). Previous GTM studies in IS such as Orlikowski (1993), and more recently from a social media perspective specifically Da Cunha and Orlikowski (2008), highlight that GTM can be used and is compatible when case studies are used for data collection.

### 3.5. Appropriateness of “Straussian” GTM

The evolved GTM, in particular the “Straussian” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008) is widely used in IS research (Matavire & Brown, 2013; Seidel & Urquhart, 2013; Vaast & Walsham, 2013). This popularity, it is claimed, is due to: (1) it being easier to work with than classic GTM (Kelle, 2007), (2) it offering detailed guidelines with well-signposted procedures which are beneficial for novice researchers (Hughes & Jones, 2003; Kelle, 2007; Urquhart, 2001), and (3) it allowing researchers to be transparent in reporting their research results, providing a ‘chain of evidence’ and adding credibility to the research study (Walsham, 1995).

Vaast & Walsham (2013) suggest that in electronically mediated social contexts “*the data collection and analysis procedures advocated by proponents of grounded methods (in particular the Straussian method) indeed aim at helping researchers build a theory that derives organically yet as rigorously and systematically as possible from the setting under investigation*” (p. 22). This lends weight to “Straussian” GTM being employed to answer my research question of “*How do organisations use social media when engaging with their online community?*”. Such a question entails investigating both the process of social media use, as well as the context of use.

“Straussian” GTM is suited to such investigation as it recommends the use of a coding paradigm as an appropriate analytic tool to use when researchers want to uncover an organisational process and the context within which the process occurs (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008; Seidel & Urquhart, 2013). The coding paradigm suggests developing an understanding of core actions/interactions (process), the causal and contextual conditions leading to/surrounding such actions/interactions and their consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Hence justification for using the “Straussian” GTM and the coding paradigm is thus: firstly, to explain the context of social media use within organisations and its effects which is referred to as contextualisation (Seidel & Urquhart, 2013), and secondly, the integration of context and process as it relates to social media use within an organisational context (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008).

#### 3.5.1 The coding paradigm

The coding paradigm allows for the uncovering of the context in which certain phenomena occur, where researchers are interested in contextual factors and dynamic interactions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008).

The coding paradigm includes analysing the data for process. “*Process demonstrates an individual’s, organisation’s, and group’s ability to give meaning to and respond to problems and/or shape the situations that they find themselves to be in through sequences of action/interaction, taking into account their readings of the situations and emotional responses to them*” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 98). “*As researchers, when we analyse data for process, we are trying to capture the dynamic quality of inter/action and emotions*” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 99). “*If one’s final goal is theory building, analysing data for process is an essential step along the way*” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 100). “*To do anything less is to misrepresent or distort the situations that are studied and to present only a partial explanation of what is happening and why*” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 114).

When considering the use of the coding paradigm Seidel and Urquhart (2013) mention two factors: (1) theoretical sensitivity towards causality – to use the coding paradigm as a sensitising device (Klein & Myers, 1999) when investigating cause-effect relationships that subsequently leads to building theories of explanation and prediction (Gregor, 2006), and (2) contextualisation – to use the coding paradigm when wanting to uncover the context within which the phenomena occurs, for example a research context within which the IT artefact is “*enmeshed with conditions of its development and use*” (Seidel & Urquhart, 2013, p. 250).

The IT artefact at the centre of my research study is social media platforms. The social context is the use of social media platforms for engagement between an organisation, its online community and the resulting effects. The justification for using the coding paradigm within my research is as an analytic tool to “*enrich the analysis*” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 90) underpinned by: (1) the need to uncover the context within which organisations use social media, referred to as contextualisation (Seidel & Urquhart, 2013), and (2) the integration of context and process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008). My approach is to use the coding paradigm flexibly and cautiously, and bearing in mind avoidance of ‘forcing’ data to fit the coding paradigm. In this way, I am enhancing my theoretical sensitivity towards causal relationships (Seidel & Urquhart, 2013). Figure 2 presents the coding paradigm being used as a sensitising device, to elucidate the process within the research study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).

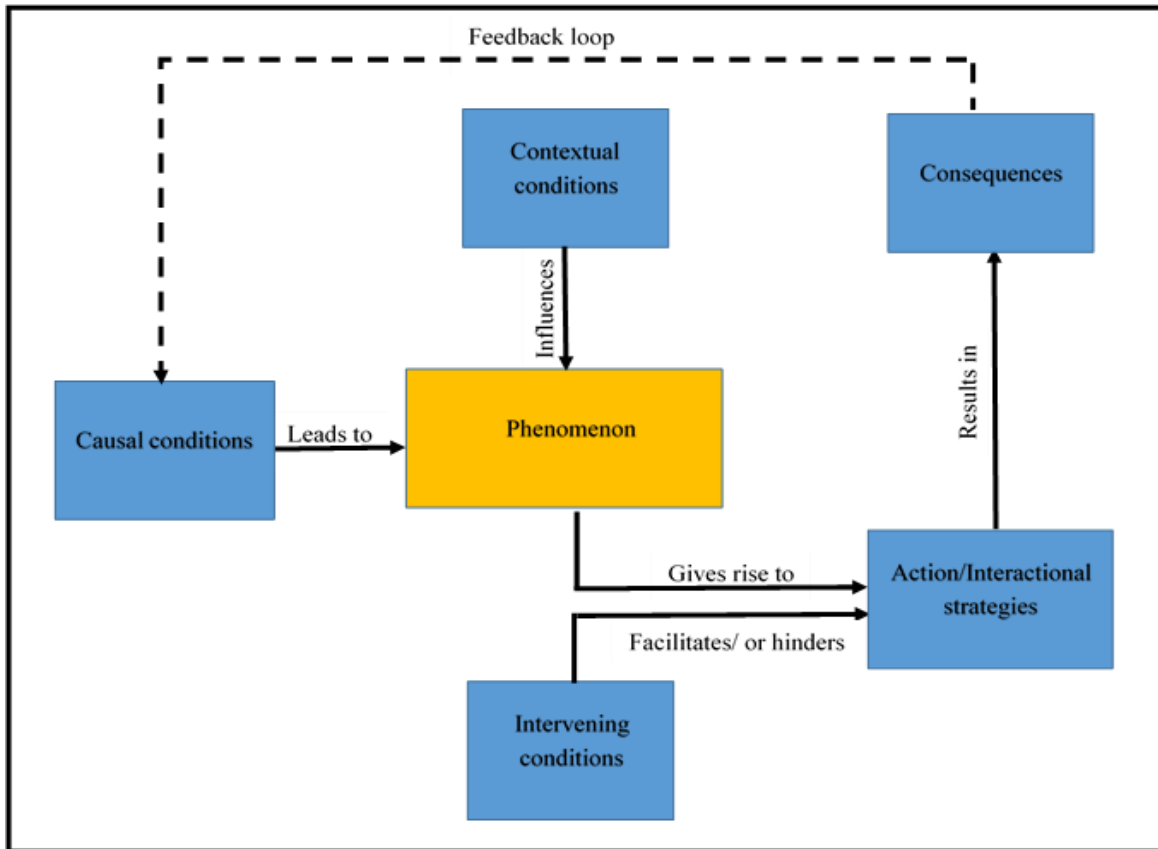


Figure 2: The coding paradigm used as a sensitising device to elucidate the process within the research study (Adapted from: Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998)

### 3.5.2 Straussian GTM Coding Procedures

In the GTM, concepts and the relationships amongst them are identified through the coding process, with the focus on generating a theorisation that fits the researcher’s empirical subject and questions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Urquhart, 2013; Vaast & Walsham, 2013). The strength of the GTM lies in its flexibility linked to the coding process and still being able to maintain rigour within the research study (Glaser, 1978). Coding is the process of extracting and developing concepts from the research data. Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1998) highlight three coding phases – open coding, axial coding and selective coding respectively. It is important to note that “*open coding and axial coding go hand in hand. The distinctions made between the two types of coding are artificial and for explanatory purposes only. As analysts work with data, their minds automatically make connections (axial coding), because, after all, the connections come from the data*” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 198).

**Open coding** is the process of breaking data apart and defining concepts to represent groupings of raw data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Open coding may start at a microscopic level, referred to by Strauss and Corbin (1998, 2008) as ‘line-by-line analysis’ or ‘micro-analysis’, where data is studied closely, looking at a word or a phrase and their varied meanings. Naming of concepts take two forms:

(1) using in-vivo codes, and (2) the researcher's interpretations that represent ideas contained in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Glaser, 2011). Concepts range from lower-level concepts to higher-level concepts (categories/themes) with “*all concepts, regardless of level, arising out of the data*” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 160). Gerund(ing) can be used to generate a code that helps imply process, however Glaser (2011) warns to “*be careful since many codes do not work with gerunds*” (p. 52). “*It is too easy to ‘over gerund’ and this weakens the theory when added to words that are actually conditions, causes, types etc ..., and too many gerunds make a theory feel forced or unnaturally grounded. However tempted, do not automatically gerund. Many codes are not gerunds*” (p. 53). In my research study, I used both in-vivo codes and my interpretations that represent ideas contained in the data. I used the gerund function on my concepts where it was appropriate and to signal process, and where the gerund function was not appropriate, I left the concepts without the gerund.

**Axial coding** which is specific to the “Straussian” GTM is described as a process of relating concepts, sub-categories and categories to each other. The relating process takes place around the axis of a category. The linking could be done using the coding paradigm (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008).

There is a continuing debate on the use of axial coding and the coding paradigm. The criticism relates to the use of the coding paradigm and the notion that its use leads to the ‘forcing’ of preconceived conceptualisations onto data thus hindering true emergence (Keddy, Sims & Stern, 1996; Robrecht, 1995). This goes against the most basic rule in grounded theory – that preconceptions must be avoided in order to be true to the spirit of grounded theory (Glaser, 1992; Kelle, 2007).

A study by Seidel and Urquhart (2013) tested this criticism by evaluating several IS research studies published in IS journals. These studies used the “Straussian” GTM coding procedures and coding paradigm. The aim of the evaluation was to find signs where the application of the “Straussian” GTM hindered emergence and forced preconceived conceptualisations. They found no evidence that the use of the coding paradigm leads to ‘forcing’. The IS research studies have successfully used the coding paradigm, leading to theorising about the phenomenon under investigation and the building of grounded theory. Furthermore, axial coding and the coding paradigm are exemplars in showing that the GTM is an evolving method with flexible deployment. Treating the coding paradigm as not being mandatory has subsequently been highlighted by Strauss and Corbin (2008, p. 90), who state that: “*An important point to remember is that the paradigm is only a tool and not a set of directives. The analyst is not coding for conditions or consequences per se, but rather uses the tool to obtain an understanding of the circumstances that surround events and therefore enrich the analysis.*”

In further commentary on the issues of ‘forcing’ and the fact that the GTM is a debated method, Birks et al. (2013) maintain that the excessive focus on the differences between the grounded theory traditions is a distraction and not helpful to GTM researchers. The similarities amongst the GTM

approaches are much more important than their dissimilarities. Other than the coding paradigm in the Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) GTM, the other aspects across the GTM approaches are quite similar. The advocating of only one ‘true’ way of conducting a grounded theory study is unnecessarily restricting its application. Furthermore, if the researcher stays true to the data, it could be found that the coding paradigm does not help to explain the emerging theory. The coding paradigm would then be abandoned for another coding model that better explains the phenomenon being investigated (Urquhart, 2001).

**Coding for process:** While Urquhart et al. (2010) suggest ‘coding for process’ is an additional coding procedure to open, axial coding or selective coding, in keeping with Strauss & Corbin (1990), I see this phase as an aspect of axial coding where focus is on linking “*concepts/subcategories to a category in a set of relationships denoting causal conditions, phenomenon, context, intervening conditions, action/interactional strategies, and consequences.*” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 99).

**Selective coding** refers to selecting the core category with the most explanatory power in conveying what the research is about and to which the other major categories are related (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008). This category represents the main theme of the research and all other concepts are related to it (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To help researchers with building theory, Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998, 2008) suggest three techniques that could be used to identify the core category and integrate the core category with other major categories identified during the research process. These three techniques are: (1) writing a storyline. (2) the use of integrative diagrams, and (3) the reviewing and sorting through of memos.

A story line is “*a descriptive narrative about the central phenomenon of the study and the storyline is the conceptualisation of the story*” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). A storyline is a process used by researchers to narrate the linking of categories and sub-categories around a core category. This narrative presentation of the theory is intended to make the final theory more visible to the reader (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998).

Creating integrative diagrams is a useful technique for increasing the ‘theoretical sensitivity’ of the theory building process and to help researchers organise data and elucidate conceptual relationships between analytical concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Fernandez & Lehmann, 2011; Glaser, 1978; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stern, 1994; Urquhart, 2013).

Memoing is seen as “*the core stage in the process of generating theory, the bedrock of theory generation*” (Glaser, 1978, p. 83); it captures the researcher’s in-depth thoughts and documents the analysis process followed by the researcher (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). The importance of analytical and theoretical memos is that they play a central role in facilitating constant comparison, emergence, theoretical sampling and theoretical densification (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Glaser, 1998; Charmaz, 2006). In GTM, memos are critical to the sense-making process, helping researchers with

understanding their data, the relationships amongst it and the gaps in the data (Birks et al., 2013). Writing theoretical memos help researchers to theorise about categories with the focus on the relationships amongst categories (Urquhart, 2013). Memos can take the form of diagrams, text narratives, propositions and mind maps (Charmaz, 2006). I wrote text narrative memos, where *analytical* memos captured my thoughts on my progression through the research study and *theoretical* memos were used to support the theory building process (Urquhart, 2013).

### 3.6. Theoretical sampling when using case studies for data collection

GTM at its inception was explicitly developed to research the interactions between individual human actors in predominantly non-business social settings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The view of IS as a hybrid that consists of information technology, data, procedures and people in organisations also referred to as the ensemble view of the IT artefact by Orlikowski and Iacono (2001) requires an extension of the GTM and a wider interpretation of its guidelines (Fernandez & Lehmann, 2011; Lehmann, 2012).

Researching IT within an organisational context results in IS research focusing on the interaction between groups of people and organisations, typically in case study settings (Fernandez & Lehmann, 2011). During typical qualitative data analysis, the focus is on generating rich description and unpacking issues related to voice and contexts. GTM's primary focus is on conceptualisations that are abstract of time and place (Glaser, 2001). To develop useful conceptualisations requires transcending the cases where data originated from (Fernandez & Lehmann, 2005, 2011). Sampling for theoretical construction and not for representativeness is important to achieving this goal.

When using cases as data sources, sampling for theoretical construction first occurs within an organisation referred to as within-case (also called intra-case) sampling. The focus here is on selecting “*more slices-of-data from within each case so that their incidents can saturate categories and maximise their conceptual yield*” (Fernandez & Lehmann, 2011, p. 9; Lehmann, 2012). Once the theoretical sampling of new data does not add new conceptualisations and existing ones are repeated, it is time to move on to between-cases (also called inter-case) sampling where the “*status of the theoretical framework, which is the result of all the previous cases' categories and constructs is assessed for 'saturation' of theorems and propositions*” (Fernandez & Lehmann, 2011, p. 9). Through theoretical sampling the next organisational case is then selected with the focus on enhancing and strengthening the explanatory and predictive qualities of those unsaturated theorems and propositions (Fernandez & Lehmann, 2011; Lehmann, 2012).

The focus of theoretical sampling in my research study was on the same or a similar group (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). With similar data, the emphasis is on filling out categories and dissimilar data will help in understanding the “*fundamental differences under which category and hypotheses vary*” (Urquhart, 2013, p. 65). The selection criterion used to select relevant cases for my study was those

organisations with a dedicated social media team responsible for the use of social media as an engagement tool with their online community. The selection process needed to be consistent to allow for the emergent theory to be either replicated or extended (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Both the selection of theoretically relevant organisational cases and the data collection process were guided by the principle of theoretical sampling. Data collection and analysis are intrinsically linked. Through a recursive process data collection and analysis alternates until theoretical saturation is reached (Birks et al., 2013; Lehmann, 2012; Urquhart, 2013). Ultimately, the number of organisational cases selected and the subsequent culmination of data collection, coding, data analysis and constant comparison processes are dependent on reaching theoretical saturation. Fitting this selection criterion and through the theoretical sampling process I selected two cases for my research study, one being a prominent retailer [OrgA] based in South Africa with expansions into Africa and Australia, and the other being a university also located in South Africa [OrgB] with both an African and global presence.

The theoretical relevance of these two cases is justified by the recent and continued high profile media attention associated with these organisations on controversial issues linked to both organisations and their brands. The media fallout has entered the social media domain with the online community expressing their unhappiness on the organisations' social media platforms and the organisations needing to respond to manage the crisis situations. This prolific use of social media by the organisations and their online community further defends the selection of these two interesting cases and their use in answering the research question of "*How do organisations use social media when engaging with their online community?*"

### 3.7. Data collection procedures

Working towards a deeper understanding of my theoretical categories, I sampled from a variety of data sources and used different data collection methods (Creswell, 2009; O' Mahony & Ferraro, 2007; Pousti et al., 2013; Vaast & Walsham, 2013). Supplementing semi-structured interviews, participant observations, or questionnaires with online data from a social media setting will help researchers gain an in-depth understanding of their theoretical categories when working towards achieving theoretical saturation (O' Mahony & Ferraro, 2007; Pousti et al., 2013; Vaast & Walsham, 2013). Triangulation allows IS researchers to complement multiple sources of different evidence within an electronically mediated social context which facilitates the corroboration of emerging propositions and relations among emerging categories working towards building a grounded theory (Vaast & Walsham, 2013).

Research data was collected through semi-structured interviews, documentation reviews, field observations, organisational videos, field notes and from online media that included visual images obtained from the organisation's official social media platforms. The duration of the interviews was

between 45 minutes to an hour. Interviews were taped and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The research information collected was safely stored in a qualitative data analysis software programme called Atlas.ti. This software tool helped in recording and the analysing of textual and graphic data during the research study.

Visual media, including videos and photographs, are rich sources of data and can play an important role in conveying context. The use of visual media, in particular photographs, in conveying the story of the phenomenon being investigated is often ignored in academic research. Social media are a rich source of visual media and can play an important role in qualitative GTM studies in providing a deep contextual background to the analysis (Urquhart, 2013). Many qualitative researchers are attentively focusing on social media as a very promising source of qualitative data (Orlikowski, 2007). To enhance the contextual background in this research study I included visual media in the form of organisational videos and online media (include photographs) obtained from Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

The conceptual framework presented by Figure 1 in Chapter 2 captures four themes that emerged from the literature review conducted and that were linked to the research problem and the research question of “*How do organisations use social media when engaging with their online community?*” These four themes were: (1) the organisational use of social media, (2) the creation and posting of digital content, (3) social media engagement between an organisation and its online community, and (4) the influencing role of the social media strategy. Based on the notion of theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1978; Urquhart, 2013) and using the conceptual framework as a lens to guide data collection, I developed a research instrument that captured these four themes. Please refer to Appendix A2 for the research instrument. This research instrument was used as a starting point and evolved as the concepts, themes and categories emerged during coding and data analysis.

Tables 1 and 2 below summarises the data sources used to collect data in each of organisations A and B respectively.

*Table 1: The data collection protocol (organisation A)*

Data source	Details
<b>Semi-structured interviews (Primary source)</b>	Interviews with strategic leader (digital editor), social media manager, Facebook team expert, Twitter team expert and visual media expert (Instagram and Pinterest) expert. Interviews were recorded and lasted between 45 minutes to an hour. Additional notes were made and I paraphrased certain sections back to the interviewee to confirm my understanding.

Data source	Details
<b>Organisational videos (secondary source)</b>	Two videos covering international conferences on social media and one promoting the benefits of social media use within the organization.
<b>Organisational documents (secondary source)</b>	Document of social media implementation and use at the organization.
<b>Member-checking documents (primary source)</b>	After analysing each interview, I created a document summarizing what I thought was the main themes expressed by the interviewee during the interview. I then subsequently had a follow-up session with the interviewee to review my understanding and accuracy in capturing the main themes the interviewee wished to express on the use of social media for organisational engagement with its online community.

Table 2: The data collection protocol (organisation B)

Data source	Details
<b>Semi-structured interviews (primary source)</b>	Interviews with strategic leader (deputy director for communications and marketing), marketing and online communications manager, digital and social media officer, web editor (linked to social media) and manager: marketing and communications in the Commerce faculty. Additional notes were made and I paraphrased certain sections back to the interviewee to confirm my understanding.
<b>Online media (from the physical artefacts – social media channels) (secondary source)</b>	Visual content (photos shared on Facebook and Twitter)
<b>Organisational documents (secondary source)</b>	Document on content management as it relates to online media
<b>Organisation (primary source)</b>	Observed a benchmarking exercise to help post the best content online.
<b>Member-checking documents (primary source)</b>	After analysing each interview, I created a document summarizing what I thought was the main themes expressed by the interviewee during the interview. I then subsequently had a follow-up session with the interviewee to review my understanding and accuracy in capturing the main themes the interviewee wished to express on the use of social media for organisational engagement with its online community.

### 3.8. Data analysis

Data collection, coding and analysis within my research study were executed iteratively (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). With case studies, iteratively following the data collection, coding and analysis process assists the researcher by getting a head start in analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989). More importantly, it allows researchers to take advantage of flexible data collection. Indeed, a key feature of theory-building case research is the freedom to make adjustments during the data collection process. These adjustments can be the addition of cases to probe particular themes that emerge, adjustments to data collection instruments or the addition of data sources in selected cases (Eisenhardt, 1989). Constant comparison played a central role during my analysis with the aim of achieving concept and relationship validity, thus leading to the internal validity of my research study and ultimately an empirically valid theory (Lehmann, 2012; Urquhart, 2013; Urquhart et al., 2010).

During my research study, I referenced Seidel and Urquhart (2013) and in addition to open coding, used axial coding flexibly, where axial coding was used to reflect emerging relationships between concepts, sub-categories and categories identified through open coding. In terms of the coding paradigm, it was not dogmatically applied within the research study, but rather used to take a more holistic view of the research and open up the analysis. I worked towards my 'own coding paradigm' as suggested by Kelle (2007). My approach to axial coding was intended to enhance my theoretical sensitivity when it came to documenting causal relationships. As a researcher, I strived towards true emergence and minimising 'forcing' of the data.

Part of the appeal of GTM is that the reporting on the various stages of coding followed in one's research study establishes the credibility and validity of the analyses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This reporting can take the form of written commentary on the decisions and steps followed by the researcher throughout the research study and is also referred to as keeping a 'chain of evidence' (Urquhart, 2007, 2013; Walsham, 1995). The dynamic and changing nature of electronically mediated social contexts holds many contexts that still need to be fully explored. This 'lack of familiarity' and that "*already established categories should not be automatically assumed to fit the empirical observations*" (Vaast & Walsham, 2013, p. 18), make reporting on the coding process important.

Throughout my research study I explicitly documented the decisions taken and steps followed. This written commentary is my attempt at keeping a 'chain of evidence' (Urquhart, 2007, 2013; Walsham, 1995). The emerging concepts, sub-categories, categories, relationships and propositions were graphically presented and supported by written commentary.

In my research study, and as part of selective coding I wrote a storyline that captured the evolving conceptualisation of the central phenomenon. The storyline was concluded once the theory building process came to an end. I used integrative diagrams to visually present the loose relationships

(associations) between emerging concepts, sub-categories and categories (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Fernandez & Lehmann, 2011; Glaser, 1978; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stern, 1994; Urquhart, 2007, 2013). The process followed was to describe each relationship as it emerged and then draw an integrative diagram. The integrative diagrams increased incrementally in complexity as new relationships emerged and were added.

I used theoretical memos to capture my thoughts on: (1) open, axial and selective coding, (2) observations, (3) theoretical sampling, and (4) procedural directions followed during the research. During my analysis, theoretical saturation became evident in my 13th and 14th data slice, when no new concepts emerged during open coding and existing concepts and relationships were repeated. I continued to focus on category development and building relationships. At this point I reached the conclusion that additional analysis would not add substantially new conceptualisations to the explanation and that the concepts, sub-categories, categories and relationships were appropriately well developed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998 & 2008; Urquhart et al., 2010). *Collective storytelling* emerged as the core category and the central phenomenon where the process associated with the phenomenon was elucidated as the use of social media to co-created digital content.

Member checking within qualitative research helps researchers improve the accuracy, validity, credibility and transferability of the research study (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During the member checking process the researcher's interpretation of the research results is given to the research interviewees and their comments are a check on the viability of the research results. The comments reveal both correct as well as incorrect interpretations, and missing information that needed to be addressed before concluding the research study (Creswell, 1994; Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 1989). The view I took in the research study is that participants should be able to recognise themselves and the world they live and work in, if claims for accuracy, validity, credibility and transferability of the research study and the emergent theory were to be made. Further justification for using member checking in GTM studies is given by Strauss and Corbin (2008) who state that participant (member) checking is "*validating our interpretations of research data with participants*" (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 48). Charmaz (2006, 2014) also agrees and further adds that member checking exercises within GTM studies help researchers further elaborate on emerging categories during the interview process which enriches the theory building process.

In addition to the techniques above, I decided to also use member checking to further enhance the theory building process. I chose to conduct member checking exercises with the interviewees after the analysis of each interview. This follow-up session was intended to confirm the main high-level themes the interviewees wished to express during the interview on the use of social media by organisations for engagement with their online community. The reason for including member checking

as part of my analysis process was its strength in helping researchers check and confirm the accuracy of the qualitative findings with the research participants during the research process (Creswell, 2009). The member checking documents were also coded to help further elaborate on emerging categories (Charmaz, 2006, 2014), and the quotations have been included to further help illustrate and support the theory building process (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Charmaz, 2006, 2014).

To recapitulate, I used a storyline, integrative diagrams, and the writing of memos, subsequent reviewing and sorting through of my memos, as integration techniques. Together with member checking exercises, these were used to weave together the major concepts and categories identified during open and axial coding to finally construct my theory.

### 3.9. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an important aspect that researchers need to be aware of when conducting research. Schwandt (1997) identifies reflexivity as the process of critical self-reflecting on one's biases, theoretical predispositions and on the entire research process. Reflexivity helps improve the validity of the research results (Urquhart, 2013). For interpretative field studies Klein and Myers (1999) identified three principles that could be seen as being reflexive (Urquhart, 2013), namely:

1. *Interaction between the researchers and the subjects* – Requires critical reflection on the socially constructed nature of the findings as a consequence of the interaction between researchers and participants.

2. *Dialogical reasoning* – Requires sensitivity to possible contradictions between the theoretical preconceptions guiding the research design and actual findings.

3. *Multiple interpretations* – Requires sensitivity to possible differences in participants' interpretations of the same event.

As part of being reflexive within my research study I appropriately referenced these three principles for guidance where necessary.

### 3.10. Ethics

Grounded theory researchers conducting research within electronically mediated social contexts need to “*reflect upon the characteristics of their research setting from which they collect data with special attention to the degree of virtuality*” (Vaast & Walsham, 2013, p. 16). Virtuality is “*the degree to which participants in the setting have the ability to meet face-to-face or not or have been able to develop a history of past common experiences*” (Vaast & Walsham, 2013, p. 11). The virtuality of electronically mediated social contexts has an impact on the data collection process within a grounded theory study. This situation provides IS researchers with easy access to collect online data that is automatically produced through the engagement processes amongst participants in the context. This

easy access raises ethical issues by blurring the distinction between information perceived as private or in the public domain (Buchanan & Ess, 2008; Urquhart & Vaast, 2012; Vaast & Walsham, 2013). This ethical issue brings to the fore the need to respect the privacy of contributors within electronically mediated social contexts and ensuring their anonymity (Bromseth, 2002; Lawsson, 2004; Sveningsson, 2004).

In my research study, the identity of all participants was kept anonymous and their privacy was strictly protected. In addition, the organisations used as case studies were referred to by pseudonyms. The following ethical guidelines by Creswell (2009) and Urquhart (2013) were also incorporated into my research study: (1) the research objectives were clearly enunciated both verbally and in writing so that they were clearly understood by the informant, (2) written confirmation permitting that the research study can proceed was first obtained from the informant, and that the informant could withdraw from the research at any time, (3) all data collection devices and activities were mentioned to the informant including how the data will be used, and (4) the anonymity of the informant and organisations were kept throughout the research process, including in the final write-up and reporting of results. In the Appendices, are the ethics approval letter from the university (A3) and two additional letters (A4 and A5): (1) for the organisation, and (2) for the research participants, requesting their participation in my research study. The initial title for the research evolved over the course of the research study as the research problem and questions became more evident in the researcher’s mind.

### 3.11. Summary of Chapter

Table 3 presents the decisions taken on the research design components linked to my research study.

*Table 3: Research design components linked to my research study*

Research design components	Details
Philosophical position	Hermeneutics, Interpretivist paradigm
Research approach	Qualitative
Research methodology	Strauss and Corbin GTM (including supportive case studies)
Theory type	Theory of explanation and prediction (EP)
Research instrument	Interview schedule guided by conceptual framework
GTM coding procedures	Open, Axial and Seletive coding
GTM core tenets	Constant comparison, Theoretical sampling, Theoretical saturation
Additional data analysis tools	Storyline, Integrative diagrams, Reflexivity, Member checking exercises, Analytical and Theoretical memos, Corroboration (Triangulation), Keeping a ‘chain of evidence’

# Chapter 4 – Results of Analysis

## 4.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 unpacks the results of data collection, coding, analysis and theory building. Section 4.2 describes the cases selected. Section 4.3 sets out the grounded theory process followed and links the case selection, data collection, coding and analysis together. Section 4.4 starts with the results of open coding where the research data is dissected and the research results presented as they emerged. Next is axial coding where the dissected information is reassembled into meaningful categories or themes. Through selective coding, the main category/theme is identified and the final theory is constructed.

## 4.2. Case descriptions

As previously discussed in chapter 3 above, the case selection for my research study followed the principle of theoretical sampling (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The cases of interest in my research study are organisations with a dedicated social media team responsible for the use of social media as an engagement tool with their online community. To build a comprehensive theory there is need to sample from more than one case (Urquhart, 2013). In the following paragraphs, I discuss the two cases selected through theoretical sampling.

The first case selected was a prominent retailer. The reason for selecting the organisation was that it is one of the biggest retailers in South Africa, and has a very visible online social media presence using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Google Plus, Youtube and LinkedIn as part of their online social media strategy. Facebook and Twitter are the organisation's most active social media platforms with 881 261 Fans<sup>3</sup> on Facebook and Twitter just over 429 000 Followers<sup>4</sup> as at August 2017. For reporting and analytics, the retailer uses Radian6, SocialBakers and Facebook Insights. The organisation has had a formal social media strategy for the past three years, which supports the organisation's communication and marketing objectives. The organisation has a dedicated social media team responsible for social media use with an online visibility across seven social media platforms.

The second case is a leading South African university. The university is actively focused on growing its online presence in Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and LinkedIn as part of their online social media strategy. Facebook and Twitter are the university's most active social media platforms, with 158 658 Fans on Facebook and Twitter just over 97 400 Followers as at August 2017. For reporting and analytics, they use Facebook Insights, Twitonomy and Youtube Analytics. The university also has a

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<sup>3</sup> A Facebook "fan" is a user who "likes" a particular page. If a user chooses to "like" a page, they are then able to get updates from that page's administrator through status updates.

<sup>4</sup> Followers are people who chooses to follow you on Twitter and will receive your Tweets.

dedicated social media team responsible for social media use, with active use of Facebook and Twitter as an engagement tool with its online community.

The similarities between the cases are:

- (1) For both organisations Facebook and Twitter are the two most actively used social media platforms.
- (2) Both organisations have official teams dedicated to overseeing the use of social media within their organisations. In organisation A, the team is called the Online Social Team and in organisation B the team is called the Communication and Marketing Team.
- (3) In both organisations, the teams have a similar structure with a: strategic leadership level, an operational leadership level and the technical experts responsible for the actual use of the social media platforms.
- (4) In both organisations, the official website of the organisation is closely related to the organisational use of social media.
- (5) In both organisations content for social media posting is created by the Online Social Team and the Communication and Marketing Team respectively and by other departments found across the organisation. These other departments will create content specific to their business campaigns.
- (6) Both had recently been engaged in highly publicised controversies, which played out in various media including social media.

The differences between the cases are

- (1) That the organisations come from two different sectors. One is from the retail sector where its business involves selling products and services, whereas the university is in the business of educating students and providing a learning environment that is conducive to learning. Differences in cases help add richness and depth to the study (Yin, 2014). I used this difference to contrast my research findings across the two cases and analysed how this difference could influence the use of social media within an organisational context when engaging with their online community.
- (2) The retail organisation has a social media expert for each social media platform, whereas the university only had one person responsible for looking after all their social media platforms. Understanding these resourcing differences played an important role in building a context around social media use within an organisation
- (3) In the retail organisation, the Online Social team is the official social media voice of the organisation and there are no other social media accounts within the organisation. The difference in the university is that although the Communication and Marketing Team is the official social media voice of the university, there is a proliferation of social media sites,

and the creation of several web pages across departments and faculties, resulting in many other online voices that ‘represent’ the university. This proliferation was an interesting occurrence and understanding its impact played an important role in building a context around social media use within an organisation

- (4) The retail organisation places a great emphasis on visual social media through the use of Instagram and Pinterest. It is interesting to note that the university wants a visual media presence as well and wants to move onto Instagram, but is grappling with how to support the use of another social media platform and whether a predominantly visual social media platform is necessary to meet their engagement and communication objectives. Understanding the thought processes followed by the university team on whether to use visual social media played an important role in building a context around social media use within an organisation.

### 4.3. Grounded Theory Process followed

During the course of my research I closely followed the iterative process of data collection, coding and analysis as discussed in Chapter 3 above. Appendix A6 contains the project plan that presents the fieldwork conducted in this research study. The emerging theory resulting from the analysis of case organisation A (within-case sampling – Fernandez & Lehmann, 2011; Lehmann, 2012) was compared with the emerging results when analysing case organisation B (between case sampling - Fernandez & Lehmann, 2011; Lehmann, 2012) to search for cross-case patterns, thus working towards improving the validity and trustworthiness of my emerging theory.

Figure 3 (adapted from Urquhart et al. 2010 and Weimann, 2012) depicts the grounded theory process followed during this research study which will be discussed further in subsequent paragraphs.

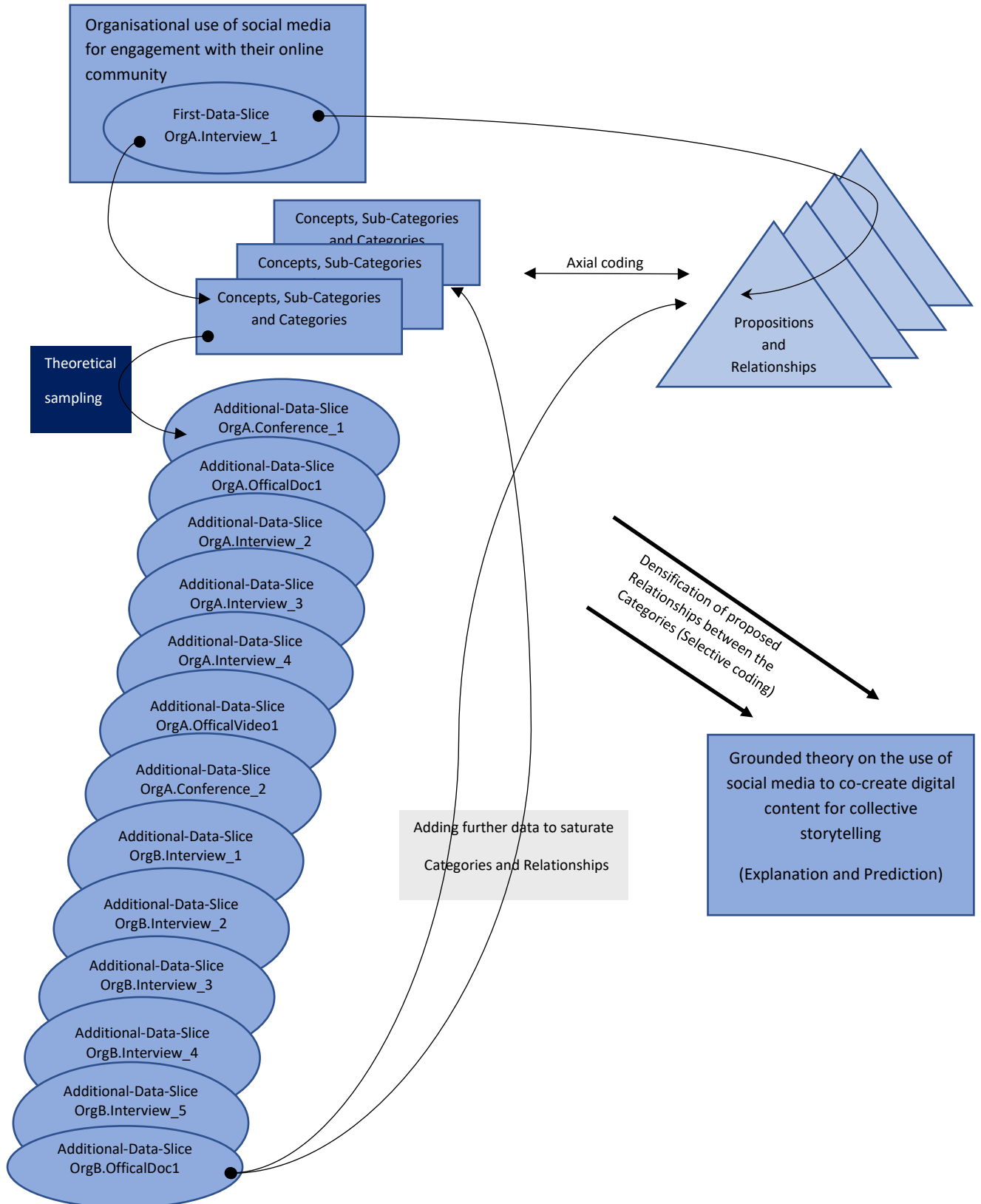


Figure 3: Grounded theory method for the research study (adapted from Urquhart et al., 2010 and Weimann, 2012)

Organisation A was the first site I visited. On agreeing to be part of my research study, I requested a meeting with the person responsible for the use of social media within the organisation. My first interview was with the Digital Editor who was responsible for managing social media use within the organisation [OrgA.Interview\_1]. I used purposive sampling (Marshall, 1996) for the first interview to kick-start the research study. For subsequent cycles, I followed the principle of theoretical sampling where data collection was based on concepts/themes derived from data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Over the course of the research study the interview questions were revised based on the emerging concepts and relationships from previous cycles, which influenced the selection and use of subsequent data sources within Organisation A and then in Organisation B. The emerging theory helped me to refine research questions as the research problem became more evident in my mind. This refining exercise facilitated the verification of the concepts and relationships associated with the emerging theory (Glaser, 1992). I was able to conduct my analysis after data collection of each data slice in keeping with grounded theory methodology tenets, using the emerging concepts and relationships as a guide in the next data slice in the sequence.

Table 4 shows the outcomes of coding after each data collection cycle. After analysing data from the first cycle, fifteen discrete concepts were identified. Subsequent cycles of data collection and analysis yielded corroborating evidence for concepts previously identified, or resulted in the emergence of new concepts, as shown in Table 4. Table 4 also shows that after every few cycles of data collection and analysis related concepts were grouped into higher level categories. The emergent concepts and categories are discussed in more detail in the sections that follow, in data slice order – i.e. as they emerged or were corroborated during analysis of a data slice. Reporting on findings in this emergent manner allows for an authentic presentation of the process by which concepts, categories and propositions emerged, in contrast to a “reverse order” presentation of results (Diaz Andrade, 2007).

*Table 4: Theoretical sampling approach followed within my research study*

Data collection cycle	Corroborated <b>concepts</b> and emerging <b>categories</b> linked to emerging theory	Focus of theoretical sampling for next data slice
OrgA.Interview_1	15 discrete concepts were identified	Purposive sampling
OrgA.Conference_1	- <b>Characteristics of social media for use, Collective storytelling, Risk to reputation, Organisational marketing campaign initiatives, Product information and descriptions.</b>	The online community was identified as an important online partner when it came to social media use. I needed to understand why the online community was important and how this importance influenced the use of social media.
OrgA.OfficialDoc1	- <b>Following community conversations, Speaking directly to the organisation, Real-time conversations with customers</b>	What was emerging was a type of storytelling process. I was not sure how it worked, why it

Data collection cycle	Corroborated <b>concepts</b> and emerging <b>categories</b> linked to emerging theory	Focus of theoretical sampling for next data slice
		was important and what its influence was on social media use. I needed to do further investigations into storytelling.
OrgA.Interview_2	<p><b><u>Collective storytelling</u></b> (Speaking directly to the organisation, Following community conversations, Real-time conversations with customers)</p> <p>- Integrating the organisational website and social media, Age profile of the social media community, Generating interest in products, Social media team, Interrelating content and social media within the organisation</p>	My analysis identified that the social media team had a relationship with the rest of the business. This relationship had an influence on social media use, thus further investigation was warranted. The age profile of the online community was mentioned, and I therefore needed to understand how it influenced social media use.
OrgA.Interview_3	<p>1. <b><u>Interrelating content and social media within the organisation</u></b> (Social media strategic leadership)</p> <p>- Content quality, Collective understanding of social media, Community posting of complaints, questions and queries, Facebook use by the organisation, Instagram use by the organisation, Twitter use by the organisation, Social media following, Addressing community concerns through social media, Feeding of community comments back into content, Aligning social media and organisation</p>	The teams involved in social media use within the organisation were identified. I needed more clarity on what the teams did and how they influenced social media use. Facebook and Twitter were used differently. I needed to understand how and why their use differed, and how this difference influenced the way social media is used.
OrgA.Interview_4	<p>1. <b><u>Characteristics of social media for use</u></b> (Facebook use by the organisation, Twitter use by the organisation, Instagram use by the organisation)</p> <p>2. Social media landscape (Social media following, Age profile of the social media community)</p> <p>3. OmniChannel (Planning cycles)</p> <p>- Online community engagement, Digital content team, Link between digital content, social media and strategy, Experiencing social media use failures, Online community and organisation power dynamic</p>	Another important theme was content creation. My analysis indicated that content creation and social media use mutually supported each other. I needed to understand how and why.

Data collection cycle	Corroborated <b>concepts</b> and emerging <b>categories</b> linked to emerging theory	Focus of theoretical sampling for next data slice
OrgA.OfficialVideo1	1. <b><u>Content quality</u></b> (Tailoring content)	Building onto the content creation theme, my analysis found that both the organisation and the community were responsible for content creation. They were co-creating content. I needed to understand how the co-creation of content influenced the use of social media.
OrgA.Conference_2	1. <b><u>Risk to reputation</u></b> (Collective interest in social media)  - Joint crafting of content by organisation and community, Social media operational leadership  (No new concepts emerged during open coding. Focused on category development and building relationships)	A continuing theme of my analysis was to focus on how and why organisations use social media for community engagement. This line of enquiry continued in the case of organisation B.
OrgB.Interview_1	- Benefits realisation, Content sharing	A social media strategy was mentioned and that it played an important role in supporting social media use. I needed to understand more about the supporting role played by the social media strategy. Marketing was identified in relation to social media use. What was the importance of this relationship and how did it influence social media use? I needed more clarity.
OrgB.Interview_2	- A supportive social media strategy, Brand awareness	Education was identified as being key to social media use, and was underpinned by the social media strategy. I needed to understand how education played a role in supporting social media use.
OrgB.Interview_3	1. <b><u>A supportive social media strategy</u></b> (Education interventions)  - Marketing through engagement, Researching the organisation's products,	The engagement relationship between the organisation and its community was identified earlier as having a power imbalance. This was an

Data collection cycle	Corroborated <b>concepts</b> and emerging <b>categories</b> linked to emerging theory	Focus of theoretical sampling for next data slice
	<p>Discussions that create a shared understanding</p>	<p>interesting theme warranting more investigation. How did a power imbalance influence the behaviour of both the organisation and the community when it came to social media use? Why was there a power imbalance and what was being done to overcome (address) this issue? More investigation was needed.</p>
OrgB.Interview_4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Online community and organisation power dynamic</b> (Attention seeking society)</li> <li>2. <b>Risk to reputation</b> (Community loyalty)</li> <li>3. <b>Education interventions</b> (Benefits realisation)</li> <li>4. <b>Online community engagement</b> (Content sharing)</li> </ol> <p>- Driving awareness of social media, Reporting on social media use, Challenges in supporting social media growth</p>	<p>Both organisations agreed that social media use was important to them; however, the use came with challenges. For this reason I wanted to consolidate my understanding on those solutions that addressed challenges in social media use e.g. the power imbalance, team working dynamics, achieving the benefits of using social media, etc. More investigation was needed to clarify my understanding.</p>
OrgB.Interview_5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Online community engagement</b> (Building relationships, Assisting community with assimilating information)</li> </ol> <p>- Supporting effective conversations, Levels of social media interactions, Benchmarking, Breaking down departmental barriers, Managing use expectations</p> <p>(No new concepts emerged during open coding. Focused on category development and building relationships)</p>	<p>Overall, the risk to reputation came across as one of the major influencers when it came to the reasons for using social media. Accordingly, the question I asked myself is why this is the case?</p>
OrgB.OfficialDoc1	<p>- Taking accountability for organisational online image</p> <p>(No new concepts emerged during open coding. Focused on category development and building relationships)</p>	<p>Continued onto the next stage in my analysis - to identify a Core category through selective coding. Continued with theoretical memos and the</p>

Data collection cycle	Corroborated <b>concepts</b> and emerging <b>categories</b> linked to emerging theory	Focus of theoretical sampling for next data slice
		coding process that started with open and axial coding.

#### 4.4. Results of Coding

As stated by Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1998) and Strauss & Corbin (2008) open and axial coding occur simultaneously. For explanatory purposes, it helps to present the open and axial coding as two separate activities (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Open and axial coding is hence presented as two separate activities next. Six main sections are presented. Section 4.4.1 titled *open coding* focuses on identifying concepts, theoretical sampling, within case concept corroboration and extension, and across case concept corroboration and extension. Section 4.4.2 titled *axial coding* focuses on emerging relationships amongst the concepts identified previously. Central concepts are elevated to categories and sub-categories. Section 4.4.3 titled *coding for process* uses the coding paradigm to document the process within the data. Section 4.4.4 titled *selective coding* focuses on identifying the core category that represents the main theme of the research study. Section 4.4.5 titled *final theoretical outcome* presents the final theory at the end of theory construction. Section 4.4.6 titled *reaching theoretical saturation* identifies the point where very little new conceptualisations linked to theory development emerges and data sourcing is concluded.

##### 4.4.1. Open Coding

This section focuses on the identification and elaboration of those concepts linked to the emergent theory. The emerging concepts from organisation A were corroborated and extended through comparing them with subsequent data slices. When theoretical sampling of new data did not add new conceptualisations and existing concepts were repeated through further data collection and analysis, Organisation B was sampled, and subsequent data slices were compared against the emerging theoretical results for further corroboration and extension. This process enhanced the validity and trustworthiness of the research results and the emergent theory (Fernandez & Lehmann, 2011; Lehmann, 2012). The concepts will be discussed per data slice, as they emerged. Only those concepts which were subsequently supported by additional data are discussed.

##### 4.4.1.1. Data Slice 1 - Interview with Digital Editor [OrgA.Interview\_1]

The first interview was chosen based on purposive sampling. The interview (OrgA.Interview\_1) was with the digital editor at organisation A. She had worked at organisation A for two years. This individual manages the social media team responsible for the use of social media within organisation A. The interview was a good starting point for contextualising the organisational use of social media. The concepts emerging from this data slice are discussed next.

### **A. Customers speaking directly to the organisation**

Social media is used as an engagement tool between the organisation and its online community. The quotation below illustrates the concept of customers speaking directly to the organisation:

“Social media is a platform where customers can speak directly to us (organisation) in real-time and we can respond accordingly” (OrgA.Interview\_1).

### **B. Twitter use by the organisation**

Twitter is used for specific reasons by the organisation. The quotation below illustrates the concept of twitter use by the organisation where the focus is on shorter posts and quicker responses:

“We use Twitter more for posting a call out (shorter posts) on our products to create interest and awareness about our products and to have small focus group discussions where you respond faster to changes in discussions and get ideas” (OrgA.Interview\_1).

### **C. Integrating the organisational website and social media**

The organisation’s website is seen as being part of and extending the social media experience between the organisation and its online community. The quotation below illustrates the concept of integrating the organisational website and social media:

“I consider our website a social platform, at least a nascent social platform and we have sharing buttons at the moment” (OrgA.Interview\_1).

### **D. Real-time conversations with customers**

The organisation decided on using social media as a means of engaging in real-time conversation with customers. The quotation below illustrates the concept of real-time conversations with customers:

“We are using social media to have real-time conversations with our customers” (OrgA.Interview\_1).

### **E. Following community conversations**

The organisation stays in contact with its online community by following social media conversations. The quotation below introduces the concept of following community conversations:

“Organisation A has to actively follow their customers and their conversations” (OrgA.Interview\_1).

### **F. Social media landscape**

The organisation uses a variety of social media platforms and tools, which I refer to as the social media landscape. The quotation below illustrates the concept of social media landscape highlighting the types of social media platforms the organisation is using:

*“In terms of platforms we use Twitter, Facebook, Google Plus, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Youtube. In terms of social reporting tools, we use Radian6<sup>5</sup>, Socialbakers<sup>6</sup> and Google Analytics<sup>7</sup>. We not very active on LinkedIn yet, because that is more for career’s integration and we haven’t really got there yet” (OrgA.Interview\_1).*

### **G. Age profile of the social media community**

The organisation considers the age profile of the social media platform when deciding on marketing campaigns. The quotation below illustrates the concept of *age profile of the social media community*:

*“Our Facebook audience is aging, so we can specifically start tailoring content towards a more mature target, but for campaigns specially targeting a younger market we could still use Facebook to reach a broader customer base. Twitter appeals to a younger age group” (OrgA.Interview\_1).*

### **H. Collective understanding of social media**

The need for collective understanding of social media within the organisation was noted. Concern was expressed about ownership and a lack of strategic direction on the organisational use of social media. The quotation below illustrates the concept of *collective understanding of social media*:

*“There is quite a lot of interest but not a lot of understanding, which is usually what happens especially if you want to use social media in the whole organisation, and then everyone looks around and asks, who is driving this and where is this going to and how do you keep standards in place? People are just wanting to add more business areas for social to support, not understanding that this is going to affect your work” (OrgA.Interview\_1).*

### **I. OmniChannel**

The term OmniChannel was mentioned as an important part of social media use within the organisation. The quotation below provides explanation of the in-vivo concept I labelled as *OmniChannel*:

*“The idea of OmniChannel means literally taking the customer journey and breaking it down into all of its touch points and creating a cohesive message across all the social media platforms which means you can’t ignore any touch points” (OrgA.Interview\_1).*

This following quotation further explains *OmniChannel* and how organisation A approaches the concept: *“Now you got to actually think about the customer in the middle, putting the customer in the*

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<sup>5</sup> Radian6 is a social media monitoring tool, which assists organisations in engaging actively with its online community through social media platforms. Organisations listen to what is being said about their brand, industry, and competitors online and responds accordingly.

<sup>6</sup> Socialbakers creates online applications to help organisations analyse and manage their engagement activities on social media platforms.

<sup>7</sup> Google Analytics is a web analytics service offered by Google that tracks and reports on website traffic.

centre of your communication strategy and then choosing from an ecosystem of possible social media tools to support your customer. For example, to communicate our main theme for Valentine's day 'I love you more than', we will take that message and look at her through her day and through what points she connect with information, and how we can make that an engaging message as opposed to just a broadcast" (OrgA.Interview\_1).

The difficulty in supporting *Omnichannel* is highlighted in the quotation below: "Whenever, I give a talk, I say that I don't trust anybody who can say *OmniChannel* without a twitch because it is so incredibly difficult and *OmniChannel* gaps are being faced by everybody in the world" (OrgA.Interview\_1).

### **J. Generating interest in products**

The organisation uses social media to generate interest in their products. The quotation below illustrates the concept of *generating interest in products*:

"Facebook is the most generic of the platforms with the largest reach, so we use Facebook for a mix of messaging across Foods and Clothing and General Merchandise (CGM) and we make sure we balance that with social questions that aren't necessarily related to our products. We add humorous things like having a bad pun Wednesday, a throwback Wednesday where we throw back old pictures of organisation A, we do a lot of that which relates to the social signs of that time, the trends of the past. Facebook is also used to talk about current celebrity trends and a video could become a content piece. We use Pinterest for our visual show casting most specifically our recipes because people love to share our food recipes. Our food recipes are so luscious and the recipes are respected by our foodie community who are very active on Pinterest" (OrgA.Interview\_1).

The focus is on providing a balanced discussion that includes stories on organisational marketing campaign initiatives and some fun activities as well. This approach aims to help stimulate online conversation.

### **K. Feeding of community comments back into content**

Customer comments are normally integrated into content for social media, as a means of enhancing quality of content. The quotation below illustrates the concept of *feeding of community comments back into content*:

"If you want to have a conversation you have to give your community quality content and you have to rework their comments into content as well" (OrgA.Interview\_1).

### **L. Interrelating content and social media within the organisation**

The digital editor declared her responsibility as being to: "manage the relationship between content and social where social media falls under the concept of digital content. It is one circular concept rather

than social broadcasting for content. So, from the beginning I've made it clear that content and social is one team in my strategy" (OrgA.Interview\_1).

This gives rise to the concept of *interrelating content and social media within the organisation*.

### **M. Aligning social media and the organisation**

The digital editor highlighted the conflict that arises when trying to align social media within organisation. The quotations below illustrate the concept of *aligning social media and the organisation*:

*"Social media falls in the customer marketing segment which aligns with customer loyalty and data. Social media does not act as a silo, we are more like a gel so we touch and meld (integrate) with everything. Yes, social media affects everything from Public Relations, Information Technology, our online shop and the in-store customer experience. I can't really think of a part of the business it doesn't affect. There are challenges when digital as a social business hits a bunch of silos like an industrial business structure. These challenges arise because the perception within this business is that digital is seen as a silo"* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

The alignment challenge is managed by: *"using your digital natives<sup>8</sup>, where they are interacting with business stakeholders to change perceptions of social media within your organisation"* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

### **N. Social media strategic leadership**

The *social media strategic leadership* emerged as an important concept, as illustrated by the quote:

*"The digital editor is in charge of content and social media. I work across both marketing and online. Because of the organisation A's structure, you can't technically do that, but half of my team is in Marketing and half is in Online, so technically I report into Marketing. I am responsible for the team that uploads campaign information onto our website to the posts we put out in social media. We also form part of the crisis communication management process within the organisation, so if something goes wrong we would facilitate the communications aspect of managing the crisis. We also have content editors who handle the specific content areas on the website and creates content for social media as well"* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

### **O. Social media team**

The concept of the *social media team* emerged as important. As stated by the digital editor: *"We have a social media manager and three social media experts where each person supports a specific social media platform, a Facebook person, a Twitter person and a visual media person that focuses on pictures for Pinterest and Instagram"* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

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<sup>8</sup> A digital native is an individual who was born during the age of digital technology and grew up using technology like the Internet, computers and mobile devices.

## **P. Link between digital content, social media and strategy**

The *link between digital content, social media and strategy* emerged as important, as illustrated below:

*“Our strategy is to use social media platforms be they owned (in-house built) or rented (Facebook, Twitter) as a means of promoting the company to their customers and possible customers and the population in general. It is for organisations to look at all these rented social media properties and then determine if they fit into your strategic goals where the strategy would be to make online conversations as seamless and engaging as possible”* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

### *4.4.1.2. Data Slice 2 - First organisational conference proceeding [OrgA.Conference\_1]*

After analysing the prior interview, I had a better sense of how social media was being used in the organisation and how the use of social media is associated with organisational campaign initiatives. I subsequently had more questions on when and why the organisation decided to use social media for community engagement, the benefits and challenges of social media use, their learnings and their journey followed on social media. The source selected was the proceedings at an international conference on the organisational use of social media held in 2013 [OrgA.Conference\_1]. The digital editor [OrgA.Interview\_1] had attended, and was one of the key speakers. This data source was appropriate because it continued the discussion on social media use in an organisational context with reference to Organisation A. Previous analytical memos (based on Data Slice 1) were also reviewed as part of my analysis. The supporting discussion will focus on those relevant concepts emerging from this data slice that were corroborated by subsequent data slices and form part of the final theory.

#### **A. Characteristics of social media for use**

The characteristics of social media were highlighted as appropriate for organisational use as illustrated by the quote below, giving rise to the concept of *characteristics of social media for use*:

*“Organisation A uses social media platforms as amazing storytelling devices”* (OrgA.Conference\_1).

#### **B. Collective storytelling**

It was revealed that social media facilitates conversations between an organisation and its online community giving rise to the concept of *collective storytelling*, as highlighted by the quote:

*“If you look at the way brands talk to customers, we think the conversation is saying something and getting them to say something back, but for me that is when the conversation is just beginning, once you’ve got their attention and they are talking to you. You then have to ask yourself how do you take what the customers said and feed it again right back. Content and social should actually be the same thing so if you trying to have real-time conversations with your customers your content has to be then taken to the social realm and fed back, using content to get conversations started with our customers on social media channels”* (OrgA.Conference\_1).

The quotation highlights that a conversation is not getting one's online community to respond to the questions an organisation poses, but rather that a conversation on social media should be at a much more personal level. The conversation should be a collective, circular process where content from the online community is analysed and incorporated back into the response from the organisation. The conversation loop continues until the online community is happy.

### **C. Risk to reputation**

An organisation with a social media presence risks their online reputation by opening themselves up to online attacks by an unhappy online community. The following quotation introduces the concept of *risk to reputation*:

*“Thousands and thousands of comments being posted on all our social media channels and a lot of them hate speech and a lot of them incitement to violence. Many hours were spent on our social media platforms trying to respond and diffuse the situation. The one thing that we have realised by having real-time communication channels with customers is that suddenly, we are accountable in a very real, real way”* (OrgA.Conference\_1).

Organisation A suffered a serious online reputation challenge on a labour related issue. As a consequence, Organisation A made the decision to: *“close our Facebook page and I put up a post saying that labour issues is a national debate and we are simply not prepared to host this kind of vitriol any longer. We must put our customers first and many, many customers have asked us to stop posting this vitriol. We will re-open our page as soon as we think we can resume reasonable discussions”* (OrgA.Conference\_1).

Organisation A recommended some techniques on how to deal with an online crisis: *“(1) The company needs to be upfront and it is something we as the social media team had to feed back into the business, (2) To manage a risk to the organisation's reputation the first thing is the speed of information gathering, (3) you also have to answer really quick and say as quickly as possible the basics, (4) Now that we as organisations need to be more transparent as brands, people (online community) need more senior interactions. We really need senior management presence on Twitter and if you do have a company that don't have a digital native on your senior management body it is a real problem because it is something you cannot fake. This is one of the educational interventions I must do with the business, and (5) being thorough and following all the conversations down all the rabbit holes and making sure that you closed off each one because they can all flare up taking each influencer and telling your side of the story”* (OrgA.Conference\_1).

### **D. Organisational marketing campaign initiatives**

Social media and organisational marketing campaigns are interrelated. The quotation below introduces the concept of *organisational marketing campaign initiatives* and the role social media plays:

“Our Spring/Summer campaign is happening now and it is our big campaign of the year. Launching Spring/Summer fashion and this is the first time we had an OmniChannel campaign. It was quite a long campaign of 14 weeks. We made very clear conversational arcs for each week where we launched a new product or trend every Monday and kept the conversations going with our bloggers<sup>9</sup>. The campaign was covered socially on all our social media channels” (OrgA.Conference\_1).

## **E. Product information and descriptions**

The quotation below introduces the concept of product information and descriptions which outlines the type of information being shared on social media by organisation A:

“I have many stories to tell. I have 100s of recipes to share, lots of trend information and how to Youtube videos. I built this significant amount of interesting content when we were rebuilding the website that integrates the content and our products, and now it’s about using that content to get conversations started with our customers on our social media channels” (OrgA.Conference\_1).

### *4.4.1.3. Data Slice 3 - Official office document [OrgA.OfficialDoc1]*

The online community was identified as an important online partner when it came to social media use. I needed to understand why the online community was important and how this importance influenced the use of social media. The source selected was an official office document (OrgA.OfficialDoc1). The document discusses the reasons why the organisation decided to use social media and the importance of its online community when engaging on social media. This made the source appropriate to answer the questions that arose in the previous data slice. Previous analytical memos (from previous two data slices) were also reviewed as part of my analysis. The supporting discussion will focus firstly on those relevant concepts that emerged initially from this data slice, then those concepts identified previously, and corroborated by evidence in this data slice.

## **Emergent Concepts**

### **A. Content quality**

During my analysis, content quality as a concept started to emerge with the focus on posting quality content onto social media. The quotation below introduces the concept of content quality and its importance when it comes to social media following:

“Content is King (important), meaning that you need to create quality information, share quality content which includes a high number of meaningful comments and quality blog posts” (OrgA.OfficialDoc1).

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<sup>9</sup> Bloggers are individuals or groups who run their own website where they post updates and have conversations.

## **Corroborated Concepts**

### **A. Customers speaking directly to the organisation**

Negative social media posts about an organisation could impact the organisation's online brand if these posts are not addressed by the organisation. The following quotation corroborates the concept of *customers speaking directly to the organisation* previously identified and highlights the importance of taking online posts on social media seriously:

*“Online conversations will happen, with or without the organisation so for a better control of your brand, it is important for an organisation to participate in the conversations and once you trigger a conversation, you should not leave it”* (OrgA.OfficialDoc1).

### **B. Real-time conversations with customers**

Rapid response by an organisation to comments have a value-add component. The quotation below corroborates the concept of *real-time conversations with customers* from the first data slice:

*“Real-time engagement on social media adds value by having a quick turnaround time”* (OrgA.OfficialDoc1).

### **C. Following community conversations**

Community conversations have influencing power and that is why organisations should follow these conversations. The quotation below corroborates the concept of *following community conversations*: revealed in the first data slice:

*“Follow your customers and go where they go. Customers meet on different social media platforms where they communicate and share content and through this process they influence one another”* (OrgA.OfficialDoc1).

#### *4.4.1.4. Data Slice 4 - Interview with Facebook expert [OrgA.Interview\_2]*

What was emerging was a type of storytelling process. However, I was not sure how it worked, why it was important and what its influence was on social media use. I needed to do further investigations into storytelling. The data source selected was the Facebook expert [OrgA.Interview\_2] in organisation A, who had worked at the organisation for four years. This role is responsible for the organisational use of Facebook. This source was appropriate because I obtained a detailed understanding of how Facebook was being used within the organisation, which included how the storytelling process took place. Previous analytical memos (from previous three data slices) were also reviewed as part of my analysis. The supporting discussion will focus firstly on those relevant concepts that emerged initially from this data slice, then those concepts identified previously, and corroborated by evidence in this data slice.

## **Emergent Concepts**

### **A. Facebook use by the organisation**

Facebook use by the organisation is seen as valuable for customer (community) care and marketing. These activities are intertwined and not easily separated. The quotation below illustrates the concept of *Facebook use by the organisation*:

*“The business sees Facebook as a replacement for a call centre and customer care where we now have to deal with a huge volume in customer care queries. At the moment, I would say Facebook is more customer care than marketing. We can push out all our marketing posts, but customers would still comment on our posts and complain or they would completely change the whole subject under discussion. For example, say we are posting about a new clothing item now in our store, a customer could change the flow of the communications by commenting on being at our store, buying some apples and they were rotten and request help”* (OrgA.Interview\_2).

The quotation also highlights a challenge experienced in the organisation on how best to use Facebook.

### **B. Instagram use by the organisation**

The social media platform of Instagram is starting to see an increase in popularity, as illustrated by the quote below:

*“Instagram is growing the fastest. Instagram is quite big now with the younger audience. I think that it’s just the big thing now because of its visual content”* (OrgA.Interview\_2).

The organisation hence has to consider how to respond, hence the concept of *Instagram use by the organisation*:

### **C. Social media following**

The organisational following on social media varies across platforms hence the concept of *social media following* emerged as illustrated by the quote below:

*“At the moment, Facebook and Twitter have the biggest audience but Instagram is growing the fastest”* (OrgA.Interview\_2).

### **D. Online community and organisation power dynamic**

The power dynamic between the organisation and its online community was found to be complicated leading to the concept of *online community and organisation power dynamic* as illustrated by the following quotes:

*“I would say the audience controls what happens more and the conversation only ends when the customer says it ends. I don’t necessarily want to go there but they control the conversation”* (OrgA.Interview\_2).

*“You never know what you going to see when you log in and go onto the company’s social media platforms. I’ve learnt before I post any marketing on our channels I first go back and go through all our customer feedback first, because the mistake I could make is post something about the company’s product and then there is complaints about the product, because it has happened to me before so now I know before I post anything I go through all the complaints and make sure that everything is okay and then post”* (OrgA.Interview\_2).

### **E. Community posting of complaints, questions and queries**

The number and variety of complaints, questions and queries vary across platforms. The quotation below illustrates the concept of community posting of complaints, questions and queries:

*“There are so many ways to complain on Facebook as compared to Twitter. If the online community wants us to know that they are complaining about something they tag<sup>10</sup> us in. On Facebook, you can complain on our wall, you can complain on someone else’s complaint by hijacking their complaint. You can complain on our posts, you can complain privately in our inbox and you can complain in our review section”* (OrgA.Interview\_2).

### **F. Addressing community concerns through social media**

Addressing community concerns is a large component of organisational social media activity, which hence keeps the social media team busy. Many hours are spent working on community concerns. The quotation below illustrates the concept of addressing community concerns through social media:

*“Definitely more customer care queries on Facebook, so you have to explore each area each and every day to make sure everything is okay and some people go far back to posts of 6 months ago”* (OrgA.Interview\_2).

### **G. Tailoring content**

Tailoring content is an important activity for the Facebook expert. The quotation that follows illustrates the concept of tailoring content:

*“I support business campaigns in beauty, kids, fashion, men, women, homeware, financial services and I try to incorporate that into my plan and then push tailored content of various articles, videos and recipes online”* (OrgA.Interview\_2).

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<sup>10</sup> Tags are keyword descriptions used to identify images or text that can be found online. Identical tags can be linked together allowing online users to search for similar or related content.

## **H. Experiencing social media use failures**

The Facebook expert highlighted the occurrence of social media use failures. The quotation below hence illustrates the concept of experiencing social media use failures:

*“You want to help the customer immediately, but you can’t always. You are dependent on other people. If I have a query on something simple like does the store stock shoes in a specific size? I need to liaise with someone to find that out and if that person is not available then you know it takes time. It is a simple question, but I can’t answer it immediately. I don’t know everything, but the customers expect you to know everything and they don’t understand. You can’t tell the customer that you only one person sitting in-front of Facebook trying to help them and at the same time I am also busy with other things not related to community care” (OrgA.Interview\_2).*

### **Corroborated Concepts**

#### **A. Integrating the organisational website and social media**

The concept of integrating the organisational website and social media which emerged from the first data slice was corroborated in this interview where the challenge of distinguishing between the content appropriate for posting on each of the social communication channels was highlighted:

*“Brand managers are all passionate about what they do and the plan is for each one to have a little space on the website and there are certain things on the website that wouldn’t do well on social media but you get that pressure because this is on the website I want people to know about it” (OrgA.Interview\_2).*

#### **B. Collective storytelling**

The quotation below corroborates the previously defined concept of collective storytelling, where the conversation is about better understanding the community’s needs and wants, and allowing for a more informed conversation. The quotation also confirms that the conversations are at a more personal level:

*“We are creating conversations around our products and through the conversations we are trying to better understand our customers. We don’t want to be as formal as customer care in their communication with customers, where customer care would use sincere apologies and we would say that we are really sorry that you had a bad experience or we are terribly sorry that you had a bad experience and we try to maintain the same tone across all our channels” (OrgA.Interview\_2).*

#### **C. Age profile of the social media community**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of age profile of the social media community. It extends understanding to highlight that Instagram as a social media platform is increasing in popularity:

*“Our Facebook age group ranges from 30 to 40 years and the same for Youtube, with a younger audience both on Twitter and on Instagram, where Instagram is really growing in popularity” (OrgA.Interview\_2).*

#### **D. Risk to reputation**

The following quotation corroborates the concept of *risk to reputation*, and extends the concept by giving an important reason why organisation A decided to use social media as an engagement tool - to join the online conversation with the focus on trying to manage the risk to their online reputation:

*“If we are not on social media they (online community) would still be talking about us (organisations) on social media so it is about joining the conversation and in a small way influencing the conversation where we can, helping customers and maintaining a good reputation” (OrgA.Interview\_2).*

#### **E. Organisational marketing campaign initiatives**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of *organisational marketing campaign initiatives* highlighting the supportive role of social media:

*“Social media is still seen to play a supportive role. In some instances, like in fashion they bring us in quite early and brainstorm with us, but we as social media mostly play a supportive role where the campaign is planned from start to finish and once the campaign has been signed off social media gets involved to support the business teams. The organisation wants to sell these products and we will showcase them on these social media channels” (OrgA.Interview\_2).*

#### **F. Generating interest in products**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of *generating interest in products*, and provides an example of how the engagement between the online community and the organisation will take place when discussing a product:

*“We use social media to create a conversation around our products. We might ask the question: We have the same style black and blue shoe which one do you prefer? This is to generate interest and create conversation around our products and maybe in our response we can say you can purchase the pair of shoes at shop B. These types of engagements are light-hearted and it is to make our social media platforms more fun and in this way the organisation is trying to keep some control over the conversations happening online” (OrgA.Interview\_2).*

#### **G. Product information and descriptions**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of *product information and descriptions*:

*“The audience doesn’t want us pushing them straight to a product without giving them content associated with the product. They want to know how to use the product and that is how the content*

helps. So, if we launch a new type of cheese then create content on what you can do with the cheese or we launch a new fashion trend then create content on how to wear the trend” (OrgA.Interview\_2).

## H. Interrelating content and social media within the organisation

The following quotation provides corroboration for the concept of *interrelating content and social media within the organisation*, where the relationship between content and social media is of a circular nature and extends the concept to highlight the mutual dependency between content and social media:

“Social media and digital content are very dependent on each other, without social media, digital content would mainly use email to share their content, nobody would know what the organisation is offering and at the same time social media is dependent on digital content because without them we wouldn’t have much content and social media wouldn’t be as fruitful. It is a cycle and we are depended on each other” (OrgA.Interview\_2).

What becomes clear is that without content, social media would not add much value to the organisation and without social media, the organisation would not be able to create an effective online brand presence for itself, and thus struggle to generate excitement for their products.

## I. Social media team

The following quotation from OrgA.Interview\_2 provides corroboration for the concept of *social media team*:

“We have a person dedicated to looking after Twitter. I do Facebook but I have someone that helps me with private messages and she is also looking after Pinterest and Instagram” (OrgA.Interview\_2).

### 4.4.1.5. Data Slice 5 - Interview with social media manager [OrgA.Interview\_3]

My analysis identified that the social media team had a relationship with the rest of the business. This relationship had an influence on social media use, thus further investigations were warranted. The age profile of the online community was mentioned and I needed to understand how it influences social media use. The source selected was OrgA.Interview\_3, who is the social media manager in organisation A and who had worked at the organisation for about a one year. The role is responsible for managing the social media experts, and the work schedule within the team, as well as building relationships within the organisation. Working closely with the organisation and engaging with the online community made the source appropriate for answering the questions that came up in the previous data slice. Previous analytical memos (from previous four data slices) were also reviewed as part of my analysis. The supporting discussion will focus firstly on those relevant concepts that emerged initially from this data slice, then those concepts identified previously, and corroborated by evidence in this data slice.

## **Emergent Concepts**

### **A. Collective interest in social media**

The quotation below introduces the concept of *collective interest in social media* and highlights a significant growth in awareness by organisations of social media as a business tool and the potential benefits of using social media for engagement and communication with their online community:

*“As a business, there is a much bigger shift towards social because the organisation has realised that it is cost effective to use social media for engagement and secondly it is the quickest way to reach a lot of people. Most of our audience is Living Standards Measure<sup>11</sup> (LSM) 8 to 10 and they all are in the social media space, so yes there is definitely a stronger shift to social, including Instagram and Twitter into campaigns” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

### **B. Planning cycles**

The quotation below introduces the concept of *planning cycles*, where the social media manager is responsible for delivering the tasks placed on the content schedule that have been approved by the Head of Online Content:

*“In my role as social media manager, I am responsible for the work activities on the content schedule and we work in weekly planning cycles. We set up a content schedule a week in advance that has been approved by the Head of Online Content. The schedule has all the campaign events in there that we need to be talking about, plus some fun activities that we then implement. We have a generic content schedule, and each social media expert will adapt the content to fit each platform. From Facebook and Twitter, we then follow onto Instagram and Pinterest falls separately as it doesn't have a defined content schedule. This is because it is a very visible platform so we will share pictures, but we cannot really follow exactly what Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are doing” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

The reference to weekly planning highlights the frequency of the planning cycle and OrgA.Interview\_3 also explains how the planning cycle cascades from Facebook, to Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest.

### **C. Online community engagement**

The quotations below introduce the concept of *online community engagement*:

*“Social media platforms are a vehicle for conversations with our consumers and it is not just about broadcasting. It is very much about engagement and interaction and that two-way conversation where a social media platform just enables that conversation to happen better. This engagement could take the form of a focus group or a customer services study” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

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<sup>11</sup> The Living Standards Measure (LSM) is a population segmenting tool which groups people according to their living standards, i.e. degree of urbanisation and the property they own.

*“A relationship building tool that opens up the conversation in a far more personal and intimate way with the consumer, to really get their feedback. Other uses for social media are as a creative outlet where the online community can share their thoughts. Organisation A’s focus is on customer care and relationship building through community engagement. A secondary focus is product pushing (marketing) where organisation A pushes really valuable content and the product flows (marketing) through from that” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

#### **D. Social media operational leadership**

The quotation below introduces the concept of social media operational leadership as important:

*“I am the social media manager at organisation A. I manage the online social media experts. I am responsible for all the campaign work as well as our influencer works that is building relationships within the social media space. I am also responsible for all the reporting that goes on. The team members collate the work and I oversee and make sure we got everything and then later feed back to the head of online content” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

#### **E. Digital content team**

The quotation below highlights the importance of the concept of digital content team:

*“The content team is the experts when it comes to content creation relating to the company and its products. We want to position the company as the experts and the quality authority so we need to be giving them quality content and the content team is writing the right content that is on trend and that is topical, it is current and easily digestible” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

Looking through previous data slices I noticed that the following excerpt from OrgA.Interview\_1 helps to give insight into the types of responsibility: *“we have a digital fashion editor and a digital foods editor” (OrgA.Interview\_1).*

### **Corroborated Concepts**

#### **A. Facebook use by the organisation**

The following quotation corroborates the concept of Facebook use by the organisation, and highlights the emergence of a shift in popularity within the organisation from Facebook to Twitter and Instagram:

*“If you look at the South African market the mass is still on Facebook so Facebook is still very important to us for campaigns and posting, but we are going through a shift at the moment where Facebook is starting to fall aside and we starting to focus more on Twitter and Instagram where the market is showing a strong growth rate” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

Even with this shift taking place, Facebook is still the *most popular* social media channel.

### **B. Twitter use by the organisation**

The following quotation corroborates the concept of *Twitter use by the organisation* and gives an example of how Facebook and Twitter are interrelated:

*“Posts will be done on Facebook and the content will be tweaked by making the content shorter and more concise so that we can post it on Twitter and get the content re-tweeted. Twitter is becoming more important to us for its ease of accessibility and for building relationships with our customers”* (OrgA.Interview\_3).

Twitter follows Facebook as being a *popular* social media channel.

### **C. Instagram use by the organisation**

The following quotation corroborates the concept of *Instagram use by the organisation* and extends the concept by highlighting an increase in smartphone use and a reduction in data costs as factors possibly helping the increase in the popularity and use of Instagram:

*“Instagram is a beautiful platform with beautiful visuals. In South Africa, we see smartphone penetration is going up and more people are jumping onto Instagram and data costs are coming down and things are now more accessible, we seeing a major rise in video content and that is where Instagram is coming in with less barriers for using Instagram”* (OrgA.Interview\_3).

Even though Instagram is growing in popularity, it still lags behind Facebook and Twitter as the *least popular* social media channel.

### **D. Social media following**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of *social media following* and extends the concept by providing a breakdown of the demographics linked to the users associated with the popular social media platforms:

*“Facebook has been around longer and I joined Facebook when I was in high school so we started to grow with that platform so the mass is between 18 and 35 and it is a mix of black, white and coloured<sup>12</sup>. Twitter is very much the younger market from about 16 to the 30s predominately white to begin with, but now we are seeing a major surge in black Twitter, which is really fascinating because it is a different culture and community, and Instagram is for the very, very young I would say 14 to 24 they are playing in that space and majority white and black on Instagram”* (OrgA.Interview\_3).

### **E. Collective understanding of social media**

The following quotations corroborate the concept of *collective understanding of social media*:

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<sup>12</sup> Coloured is a term used in Southern Africa to indicate a grouping of people of mixed ethnic origin.

“Social media is really flexible and it is also very quick to announce something on social. We announce it straight away and we don’t have to wait for a print run which is probably weird to a corporate because corporates move quite slowly, so social media is quick and a flexible medium which has loads of benefits” (OrgA.Interview\_3).

“South Africa has been in the social media space for quite a long time, but corporates I do find move quite a bit slower than the earlier adopters. So much of this job is about education. Like what does it mean to trend? Can your posts be seen on all types of mobile phones? Can people see things on featured phones? So, a lot of it is about education and we cannot put everything on social media, we need to be strategic about it and the organisation has been really open to it” (OrgA.Interview\_3).

#### **F. Community posting of complaints, questions and queries**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of community posting of complaints, questions and queries and extends the concept by explaining that the constant responding to complaints, questions and queries is a challenge for the social media and digital content team:

“On a Monday morning, we have a lot of customer queries and complaints from the weekend, which means the bulk of Monday is spent on clearing the weekend backlog. Once done, the customer services part is out of the way. The challenge is that this exercise is time consuming. Additionally, a posted article also results in several questions from the customers that the content team needs to answer” (OrgA.Interview\_3).

#### **G. Addressing community concerns through social media**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of addressing community concerns through social media and extends the concept by giving an insight on the number of customer care related queries the team needs to deal with:

“People don’t understand how time consuming it is dealing with online complaints and questions posted by customers. They say it is one or two questions, but actually it can be between 60 and 120, so what the content team has got to do is go find the answers to the questions and link them back to the article, and this is time consuming” (OrgA.Interview\_3).

#### **H. Content quality**

The quotations below corroborate and discuss how important the concept of content quality is:

“Without the content team, we would literally be sharing LOLcats<sup>13</sup> and jokes and product price changes so it is a very critical role. I’ve (social media manager) gone on about this a lot in social media, it is the online community’s personal space and you need to add value to their life. The

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<sup>13</sup> LOLCats are funny pictures of animals like cats in human-like poses with a funny caption.

*information needs to be relevant and compelling and it needs to be something that the community wants to follow organisation A for. Our best performing sections are our recipes and people love seeing those dishes and love being inspired. Organisation A is a very aspirational brand so people would want to try our recipes. The content adds a lot of value to the social media experience, the content team writes such strong valuable content that social can leverage. If you look at our competitors, they mostly have images and once and a while there is some content. There is no take away (low following) from the engagement, and what we find is that our recipes get shared a lot and the longevity of this sharing lasts much longer than just sharing a picture. It is about giving them valuable content and we couldn't do that honestly without the content team” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

This quotation highlights the close interaction between the social media team and the content team when it comes to creating quality content: *“The social media manager sits with the content team and plans the campaigns for the following week. We also discuss how the campaign can be built into the content, looking at ways of getting the most from crowdsourcing<sup>14</sup> and making the content being shared both valuable and also relevant” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

What becomes clear is that high quality content will get more engagement and a greater following, while low quality content will struggle to get an online following.

### **I. Feeding of community comments back into content**

The quotations below corroborate the concept of *feeding of community comments back into content*, and provides an example of how organisation A would engage with its community:

*“The social media team would start off the conversation on Monday by asking a question like ‘What is your favourite curry?’ and then a member of the content team will sit on the question and respond to each comment individually, thus keeping the conversation going. The next step is for a digital content team member to collate all the best answers coming from that trend, and put them into an article that is linked to the company’s products, thus providing shopping suggestions as well. The social media team then goes on to social media when the article is ready to be published and then will post the article, giving feedback to the customers on the question asked, ‘What is your favourite curry?’” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

*“The cycle continues by the customers probably responding with more tips (customer feedback) on the article which the content team will then respond to with follow-up articles and more products that could be purchased. So, it is a very circular relationship” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

The organisation needs to *actively* engage with their online community to ensure the continued success of content generation through their circular relationship.

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<sup>14</sup> Crowdsourcing is sourcing services or information on a particular topic from a group of people often via the Internet.

## **J. Aligning social media and the organisation**

The following quotation provides corroboration for the concept of *aligning social media and the organisation*:

“Like any business, it is better to not work in silos and to communicate as much as possible which could be a challenge” (OrgA.Interview\_3).

## **K. Social media strategic leadership**

The following quotation from OrgA.Interview\_3 provides corroboration for the concept of *social media strategic leadership* by highlighting the reporting line to the digital editor:

“Online social media experts report to me as the social media manager and I report into the digital editor” (OrgA.Interview\_3).

### *4.2.1.6. Data Slice 6 - Interview with Twitter expert [OrgA.Interview\_4]*

The teams involved in social media use within the organisation were identified. Accordingly, I needed more clarity on what the teams did and how they influence social media use. Facebook and Twitter were used differently. I therefore needed to understand how and why their use differed and what their influence was on social media use. The source selected was OrgA.Interview\_4 who is the Twitter expert in organisation A and who had worked at the organisation for three years. This role is responsible for the organisational use of Twitter. This source was appropriate because I subsequently got an understanding of how Twitter was being used within the organisation and with this information I could start unpacking how and why Facebook and Twitter were being used differently. The interview also covered the work relationships amongst the teams. Previous analytical memos (from the previous five data slices) were also reviewed as part of my analysis. The supporting discussion will focus firstly on those relevant concepts that emerged initially from this data slice, then those concepts identified previously, and corroborated by evidence in this data slice.

## **Emergent Concepts**

### **A. Joint crafting of content by organisation and community**

The following quotation introduces the concept of *joint crafting of content by organisation and community*:

“The engagement with the customer is circular in that the organisation or the customer would start off the conversation and the conversation will continue until the customer is happy, following a circular flow from creating content to social media posts and back to creating content” (OrgA.Interview\_4).

## **Corroborated Concepts**

### **A. Characteristics of social media for use**

The following quotation corroborates the concept of *characteristics of social media for use* and extends it by identifying certain criteria the organisation looks at, like the length of content being posted for a campaign and whether the content type is text and/or pictures:

*“Content stories will be posted on the best suited social media platform. Facebook is used for longer content stories and Twitter for more quick and short content stories. Visual media is posted on Instagram and Pinterest”* (OrgA.Interview\_4).

The content requirements for each social media campaign will be compared with the characteristics of each social media platform to determine the best social channel to use.

### **B. Social media landscape**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of *social media landscape* and the fact that the type of social media platforms used within the organisation is varied:

*“We have Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Google plus and Youtube and for reporting the company uses Radian6, Socialbakers and Facebook Insights<sup>15</sup>”* (OrgA.Interview\_4).

Linkedin is not mentioned since the organisation is not actively using the social media platform, and Facebook insights is mentioned as an additional reporting tool.

### **C. Online community and organisation power dynamic**

The below quotation corroborates the concept of *online community and organisation power dynamic*:

*“We are representing social media within the organisation, so we might or the customer would start off the conversation and the conversation will continue until the customer is happy”* (OrgA.Interview\_4).

### **D. OmniChannel**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of *OmniChannel* and extends the concept by explaining *OmniChannel* as a strategic communication intent followed by organisation A to facilitate seamless communication across all social media platforms:

*“To create an OmniChannel experience for the customer where the customer is in contact with the company throughout the engagement journey. The strategy is about providing an OmniChannel experience for our customers so that the customer is able to get information on the company on*

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<sup>15</sup> Facebook Insights is an analytical tool that can be used to track user activity on a Facebook site.

whatever medium the customer chooses to interact with the company, and the strategic intent from leadership is that communication should be seamless” (OrgA.Interview\_4).

### **E. Planning cycles**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of planning cycles: “The team has planning cycles for upcoming business campaigns and delivers work based on a schedule” (OrgA.Interview\_4).

### **F. Online community engagement**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of online community engagement: “We use social media to engage and communicate with customers, allowing for real-time engagement with the customer and it is cheap (social media is not an in-house application that has licensing agreements and maintenance costs) as well. The company’s active online engagement will help manage and address any customer issues or concerns (customer care)” (OrgA.Interview\_4).

### **G. Digital content team**

The following quotation from OrgA.Interview\_4 provides corroboration for the concept of digital content team: “The content team creates high quality content and the social media team is responsible for posting the content onto social media” (OrgA.Interview\_4).

### **H. Link between digital content, social media and strategy**

The following quotation from OrgA.Interview\_4 provides corroboration for the concept of link between digital content, social media and strategy and extends the concept by relating the content and social media to the Omnichannel experience whilst at the same time working towards achieving the strategic goals set out by the organisation:

“Using content and social media we able to build our brand awareness and online reputation, increase our reach through Omnichannel and speaking with one voice across all social media platforms” (OrgA.Interview\_4).

### **I. Experiencing social media use failures**

The following quotation from OrgA.Interview\_4 provides corroboration for the concept of experiencing social media use failures:

“Social media users could send out a post which could have spelling and grammatical errors in it or your post could contain incorrect facts in it which could impact the company’s brand when it goes live” (OrgA.Interview\_4).

Not taking the time to check work before posting content, can negatively impact the organisation’s online brand and lead to strategy failures.

#### 4.2.1.7. Data slice 7 - Review of official video [OrgA.OfficialVideo1]

My analysis indicated that content creation and social media mutually supported each other when it comes to the use of social media. I therefore needed to understand how and why. The source selected was OrgA.OfficialVideo1 in which the video promotes the benefits of social media use within the organisation. The source was appropriate because it discusses content creation and its importance when it comes to social media use. No new concepts emerged during the coding phase.

#### **Corroborated Concepts**

The discussion below includes those emerging concepts that have been corroborated and extended by OrgA.OfficialVideo1.

#### **A. Tailoring content**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of *tailoring content* and further explains the use of social media analytics to help tailor content for the different social media platforms:

*“I think very practically the Socialbaker analytics have allowed us to drive a lot more traffic (online visitors) to our website and hopefully to sales conversions. It has definitely increased our engagement levels because we are able to tailor our content more coherently to each social media channel and I think it made the business sit up and take notice of the importance of resourcing my area”* (OrgA.OfficialVideo1).

#### 4.2.1.8. Data slice 8 - Second organisational conference proceeding [OrgA.Conference\_2]

Building onto the content creation theme, my analysis identified that both the organisation and community were responsible for content creation. They were co-creating content. I therefore needed to understand how this co-creation of content influenced the use of social media. The source selected was OrgA.Conference\_2, which covers the proceedings at an international conference on the organisational use of social media that Organisation A attended in 2014 and was one of the key speakers. The source was appropriate because it continues the discussion on social media use within an organisational context, with reference to Organisation A and with a focus on co-creation. No new concepts emerged during the coding phase.

#### **Corroborated Concepts**

The discussion below includes those emerging concepts that have been corroborated and extended by OrgA.Conference\_2.

#### **A. Collective interest in social media**

The quotations below corroborate the concept of *collective interest in social media*, highlighting the growth from obscurity to becoming an important function within an organisation, where social media use has the potential to be really beneficial to the organisation:

“Before the social media team was seen as just a fluffy branch, where slightly techie people are playing in the corner and all of the sudden we are now front and centre” (OrgA.Conference\_2).

The increased attention on social media also means an increase in social media related requests. OrgA.Conference\_2 highlights capacity issues and the risk of not being able to adequately deal with all online related activities: “We deal with requests as fast as possible. I keep saying that there is a fifteen-minute limit, but the social media manager says that we only work nine to five and can only do what is possible during this time” (OrgA.Conference\_2).

## **B. Joint crafting of content by organisation and community**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of *joint crafting of content by organisation and community*, and gives an example illustrating that the conversation is co-owned by both the organisation and the online community and on a topic, they both are interested in:

“If I want to start a conversation on handbags because we have just launched a new in-house brand, but the online conversation moves onto discussing shoes, I can’t go and say, yes, but back to the handbags, that is not a conversation, the customer wants to talk about shoes, the content should then go into discussing shoes” (OrgA.Conference\_2).

## **C. Social media operational leadership**

The following quotation from OrgA.Conference\_2 provides corroboration for the concept of *social media operational leadership* by confirming the role of the social media manager:

“Part of my structure as digital editor is the social media manager who handles our influencer strategies and steps in when there is a crisis” (OrgA.Conference\_2).

### *4.2.1.9. Data slice 9 - Interview with digital and social media officer [OrgB.Interview\_1]*

A continuing theme of my analysis was to focus on how and why organisations use social media when engaging with their online community. This line of enquiry continued in the case of organisation B. The source selected for the first encounter was OrgB.Interview\_1, who is the digital and social media officer and has been in the role for close to one year. The role is responsible for the use of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn at Organisation B. The source was appropriate because I was able to continue unpacking social media use within the organisation. Previous analytical memos (from the six previous data slices) were also reviewed as part of my analysis of this data slice. The supporting discussion will focus firstly on those relevant concepts that emerged initially from this data slice, then those concepts identified previously, and corroborated by evidence in this data slice.

## **Emergent Concepts**

### **A. Reporting on social media use**

The quotation below introduces the concept of *reporting on social media use* where social reporting is starting to play an important role in the planning of social media work activities:

*“As digital and social media officer, I am responsible for compiling a report on social media and what happened in that week and to provide the analytics and insights for that week on what worked, what was good and what was bad and we use this information as input into planning for the next week or for the coming months” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

### **B. Taking accountability for organisational online image**

The following quotation introduces the concept of *taking accountability for organisational online image*:

*“People posts comments, they comment what they like and it is out there in the world where everyone can see whereas in the past you would write an email and complain about not being happy, but now they can just write it on your status which is okay because then you can deal with it. We do respond to negative comments directed at organisation B and try to assist” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

Appeasing the online community has an influence on an organisation’s online reputation. Accordingly, the importance of engagement and keeping the online community happy. A follow-on question was asked on how the organisation takes accountability for their online image. The answer is discussed in the following quotations and explains how organisation B takes accountability for its online image by managing negative comments in a positive way:

*“We don’t delete comments that are bad just because they are bad. Our first priority is a positive brand name. If there is anything negative out there on social media about organisation B we look at the comments, we actually check comments every day on Facebook and Twitter so if someone posted a negative comment we look at what the comment is about. It could just be a random statement or a genuine query about something and then we try to categorise the negative comments to see what we can answer and address and what we cannot. Social media allows people to say whatever they like so if it is really random and it cannot be helped then we would just leave it there” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

*“We are very transparent so if someone wants to contact us on a post or a video we uploaded they can email us or Facebook us or Tweet us the message and we would direct it to the relevant people or if we could answer it we would. On Facebook, we constantly have people asking about admissions and applications and we respond to those and where we cannot we give it to the admissions who would send us an update and we will post the feedback” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

*“A challenge could be posting wrong information and it gets distributed goes viral<sup>16</sup>. Information on social media travels so fast and when a mistake is made it is harder to rectify than when you were using tradition channels of communication, but this is counteracted by the approval process we have in place”* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

### **C. Content sharing**

The quotation below introduces the concept of content sharing and the role of social media in the sharing of content:

*“We try to share the most relevant, the best content that we can from organisation B. Social Media allows us to share relevant content that we wouldn’t otherwise have been able to share and to reach as many people that we can reach. So, anything that goes onto our website we also share on social media and so it reaches many more people. We will be able to share our information and stories more widely by the end of the year”* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

### **D. Brand awareness**

The quotations below introduce the concept of brand awareness and that building a brand awareness needs to be a conscious effort by the organisation:

*“To try and create an online brand awareness for organisation B that is positive, so anything we post and anything we engage in should promote the brand of organisation B”* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

*“Creating an online awareness associated with your brand helps people know that they can speak to us on our social media platforms and that over time they will refer to our social media platforms as relevant content sharing platforms where they can get important information”* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

### **E. A supportive social media strategy**

The quotation below introduces the concept of a supportive social media strategy with the aim of achieving synergy:

*“What is important is to set the foundations through the strategy. If everyone operating social media accounts understand our strategy, and that they are working towards achieving it, then I think we will overcome our challenges”* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

A follow-on question was asked for more elaboration on the challenges, and how a social media strategy can help with achieving synergy, which is answered in the following quotation:

*“We are working on identifying all the social media accounts being used within the organisation. Prior to this we didn’t know who owned what accounts, but as we are going through the year, working with the strategy we now know who owns what accounts and the numbers. With this information in hand we*

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<sup>16</sup> An image or text that is circulated widely and rapidly on the Internet from one user to the next.

can now also share information with them on social media and avoid duplication. In this way, they can post things and we can retweet<sup>17</sup> their posts than actually drafting a post ourselves. In this way, we create that synergy. This creates a more unified company voice coming out that is supported by our strategy, which drives the foundational principles for all the social media accounts” (OrgB.Interview\_1).

## **F. Benefits realisation**

The idea of the benefits associated with the use of social media started forming as I read through the interviews. To test the idea, I posed a question to OrgB.Interview\_1 of what organisational benefits are associated with the use of social media. The quotation below introduces *benefits realisation* as a concept:

*“The benefits are being relevant to the times and we communicate with more people who might have not gone to our website. So, we communicate with more people, we have a greater reach to different people across the world and we are able to engage with our audience in a way we wouldn’t have been able to do just through our website. We can answer questions in real time, we can join in conversations that are going on in real time so those are all benefits of social media for an organisation and business strategy and I really think the benefits far outweigh the challenges”* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

## **Corroborated Concepts**

### **A. Characteristics of social media for use**

The category *characteristics of social media for use* first emerged in organisation A and now the category is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_1, showing relevance to both the cases of organisation A and organisation B. The interviewee expresses excitement with the variety of uses social media offers to the organisation and gives a practical example of how content stories are linked up with the most appropriate social media platform:

*“It is a platform or space where you can do social networking with different people without limitations of geographical space where you can share any kind of content. You can share pictures and you can share videos and there are different platforms to cater for different types of content and I would say it is very exciting”* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

*“On Facebook, we can fit much more information in one post and that translates into how many times we actually post on these different platforms. For Facebook, usually on a day, on average, we would post 2 to 3 posts a day. On Twitter, it might be 9 to 10 or less or more depending on what is happening. So yes, we think differently on Facebook where you can put more information, whereas for Twitter we are limited by the character space which could lead to us dividing one story that we are trying to share into 3 tweets, or we might first decide to post a picture up on Twitter and then later on post the*

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<sup>17</sup> An action of forwarding a message on Twitter.

*supporting statements, whereas on Facebook you would have one post containing everything. So, it is definitely different when we create content for Facebook and for Twitter” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

### **B. Twitter use by the organisation**

The concept of *Twitter use by the organisation* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_1, showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. What is interesting is that organisation A is starting to indicate a shift in importance towards Twitter, whereas in organisation B the importance of Twitter is already visible and is used more than Facebook on a daily basis:

*“We use Twitter more than Facebook for day-to-day communication and engagement where we share the most content and reach out to different people” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

### **C. Social media landscape**

The category *social media landscape* first emerged in organisation A and now the category is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_1, showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. Organisation B is active on less social media platforms, but the platforms are still varied:

*“In organisation B we use Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and we use LinkedIn. Those are the ones we are on currently. For reporting we use Facebook insights, but we would like to use something else because it has been very sporadic and for Twitter we use Twitonomy<sup>18</sup> and for Youtube we use Youtube Analytics<sup>19</sup> and for LinkedIn we haven’t set up any analytical tool yet” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

### **D. Age profile of the social media community**

The concept of *age profile of the social media community* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_1, showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The following quotation extends the concept by highlighting that platforms are not completely age specific and that diversity in age can be found on the platforms itself:

*“Our audience is very diverse although we have many younger individuals following us and that we interact with on social media we also interact a lot with Alumni who could be much older. We also interact with researchers from different universities. On Twitter, our student follows are more but on a platform like LinkedIn we have an older group of people who are either Alumni or prospective staff members looking for jobs. There is diversity across the platforms, but there is also diversity within the*

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<sup>18</sup> Twitonomy is an analytics tool used to provide statistics and user information for Twitter.

<sup>19</sup> It is an analytical tool used to provide statistics and user information for Youtube.

*platforms themselves where we don't have an entirely younger population on Twitter. We do have different age groups using Twitter"* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

### **E. Social media following**

The concept of *social media following* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_1, showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

*"When looking at follow count on the different platforms it would be Facebook that has the most following where currently it is about 41 000 followed by Twitter. We use Twitter more on a day-to-day basis although our follow count is still lower than Facebook"* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

### **F. Planning cycles**

The concept of *planning cycles* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_1, showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation extends the frequency to include daily, monthly and yearly:

*"If anyone has a yearly schedule and wants to give us that information at the beginning of the year we'll accept it and we have a calendar that we use for digital and social media so all the campaign activities that are happening will go into that calendar, but we operate on a weekly schedule more, so we will take from that broad year and month overview and then plan for the next week so we really focus on the coming week. In our schedule template that we use we have our work objectives that we set out at the beginning of every month of what we want to achieve for that month and what we want to showcase for that month"* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

I posed the follow-on question: *"If I may summarise, you have a strategic plan and an operational plan and the operational plan is narrower and focuses more on a monthly view and a weekly turnover. Is that correct?"*

OrgB.Interview\_1 answered: *"Yes, that is exactly what we do and on a day-to-day basis. I work on a schedule for the coming weeks and months ahead, so we work on a schedule and we plan according to the campaign activities that are happening; whatever is happening within organisation B and things we want to highlight"* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

### **G. Aligning social media and the organisation**

The concept of *aligning social media and the organisation* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_1, showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The concept is also extended by explaining the mechanisms they use to become a more integrated organisation:

*“I receive information from different departments and faculties across campus and then we collate that information and make a schedule for what we want to showcase on our social media platforms and on a day to day basis I am in charge of uploading any content to the platforms” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

My follow-on question was whether there is any approval process between these organisational departments and social media, that helps create an integrated mechanism on the content being posted. The response was:

*“The marketing manager approves most of the content before it is posted but for other specific things like properties and services, we do get the media liaison manager to check and approve the facts before it gets posted or sometimes the public relations manager approves” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

*“If something goes wrong in other departments and people are upset, we will try to follow up with the particular department on the issue and ask if there are any updates they want to give the social media team, and then we will share that on social media and we will also try to reply to that person if need be” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

What comes to mind when thinking about social media alignment is the attempt at creating uniformity across the organisation: *“Part of our strategy is to promote synergy between the different organisation B accounts that exist online, because although we manage the main (official) online accounts for organisation B there are other accounts in different departments. So, it is to create synergy amongst all those accounts, to speak with one voice for organisation B and promote the organisation B brand” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

## **H. Digital content team**

The concept of *digital content team*, concerned with the responsibility and composition of the digital content team, first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_1, showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation also extends the concept to highlight that content is also created by the various departments themselves which falls outside of the Communications and Marketing department (CMD):

*“The creation of content is varied. Most of it is done within our team. We have a status meeting every week to decide what needs to be uploaded. We have a marketing manager who is responsible for marketing and so we will discuss what needs to be shared for the next week, but also content creation comes from the departments themselves and sometimes they will send us things as they want it to be uploaded already and then we just take that and fit it into our schedule. So, I think it is varied, I would say more content creation happens here, but we could also get content from other departments as well” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

## I. Link between digital content, social media and strategy

The concept of *link between digital content, social media and strategy* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_1, showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation also enriches the concept to highlight the strategy and its role in linking digital content and social media together:

*“In 2014, we came up with a strategy which we are now using in everything we do in digital content and social media and that wasn’t there before. Essentially, we were thinking of how social media will be done at organisation B as a new thing that is just starting. It is setting our foundational strategic principles for social media use within the organisation. Right now, we are trying to build our reputation on social media since it is in its very beginning stages. Our strategy for social media is based on four main points which are: brand awareness, engagement with our audience, content sharing and building synergy across teams using social media and amongst the many social media accounts. All four strategic principles answer to the introduction of social media as a communication tool at organisation B. We are working towards these strategic goals for 2014 some of them may be carried over to 2015, so ultimately, we are looking at the strategy for the year. It is definitely a long-term vision and anything else that happens will happen within that long-term strategy” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

### 4.2.1.10. Data slice 10 - Interview with deputy director for communications and marketing [OrgB.Interview\_2]

A social media strategy was mentioned and that it played an important role in supporting social media use. I therefore needed to understand more about the supporting role the social media strategy played. Marketing was identified in relation to social media use. What was the importance of this relationship and how does it influence social media use? I needed more clarity. The source selected was OrgB.Interview\_2, who is the deputy director for communications and marketing at organisation B and has been in the role for one year. The role is responsible for managing the social media team, who in turn is responsible for the use of social media in organisation B. The source is appropriate because part of this role is also to map out the strategy for social media use in organisation B. Previous analytical memos (from the prior case and prior interview in Organisation B) were also reviewed as part of my analysis. The supporting discussion will focus firstly on those relevant concepts that emerged initially from this data slice, then those concepts identified previously, and corroborated by evidence in this data slice.

## **Emergent Concepts**

### **A. Researching the organisation’s products**

The quotation below introduces the concept of *researching the organisation’s products* and shows how these research activities could range from mundane to serious:

*“The audience will engage with us on whatever social media platform they choose. They may ask advice about the best universities to attend, what courses to do, which Jammie<sup>20</sup> bus route to take, from the mundane to the very serious questions so from that perspective social media makes absolutely critical sense. We get a lot of questions directed to Facebook about applications” (OrgB.Interview\_2).*

## **B. Discussions that create a shared understanding**

The quotation below introduces the new concept of *discussions that create a shared understanding* where the organisation and their online community work towards finding commonality during their discussions:

*“Using social media to get to grips with what our students know and are aware of. Organisation B uses confessions forums to learn how to deal with things like potential criminal activities that are reported. We can’t as a university turn a blind eye to those, but how do we deal with it? So, we have looked at building relationships with student leaders on campus where these relationships will help us when we need to act against crime taking place on our campus” (OrgB.Interview\_2).*

Social media allows for the creation of online forums where serious issues like crime on campus can be discussed, and through these discussions, a shared understanding about crime levels on campus is made visible and where possible suggestions could be made on how to deal with crime on campus.

## **C. Levels of social media interaction**

From the previous interviews, I got a sense that the rate of social media interaction between the organisation and their online community is increasing. To test this idea, I posed a question to OrgB.Interview\_2 on the levels of social media interaction. The quotation below is in response to my question and introduces the concept of *levels of social media interaction*:

*“A large portion of the information that our community seeks is electronic and more and more they are seeking this information from social media networks” (OrgB.Interview\_2).*

## **D. Challenges in supporting social media growth**

The quotation below introduces the concept of *challenges in supporting social media growth* where one of the consequences associated with the significant growth in social media is that, the current resource base in organisation B is not able to effectively support this growth:

*“At the moment, there is the digital and social media officer who reports to the marketing manager and works with the web editor and that is not enough. You need a team of people working on social media who are managing your online communities, managing all the myriad of questions and issues that gets raised, doing all the analytics, engaging on social and watching the trends. You really need to build a*

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<sup>20</sup> Jammie shuttle is a bus transporting service at organisation B that students and staff can use to travel between the different campuses located across Cape Town.

team, and we are definitely not there. This year for the first-time organisation B has appointed a digital and social media officer and that's a big first for us" (OrgB.Interview\_2).

### **E. Benchmarking**

The quotations below introduce the concept of benchmarking; they discuss how the benchmarking exercises are conducted, why these exercises are important to organisation B:

*"We started benchmarking and this year we looked at the universities just above us and below us on the Times Higher Education World University Rankings and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings. We were looking at them from an online perspective, what are they doing well that we could leverage off and benefit from. We started doing that and we are getting some useful insights in terms of that benchmarking exercise. Then what we have also done is benchmark locally. Comparing and looking at our social media presence, how are we doing, what can we be doing better? So, we have very formal monitoring systems where we do analytics using a variety of measurement tools. We are also doing it anecdotally for our own research, seeing who is above us and who is below us, what are they doing well and what we can be doing better"* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

*"Benchmarking is also critical to organisation B and other tertiary institutions as it allows us to connect with a global audience much easier. So, we are spending a lot of time thinking of how we can expand that global reach which makes sense because organisation B receives a lot of international donor funding for the research we are doing which is a significant revenue source"* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

### **F. Supporting effective conversations**

The quotations below introduce the concept of supporting effective conversations with an example of how organisation B decides what content would be more appropriate for online conversations: *"We are currently having the discussion to understand what is appropriate for online and what is appropriate for offline [meaning print] because there are still some things, types of publications, types of products that are appropriate offline and there are some products more appropriate for online and it is about making that distinction"* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

*"For example, our Monday Monthly Publication, it is a beautiful publication and it is visually very stimulating. We are looking at this print publication and thinking of how we can translate the principle of being visually stimulating to our online platforms. So, what we have done is to create weekly photo galleries where we tell stories about organisation B online using pictures as opposed to text. We then translate that to social media and then to marketing"* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

### **G. Marketing through engagement**

The quotation below introduces the concept of marketing through engagement where there is an exciting shift from the traditional marketing approach to content marketing:

*“Content marketing has become absolutely critical in how a university communicates with its existing students and staff, but also with potential students and potential staff, potential donors, potential collaborators and funders and the international audiences. A source of content for us is the amazing research and knowledge that organisation B generates so we use that knowledge to market organisation B. The shift in marketing is so exciting, away from the traditional view (pamphlets and newspaper articles) to communicating your content online” (OrgB.Interview\_2).*

#### **H. Assisting community with assimilating information**

The quotation below introduces the concept of assisting community with assimilating information, where the emphasis is on helping the online community, through the maze of online content, to find what they are looking for:

*“A university has many interesting academic publications. We need to consider how that information is read and consumed by our external audience and we have to be kind to them because very complex academic information can be confusing so we need to present these ideas to the rest of the world in a way that can be understood. For example, we get a lot of questions directed to us about applications via Facebook. To help we then send people to the relevant pages on the Org’s B website” (OrgB.Interview\_2).*

The example of questions received via Facebook, shows that the external audience does need help in navigating through all the online content.

#### **I. Education interventions**

The quotation below introduces the concept of education interventions:

*“We as digital content and social media are to a large constituency at organisation B invisible so what I mean by that is much of the management and senior leadership at organisation B are not socially active online. So, they don’t understand the medium and in many respects, that makes them nervous and suspicious of the medium and cautious to engage with it. This does mean that they also don’t recognise when we are doing very well on the medium. They don’t understand the potential benefit of doing well online is improving our reputation and standing within the community” (OrgB.Interview\_2).*

The follow-on question I asked was, what mechanism(s) are currently being used to address the lack of knowledge in digital content and social media. The response to the question was:

*“There is a lot of education needed and we do have education for the institution on social media where we try and highlight the potential of social media and also the areas where you can really have big challenges that negatively impact your online brand, but more, we want to share the wonderful exciting opportunities social media brings to engage in a completely fresh and different ways with our audience” (OrgB.Interview\_2).*

These education interventions are necessary due to a lack of knowledge of social media by senior staff members. The education interventions are addressing specific needs.

### **J. Driving awareness of social media**

During data analysis, I got a sense that the awareness and visibility of the social media team is an issue. I then posed a question to OrgB.Interview\_2 to check if my thinking around awareness and visibility is valid. The quotation below introduces the concept of *driving awareness of social media*:

*“Working on creating more awareness and visibility of the social media team, that is what I am hoping for. Ironically, we have to really do a good public relations job for ourselves and for the work we do”* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

### **K. Breaking down departmental barriers**

During data analysis, I identified a few teams that need to work together to get campaign information successfully posted onto an organisation’s social media platforms. The successful interactions between these teams are important for social media use. I then posed a question relating to work relationships amongst the different teams and the level of inclusiveness in decision-making. The quotation below starts giving me insight into the concept of *breaking down departmental barriers* as it relates to social media use:

*“Team interactions is a work in progress. One of the things we have instituted internally in our department is that we have management meetings where we discuss all of the different things that all of the different people are doing and then we feed off each other and try and help each other where appropriate. Across teams I also started chairing a meeting between our online, the newsroom, marketing and publications team managers where we sit together and talk about how we can complement each other in the work that we are doing”* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

## **Corroborated Concepts**

### **A. Brand awareness**

The quotations below corroborate the concept of *brand awareness* and extends the concept to highlight the importance of having an active online profile that creates brand visibility, and shows that organisation B is serious about social media:

*“The first thing is for organisation B to get out there and create an online brand visibility. It is for us to get people aware that organisation B is a university that is serious about social media and the online space and that we are posting interesting content online”* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

*“So, we don’t go out there and say to people we are a world-class university because we do world-class research; we show people, we say we are doing fascinating research in hake trawling, in acid water*

mining, in Tuberculosis (TB) and Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV) Aids and by inference the implication is that we are a top-notch institution” (OrgB.Interview\_2).

Looking through previous data slices I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Conference\_2, which corroborates the concept of brand awareness that first emerged in organisation B:

*“A brand is not a person and you have to deal with that. We spend a lot of time building our brand awareness and to create a brand persona too, but it is naive to think that anyone else will buy into your company’s persona. When there is any kind of crisis the angry consumer is always David and you are always Goliath. Even if the consumer is wrong you will always be seen in a bad light. You need to understand that you are a brand and not a person, so do not take it personally. Realise that obviously, this is how it will be perceived - a big corporate against a small individual. So, as a brand act accordingly, never lose your cool and be calm in your online engagements”* (OrgA.Conference\_2).

The quotation also extends the concept to highlight that by having an online brand awareness, the organisation opens itself up to criticism; and hence, as an organisation one needs to be prepared for and deal with criticism.

## **B. A supportive social media strategy**

The following quotation from OrgB.Interview\_2 provides corroboration for the concept of a supportive social media strategy and gives an example of how the strategy aims to achieve synergy amongst organisation B’s social media accounts:

*“One of the things we have done is an audit of all of the social media voices in organisation B. The strategy is meant to help us manage the opening of social media accounts. Going forward departments wanting to open new social media accounts must first get permission from me (deputy director of communication and marketing). I have to be able to say, yes you need this or no you don’t need this. They are not going to respond positively to it but the reputational nightmare that it causes is far too great where nobody knows who owns what accounts and more importantly what are the official social media accounts for organisation B”* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

Looking through previous data slices I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_4, which corroborates the concept of a supportive social media strategy that first emerged in organisation B, showing that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

*“The strategic process between digital content and social media is important in that it creates a standard when operating in a flexible environment like social media. The strategy follows a planned and structured approach with a more traditional long-term planning cycle which helps to create an operational environment that is more stable for using the social media platforms. The strategy thus*

*helps bring about a standardisation across all social media platforms allowing us to speak in one voice and represent the brand in the best possible way by addressing challenges like posting incorrect information on social media” (OrgA.Interview\_4).*

The quotation also extends the concept by highlighting that the digital content and the social media environment are flexible, and that there is a need for a supportive social media strategy to manage this flexibility. Moreover, there is a need to introduce a form of standardisation to overcome too much flexibility within the system.

### **C. Integrating the organisational website and social media**

The concept of *integrating the organisational website and social media* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_2, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The concept is also extended to highlight that part of the social media engagement process is responsible for driving traffic to the official website, exposing the online community to a much wider array of interesting content meant to facilitate a more engaging online conversation:

*“I believe that the job of the social media presence is to drive traffic to our official website and to raise our online profile where our website is the first port of call for many people online. Our social media platforms are primarily there to assist and augment the work that we are doing online starting with the website” (OrgB.Interview\_2).*

### **D. Instagram use by the organisation**

The concept of *Instagram use by the organisation* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_2, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. There is a serious discussion taking place within organisation B, where the focus is on extending its social media presence to include Instagram. This is not an easy decision to make when trying to balance the popularity of Instagram with the capacity of the social media team to support an additional social media platform:

*“I have a reluctance to join Instagram primarily because it would be another social media application to look after and that worries me. There are some people in my team who are desperate for me to go onto Instagram but for me it is more important that we properly manage our existing social media channels before adding a new social media platform” (OrgB.Interview\_2).*

### **E. Addressing community concerns through social media**

The concept of *addressing community concerns through social media* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_2, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation also extends the concept by further emphasising the intensity of dealing with community concerns posted on social

media: *“It is hard if you want to be an active, committed user of social media where active engagement on all of these platforms become a full-time job”* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

## **F. Tailoring content**

The concept of *tailoring content* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_2, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation illustrates that the organisation and the community engage on topics that are not only related to business campaigns, but are also of interest to the community as well:

*“You need to think about your content strategy and what is nice about social media is that tertiary institutions can be quite serious and formal. Online allows you to be a little more casual with people. A little friendlier and I have been having a lot of conversations with my team recently about how do we have a conversation with our audience that is friendly, yet has credibility; that is engaging and people focused as opposed to just being this cold, austere organisation focusing on campaign only”* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

## **G. Online community engagement**

The concept of *online community engagement* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_2, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B, and provides an example of how encouraging stories can be used as a premise for positive online community engagement:

*“When we have an Alumni of organisation B or a student from organisation B doing well we highlight that online and we find that that gets incredibly positive responses (engagements). In terms of analytics tracking, celebratory messages about organisation B students always do well and then we make a big deal about graduations, of student awards and achievements by students, all of those engagement opportunities where students perform very well, we do that”* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

## **H. Social media strategic leadership**

The concept of *social media strategic leadership* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_2, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

*“I am the deputy director for communications and marketing at organisation B. Within the CMD, I report directly to the Executive Director for the department. I am also part of the senior staff leadership at organisation B and attend the senior staff strategic management group meetings where I represent the CMD. I am responsible for the online content component in organisation B so that refers to all of our official online electronic platforms which includes our website, social media and mobile applications where we have a significant content focus”* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

4.2.1.11. *Data slice 11 - Interview with marketing and online communications manager [OrgB.Interview\_3]*

Education was identified as being key in social media use and is underpinned by the social media strategy. I therefore needed to understand how education played a role in supporting social media use. The source selected was OrgB.Interview\_3, who is the marketing and online communications manager and has been in the role for just less than a year. The role is responsible for building relationships within the organisation, managing the work schedule and the operational tasks executed by the digital and social media officer. Through working closely with organisational stakeholders who require the services of the social media team, gave OrgB.Interview\_3 exclusive knowledge of how social media use is being perceived within the organisation and where the challenges in social media use exists, making this an appropriate source when looking at educating the organisation about social media use. Previous analytical memos were also reviewed as part of my analysis. The supporting discussion will focus on those relevant emerging concepts that are corroborated by subsequent data slices and forms part of the final theory.

### **Emergent Concepts**

#### **A. Community loyalty**

The quotation below introduces the concept of *community loyalty* and provides an example of how organisation B is creating an awareness of its online brand by posting interesting content:

*“We live tweet from the inaugural lecture as well and we never done this before as the organisation B brand. As a result of these initiatives, we are averaging a weekly growth rate of five percent. We are really doing well and we are growing the right audiences”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

Fresh and interesting content will keep their online community coming back and build loyalty within the online community.

#### **B. Attention seeking society**

The quotations below introduce the concept of *attention seeking society* and the risk this concept can have for a brand with an online presence:

*“We had someone who impersonated the Vice Chancellor and it was our job to ensure that we showed the person the right way, and that impersonating a person was illegal”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

*“The online community tell you how to run your brand, where the risk of this is that you can get brand hijacking. You have to manage your brand well because you don’t want the audience to hijack your brand, where the audience runs your brand and you don’t have any control over the posts you put out”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

OrgB.Interview\_3 continues to say that organisations with an online presence are constantly at risk of receiving negative social media posts. The organisations need to scrutinise these comments and evaluate whether the posts were made maliciously with no real substance, or whether the posts have real merit and deserves a response:

*“I suppose that would be the never-ending challenge that all brands will face because you run that risk, but what we do quite well is that we are very quick to respond to things that we feel justify a response. Sometimes people say things and you think it is going to start trending but actually it doesn’t”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

### **C. Building relationships**

The quotation below introduces the concept of building relationships: *“The online community follows the brand on social media. They got a relationship, an affiliation with the brand”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

### **Corroborated Concepts**

#### **A. Researching the organisation’s products**

The following quotation corroborates the concept of using social media in researching the organisation’s products (questions asked by the online community) and provides an example of an online enquiry:

*“I need an application form; I want to study law where do I get the application form from? They no longer go to the website first to go and find it but ask on social media”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_1:

*“Your online community is going to use social media for product research, like exploring the cold status of our chuckles (exploring organisation A’s chocolates). We as the organisation can analyse the social media posts to see whether people like our new chocolate cream cheese”* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

The excerpt corroborates the concept of researching the organisation’s products which first emerged in organisation B. This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. It also extends the concept of research to include both the online community as well as the organisation, where the organisation can also review the online comments on social media to see the type of feedback it is getting on their products.

#### **B. Discussions that create a shared understanding**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of discussions that create a shared understanding by providing an example of how the large amount of organisational information

available on social media platforms, can create confusion for the online community reading through it and how organisations can help in this regard:

*“An individual seeking information on our organisation can send a message to us and say that they need help on getting access to particular information. We then respond and say go directly here and give them the link and the moment they click on the link it is directly where they want the information so they don’t have to struggle and scratch around trying to find what they are looking for. This is a very important role”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

Part of the solution is for the online community to enter into discussions with the organisation on what they need, and in return, the organisation will be able to help the individual seeking information, thus creating that shared understanding. On looking back through previous data slices, OrgA.Interview\_4 is found to provide corroboration for the concept of *discussions that create a shared understanding* across both cases of organisation A and organisation B, and thus further supports the important role the organisation plays in generating a shared understanding through online discussions:

*“Customers are discussing the company and its brand online so it is important for our company to be on social media and to be part of the online discussions where the company’s active online engagement will help to manage and address any customer issues, concerns and misunderstandings (creating a shared understanding)”* (OrgA.Interview\_4).

### **C. Marketing through engagement**

Wanting to understand more about the relationship between social media and marketing, I posed the following question: *“Can you please describe the role of social media within a marketing context?”* The following response, further corroborates the concept of *marketing through engagement*:

*“Social media plays a very important role, it is a very pivotal role, now with the existence of social media I always ask myself how we lived without it. It is no longer the traditional marketing where you sit around and you say well my target audience is X I think they want chocolates today so give them chocolates and hope that is what they want. Now it is the other way around and the consumer tells you what they want”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpts in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_1 and OrgA.Interview\_3:

*“Our marketing approach is very subtle because this is a space where people are already playing in and it is their personal private space and I know I would hate it if someone just shoved pamphlets in my face like billboard broadcast media, I don’t want that. I want a conversation, I want something of value and I want something relevant. So, whenever you are looking at the social media platforms, just also think what the consumers are getting out of those platforms and how you can help that and how*

*you can build on that. The conversation and engagement is a lot subtler than just pushing product on them” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

*“I would personally describe social media in marketing as a campaign, customer connection or customer interaction driven by our marketing objective and because of our marketing system we can include data collection and focus groups as input into our marketing activities” (OrgA.Interview\_1).*

These excerpts corroborate the concept of *marketing through engagement* which first emerged in organisation B. This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B.

#### **D. Education interventions**

The quotations below corroborate the concept of *education interventions*, and extends the concept to highlight the role of the social media strategy, in assisting with educating the organisation about social media and the use of social media:

*“CMD needs to look after and protect the brand in all instances from issues arising both internally and externally. So, when a department uses our logo in the incorrect way it is part of our job to ensure we show them how to do it the right way and give them guidance and support” (OrgB.Interview\_3).*

*“We also have our social media strategy that does give guidance and will help people understand what they are working with when it comes to social media, the repercussions should things go wrong and what to do to address online mistakes. If users in the departments don’t know how to use social media properly then they can come to CMD and we will help” (OrgB.Interview\_3).*

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpts in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_3 that corroborates the concept of *education interventions*, which first emerged in organisation B:

*“So much of this job right now is about education. South Africa has been in the social media space for quite a long time, but corporates I do find move quite a bit slower than the earlier adopters. So much of the job is about education. It is also how you communicate and educate. I speak social media jargon as a second language, but to help the business better understand social media and to overcome their intimidation of the technology, we as social need to make the messages we share with the organisation easy to digest and understand” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

*“It is educating about the platforms, what is respectful on the platforms and what is appropriate for posting like having good content with a graphic. Change is starting to take place within the organisation and we are getting involved earlier in campaigns, so we can flag our concerns and it helps us plan ahead. The business becomes more understanding as soon as they understand the challenges social faces and how our team works” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation also extends the concept to highlight the need to have a ‘common’ language when speaking about social media use within an organisation. Having this commonality will help to make educational interventions more successful.

#### **E. Customers speaking directly to the organisation**

The concept of *customers speaking directly to the organisation* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_3, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

*“If the online audience wants to know something they will go onto Twitter or Facebook and they would ask the brand directly. They can send comments and queries our way and we can assist them immediately”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

#### **F. Following community conversations**

The concept of *following community conversations* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_3, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The concept is also extended by highlighting that the activity of *following community conversations* is part of conducting research, carried out by the organisation to understand their online community better:

*“Social media are very good platforms used by our organisation to get customer information coming directly for the source. We use it for research purposes on the audience that we are having conversations with”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

#### **G. Collective storytelling**

The category of *collective storytelling* first emerged in organisation A and now the category is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_3, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation highlights the personal nature of conversations between an organisation and its online community, and extends the category to indicate that constant *collective storytelling* helps reach a broader online community, which is a goal of this organisation when using social media as a conversational tool:

*“Conversations is that one-on-one engagement between your audience and the organisation where constant engagement allows for reaching a wider audience which all brands actually need”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

## H. Online community and organisation power dynamic

The concept of *online community and organisation power dynamic* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_3, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

*“It is not about when you see something you immediately respond to defuse it. It is actually about reading it, taking a step back and sometimes just waiting it out and seeing what happens. One of the examples I won’t mention names – someone about a week or two ago wanted to know what the vice chancellor’s stance was on the Palestinian / Israeli war going on at the moment and as you know the University of Johannesburg Vice Chancellor came out very openly pro-Palestinian for obvious reasons which is fine and we have the Israeli /Palestinian week every year where we get to engage and this person asks this. The immediate response from some of us was that we have to respond, others were actually don’t let’s see what happens, let’s see what it attracts, does it get a retweet, let’s give it an hour or two. Is this what he wants to know and does his networks want to know as well. His networks weren’t interested in that and no one retweeted it and it was fine. However, the person came back again, two weeks later saying what is your stance. At that point, we turned around and said okay now we need to respond and we drafted a response and checking that the Vice Chancellor is happy with that as well just so that we give him an answer as well, because you can’t always ignore someone that comes back with the same question. Eventually you are going to have to answer because if you continue to ignore the person you are making room for the person to turn around and say I am still being ignored so is there an agenda. So, it is also important to be transparent” (OrgB.Interview\_3).*

*“But you cannot respond to everything all the time. Sometimes these things you just have to wait it out. You’ll find a lot of the time people would say something that you think will be retweeted and start trending<sup>21</sup> but it actually doesn’t and then you as the brand creates an incident where there wasn’t, so it is important to really look at what is being said, understand it and put it into context and evaluate it before you respond because sometimes you respond and before you know it you opened up a can of worms as the brand” (OrgB.Interview\_3).*

OrgA.Conference\_2 captures the essence of the *online community and organisation power dynamic* concept in the following quotation: “... being respectful, you are playing in someone’s private space where your Facebook posts can be found amongst personal information like pictures of children and birthdays, weddings and holiday trips of Facebook users and therefore you got to respect being in that space and not take advantage of it too much. We’ve all muscled in as brands into these Social Domains, so don’t act like it is ours, the customers own that channels and we don’t, and the reason we are there is that they choose to talk to us of those channels” (OrgA.Conference\_2).

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<sup>21</sup> A story is said to be trending when it receives many posts on social media within a short time period.

## **I. Community posting of complaints, questions and queries**

The concept of *community posting of complaints, questions and queries* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_3, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

*“I think even with all those questions being asked, they help by giving us an idea of what we can do better. We can reflect on what we are doing right and what we are doing wrong, and we are able to respond with solutions. Our response will then receive comments from our audience”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

## **F. Organisational marketing campaign initiatives**

The concept of *organisational marketing campaign initiatives* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_3, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The organisational use of social media is also to inspire their community through using interesting and engaging content:

*“For our campaigns, we plan a week in advance. When we get the information from the business we know what events are out there that we need to cover and post online. We plan our message that we want to share in our campaigns with an aim to inspire our audience”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

## **G. Generating interest in products**

The concept of *generating interest in products* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_3, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

*“We use social media to inform the market about our courses, of our high-profile events, our Vice Chancellor (VC) lectures and what we’ve started from this year is that we started live tweeting from the VC lectures. We created hashtag<sup>22</sup> (#VCLectures) and now every time we have a VC lecture, the audience knows the hashtag and we live tweet. Same thing with the inaugural lecture and we live tweet from the inaugural lecture as well”* (OrgB.Interview\_3).

## **H. Social media operational leadership**

The concept of *social media operational leadership* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_3, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

*“I am the marketing and online communications manager and I am responsible for the marketing and online communications for organisation B. My team and I support the different faculties and provide marketing support. We are also responsible for the social media and we run the official university social*

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<sup>22</sup> It is a word or phrase preceded by a hash (#) which helps online users to search and find messages on a specific topic.

media platforms on Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and LinkedIn. The deputy director for communications and marketing has various managers reporting to her and I would put myself in Marketing” (OrgB.Interview\_3).

## I. Social media team

The concept of *social media team*, concerned with the responsibility and composition of the social media team, first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_3, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. There is one difference identified between organisation A and organisation B; in organisation A, there is one expert per platform, while in organisation B, the digital and social media officer is responsible for all platforms:

“Content that needs to be uploaded onto social media is sent to me as the digital and social media officer and then I upload on a day to day basis. I usually schedule the posts using Facebook or Tweetdeck or Hootsuite<sup>23</sup> for Facebook and Twitter so when I have scheduled the posts, they will go as I scheduled them and if there is anything that comes up during the day we draft up posts, send them for approval, they will come back to me and then I upload them” (OrgB.Interview\_3).

### 4.2.1.12. Data slice 12 - Interview with web editor [OrgB.Interview\_4]

The engagement relationship between the organisation and the online community was identified earlier as having a power imbalance. This was an interesting theme warranting more investigation. How did a power imbalance influence the behaviour of both the organisation and the community when it came to social media use? Why was there a power imbalance and what was being done to overcome (address) this issue? More investigation was therefore needed. The source selected was OrgB.Interview\_4, who is the web editor in the CMD and has been with organisation B for about a year. This role is closely related to social media use and the engagement with the online community, which makes OrgB.Interview\_4 an appropriate source. Previous analytical memos were also reviewed as part of my analysis. The supporting discussion will focus on those relevant emerging concepts that are corroborated by subsequent data slices and forms part of the final theory.

## Emergent Concepts

### A. Managing use expectations

As the requests by departments to have an online social media component linked to their campaigns steadily increases, so too, does the need for social to actively start *managing use expectations* become more important. The formal process of *managing use expectations* is affected by delays in

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<sup>23</sup> Tweetdeck and Hootsuite are both dashboard applications used to help users manage their social media accounts.

posting content, which in turn negatively impacts the CMD. The quotations below support the need for managing the process by which an organisation uploads its online campaign information:

*“Anything that is on the front page gets the most traffic and everyone wants everything on the front page but, that is where you also have to decide and choose which stories best represents the organisation and its brand. Using reporting and analytical tools help the business to determine the best stories based on the levels of interest showed by the online audience” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

The management of use expectations introduces a consequence of increasing the time it takes to post stories which hampers some users: *“At my previous company, we had far more freedom in media but if you misused the freedom by posting content that negatively impacts the organisational brand, you would lose your job. Because I know our journalists have complained that often there is a big conference on upper campus and the other journalists from other publications are live tweeting and our journalists are not allowed to do it which I feel is problematic. I feel social media users should act responsibly when it comes to their job and post high-quality content that promotes the brand” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

In considering this challenge of *managing use expectations* and the hampering of social media users who wants to post stories, I posed the following question: *“Would evaluating each story on a case-by-case basis help? If a story deals with something controversial like student admissions and student housing then, there would be a need to manage communications through the official CMD channels. However, if it is a fun story like ‘Enjoying my day at the pool’ it shouldn’t take two days to post.”* To which OrgB.Interview\_4 agreed and responded: Yes, absolutely that is a nice summary.

### **Corroborated Concepts**

The discussion below includes those emerging concepts that have been corroborated and extended by OrgB.Interview\_4. Previous analytical memos were also reviewed as part of my analysis.

#### **A. Reporting on social media use**

The quotations below corroborate the concept of *reporting on social media use*, and extends the concept by discussing how reporting helps with understanding the online traffic between social media and the website:

*“One of the tools that we use to measure online traffic is Google Analytics which I spend a lot of time on. With Google Analytics, you can drill down and you can learn a lot about what is important and what is popular, which pages are visited most often, how we can capitalise more on this audience, which pages are not visited that often and how we can improve them. If online traffic is very high for particular types of stories we would realise that they are very important and you need to make them more easily accessible to our audience” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

*“We also able to check the demographics of the audience, what they search for most, what social media platforms they use to get to our website and the social media referrals, in our case we get the most referrals from Facebook and then Twitter and LinkedIn is also strong. Generally, we take a closer look at the statistics on our stories, when we are having a big university event” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpts in organisation A from OrgA.OfficialVideo1, which corroborates the concept of reporting on social media use that first emerged in organisation B:

*“In social media, it is no longer enough to listen. There is far too much data. You need to analyse, and you need to benchmark and then you can work out how you are going to react. Socialbakers is very valuable for us in providing statistics and analytics that we can feed back into the business. It really has been invaluable with the speed that we can access a large variety of data, and in a business like ours where we sell so many things it is of incredible value” (OrgA.OfficialVideo1).*

*“Practically the Socialbaker’s analytics have allowed us to drive a lot more traffic to our website from our social media platforms and hopefully to sales conversions. Socialbakers have given us the analytics we need to convince executives that we actually need to take social media seriously within our business and having statistics highlighting what works makes it much easier to target your advertising and use the money allocated to you more appropriately” (OrgA.OfficialVideo1).*

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The excerpt also extends the concept to highlight the use of social media analytics at an executive level, as a tool to convince senior management of the importance of social media within an organisational context.

## **B. Community loyalty**

The following quotations corroborates the concept of community loyalty, and extends the concept to highlight the risk of losing one’s online community if their wants and needs are not understood:

*“You don’t want to frustrate your users and then lose them. When I arrived here first I asked where the students are represented. There was no sign of student life on the website. I am still getting used to it but organisation B is a big corporation and the wheels turn very slowly, so for me coming from media and a journalist publication background it was very frustrating in the beginning, but I am starting to learn to take a step back. You want to get things done immediately whereas it just goes slowly within big organisations” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

*“We are an old university with many traditions which is important for our current community, but traditions can become an issue when trying to attract a new audience with no real association with the university traditions” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

A follow-on question to the quotation above was: “*Is it important to find a balance, giving both the new and the current audience what they want, but not favouring one over the other*”. The answer was “*exactly*” (OrgB.Interview\_4).

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_1, which corroborates the concept of community loyalty that first emerged in organisation B:

*“There has to be a lot of social discussion and I (digital editor) am not going to just sell Candice shorts, I am also going to talk about the fact that Candice Swanpoel has these favourite colours. I will do content associated with a particular business campaign and I will do content which isn’t associated at all with a business campaign, like the Grammys for example because I know it will get a lot of engagement and attract people to the platform, so social tactics are varied and are mostly there to build customer loyalty”* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. Interesting and engaging content is important to attract and maintain an audience.

### **C. Attention seeking society**

The following quotation corroborates the concept of attention seeking society adding prominence to the notion that humans are increasingly seeking attention for themselves and this search has moved onto social media as well:

*“It is easier for the online community to pop a quick question on Facebook than having to go themselves and search, so often they will let me know of something and then I help them with their requests”* (OrgB.Interview\_4).

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_1, which corroborates the concept of attention seeking society that first emerged in organisation B:

*“Businesses like to go where the conversations are happening, whether these conversations are happening on radio or on television, anywhere the action is happening. We are so an attention starved community, so we have to actively follow the customer”* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation also extends the concept by indicating that organisations need to follow their community in order to stay informed about what is happening on social media.

#### D. Challenges in supporting social media growth

The quotation below corroborates the concept of *challenges in supporting social media growth*, and extends it by emphasising the need for the social media team members to work closely together, so that everyone is aware of important campaign activities and that nothing slips through the cracks:

*“Work activities related to social media is increasing so it is important to stay in touch. Most of the time I (web editor) will tell the social media team what’s been highlighted on the website because it is not possible for the social media team to stay on top on everything. There is just too much engagement and we need to help each other”* (OrgB.Interview\_4).

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_1, which corroborates the concept of *challenges in supporting social media growth* that first emerged in organisation B showing that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

*“There is a need for social media to receive much more organisational funding. The sheer volumes on those platforms overtake the number of people that are supporting these channels. You need to be able to answer fast, so it just becomes a big resourcing issue”* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

#### E. Content sharing

The quotation below corroborates the concept of *content sharing*, and extends it to highlight that high-quality content needs to be made visible when sharing it with the online community:

*“A simple example is our Monday Monthly publication. A lot of hard work goes into the publication every month and we also load it online. What I noticed is that it is hidden away under our publications and the entire document is not on the front page. What I now do is to highlight some of the stories on the front page and interestingly the statistics of those stories are much higher than the other Monday Monthly stories. It is amazing just because it has been highlighted on the front page and I will just do a general blurb informing that the Monday Monthly stories are up and what highlighted stories are included, just to get some interest”* (OrgB.Interview\_4).

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Conference\_2, which corroborates the concept of *content sharing* that first emerged in organisation B showing that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

*“Content pieces like our beaded flag associated with Human Rights Day<sup>24</sup>, a special public holiday in South African is in-dispersed with the customer care on Facebook. This is an attempt to keep the*

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<sup>24</sup> It is a day in South Africa to remember those individuals in history who struggled against past laws that infringed upon basic human rights and dignity.

*sentiment positive and to show that we are more than just a customer care channel and that all social channels are important to all aspects of the business” (OrgA.Conference\_2).*

## **F. Driving awareness of social media**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of driving awareness of social media, and provides examples of what organisation B is doing to try and generate more awareness and visibility around social media:

*“So, I think that creating awareness and visibility around social media is the big challenge for me. What I am doing now is from graduation we ran a huge online campaign where we encourage students to take pictures of themselves graduating and then we would give a hoodie (a cap) to the students who took the best picture. In this way, we are trying to generate some fun, happy and exciting activities around social media. We are now also writing reports about these activities linked to social media which we then share with the leadership. In this way, we are trying to highlight what we have done and these are the successes we have had. We have to make the invisible, visible otherwise we not going to get the level of support for social media” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpts in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_1 and OrgA.Interview\_3, which corroborate the concept of driving awareness of social media that first emerged in organisation B showing that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B, and that driving awareness is an ongoing exercise:

*“During 2012 and 2013 our focus was on getting people to realise that social media was necessary. For 2014, our focus is on how each department can leverage social media for themselves” (OrgA.Interview\_1).*

*“We need to highlight to the business that we cannot put everything onto social media. We need to be strategic about it. So, creating that awareness through education and everyone has been really open to it” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

## **G. Benefits realisation**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of benefits realisation:

*“There are so many social media voices representing organisation B currently and going forward the focus is to create one social media voice for organisation B. A single voice is becoming more important because organisation B has been relying on its name and reputation for far too long and too much. We are very spoilt in having a proud tradition, wonderful students and staff, but we have to think bigger and bolder in our campaigns, else we will be getting less and less funding from government and other donators (loss of benefits), so we have to market ourselves as a brand, ensuring a synergistic relationship between our brand and the use of social media. Part of the synergy exercise is having the*

same tone of voice across our platforms. We are a strong brand, but we need to just become more active to capitalise on it” (OrgB.Interview\_4).

The quotation also extends the concept by suggesting that *benefits realisation* cannot be based on one’s brand alone. It is also important to work at realising the benefits that social media offers. The issue of the online proliferation of social media accounts is used as an example of what could negatively impact benefits realisation, even though organisation B has a strong brand in the community.

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_3, which corroborates the concept of *benefits realisation* that first emerged in organisation B:

*“What’s lovely, the shift only started recently by getting the social media team in at the very concept stage and discuss how the social media team can add value to the campaign. This is definitely a big shift in the business to placing more emphasis and importance on social. The business has had a few crises that played itself out on social media, which has made them realise that actually social media is important and we need to take it seriously. In terms of communication the company wants to make a real difference in the lives of their customers by offering them this beautiful online experience whether it is on Facebook or on Twitter”* (OrgA.Interview\_3).

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The two examples show the *benefits realisation* linked to organisational campaigns and the use of social media in a crisis.

## **H. Risk to reputation**

The concept of *risk to reputation* first emerged in organisation A, and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_4, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation also extends the notion of risk to reputation to include social blogs, finding a balance between having the freedom of expression and acting responsibly, as well as the risk of having a presence on too many social media platforms:

*“On social media, the brand referrals from social blogs come through consistently. You have to drill down quite a bit to see what the actual blogs are and who they are run by, and to see the name of the blog, as well as what they are linked to. Often it is linked to the organisation B landing page. This gives you an indication of the audience interested in your brand and who to keep an eye on; for reputation management purposes, because there might be a social blog that is very obscure, and could put your brand in a bad light if they are writing about controversial issues in politics and religion. Obviously, there is freedom of speech but, you need to know what is linked to your website and social media. We need to know, even on those social media platforms where we do not have an official organisational account, what is being said about your name and your brand. This is brand management and having*

*some kind of control. You cannot leave it to chance, you need to take responsibility and social media gives you the tools to manage your brand out there in cyberspace by being online and engaging”* (OrgB.Interview\_4).

OrgB.Interview\_4 believes that responsibility needs to be given to the organisational users of social media to manage what they are posting. A balance is needed between freedom of expression and taking responsibility for what is being posted, and this is where the challenge lies: *“It is easier said than done because I do understand that it is reputation management and brand management and we all read in the newspapers now and then about someone on social media that did something stupid”* (OrgB.Interview\_4).

There is a risk of having an online presence on too many social media platforms: *“I think also controversial that there are a lot of other social media platforms where we could also have a presence. Yes, I know that just because the social media platform is out there it doesn’t mean that you must have an online presence on it. The point is that whether you are on Google Plus or Instagram or not, people are still going to talk about you so you need to know what they are talking about. For that reason, we have to be on those platforms as well even if it is just for brand management and there is a bit of disagreement around that point as well. We need to just do it responsibly”* (OrgB.Interview\_4).

OrgB.Interview\_2 confirms this disagreement on when it is the right time to create an online presence on social media: *“I don’t want to be on a platform for the sake of being on a social media platform. I know one of the arguments for Instagram is that visually organisation B is an extra ordinarily beautiful campus so it is very visually stimulating therefore it is a perfect candidate for Instagram, but can I achieve the same effect using my website and Twitter and Facebook and LinkedIn and my Youtube accounts. Can I achieve that story about our beauty and then still have to be on Instagram and for that the jury is still out for me? There no point in saying hello I am here and then there is no follow up”* (OrgB.Interview\_2).

## **I. OmniChannel**

The concept of *OmniChannel* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_4, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotations also extend the concept to highlight that weekly meetings amongst the relevant stakeholders will help interconnect work activities, and to ensure a consistent message across the website and all social media platforms by speaking with one voice:

*“We do have weekly meetings to discuss our working schedule and the website and digital and social media custodians will also engage via emails or a meeting (keeping everyone in the loop). The leadership in the department could become aware of something coming up and will let us know or the media team will let us know what people are talking about: for example, a robbery on campus and then we would say let’s share safety tips for the campus. Before we post we will have a quick meeting and*

*chat how we want to do it. Having regular meetings will ensure we are communicating and sharing information using the same voice” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

*“The other big change I also brought in was our media releases relating to interesting research stories which I always felt that we were sending out to the Media and then only the Newspapers were writing about it. We didn’t have it visible on our website and often it is really fantastic stories so what I started to do is place these stories on the official landing page which is also now starting to increase the interest and the traffic to our media releases. Instead of just loading it onto social media and dumping it into the media releases folder, it is now uploaded onto social media and the website as a real news story with photos” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

## **J. Content quality**

The concept of content quality first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_4, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation also extends the concept to highlight the importance of presenting online content in an interesting and fun way to attract more followers to both the social components of the organisation’s website and social media:

*“The website is the front page to organisation B. The very first introduction a lot of people get to organisation B. We can do so much better. The content that we have is very well written but the way that it is presented I think doesn’t show the wonderful possibilities and opportunities of organisation B and what makes us unique. Yes, we are another university but we have history and we have a beautiful location which we don’t see on the website. We should exploit the things that makes us unique. We have a diverse culture on campus, but unfortunately, we don’t do enough to reflect our strong diversity on campus” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

*“That is why I said we need to go bigger and bolder with text and a lot more images because this is the general online trend. People like visuals, maybe it is photo galleries, audio clips or any multimedia that you can share via social media is very important. On the one hand, you grow your social media audience and on the other hand you improve the traffic to the website when you have interesting things that will attract people’s attention. People like to look at beautiful pictures and listen to beautiful clips and that is where I feel the biggest change needs to come immediately” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

## **K. Feeding of community comments back into content**

The concept of feeding of community comments back into content first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_4, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation also extends the concept by highlighting that content the online community has indicated as being of little interest, is no longer posted:

*“It would be boring for me if I only had to go and get statistics, and I feel we can use Google Analytics for so much more by identifying trends of online users and make it work for you. And there is Google Adwords<sup>25</sup> which on Google Analytics you can identify what are the most search terms, and for marketing you can use the terms with Google Adwords to increase your search engine optimisation”* (OrgB.Interview\_4).

I remarked to OrgB.Interview\_4, that it is interesting to hear that they use Google Analytics, not just for statistics but, also to identify the stories that are of interest and are important to their audience. Organisation B then subsequently uses that information to focus on creating more stories their community would want to read.

#### **L. Joint crafting of content by organisation and community**

The concept of *joint crafting of content by organisation and community* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_4, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The following quotations also extend the concept to highlight that more co-creation opportunities are needed for social aspects linked to the website:

*“The audience will let me know of something that they want or are looking for and then I will let them have the link. Additionally, if the information on the website is not clearly explained I will go and improve the explanation, so there is that synergy between the audience and the company”* (OrgB.Interview\_4).

*“There are very little co-creation opportunities linked to social on the website. I find people come to look for certain information and they will read a story and then they will go again there isn’t stickiness. By adding more links into our stories and basically, we need to find a way to entice people to stay on our website longer by making them click to other relevant sections. There could be more engagement in the sense that you want the person to stay on the page longer. Also, you want them to go to other pages on the website and explore other parts on the website. I’ve also seen at other universities where you can comment below the story and I think we should include that. Obviously, that would have to go through a moderation process so someone would need to moderate the comments before they go live. By doing this you can get a conversation going and on these other websites the comments are sometimes more interesting than the actual story and it is another way to share the comments. You can even have online polls as well. More interaction is always a plus”* (OrgB.Interview\_4).

#### **M. Interrelating content and social media within the organisation**

The concept of *interrelating content and social media within the organisation* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_4,

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<sup>25</sup> It is an advertising service provided by Google to businesses who want to display ads on Google.

thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotations also extend the concept by explaining how the website is seen as an extension of this interdependence between social media and digital content, where campaign information is also posted on the website as well:

*“Most of the campaign information gets loaded onto the website first before it is highlighted on social media so I need to get it out as soon as possible. As with social media you don’t want to post things on the website that are old and stale. The work process so far is if something comes from the newsroom I upload it or if it is a media campaign I will upload it and as soon as I have uploaded the information I will notify the digital and social media officer and marketing manager so that they can include it into their schedule for social media. Sometimes it is the reverse where the digital and social media officer and marketing manager will pick up something on social media and let me know” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

To confirm this interrelationship amongst content, social and the website within an organisational context, I posed the follow-on question: *“To confirm, you get information from the newsroom and other departments, and then you load it onto the website. Once the loading of content onto the website is done, you inform the digital and social media officer and the marketing manager so that they can put the information on social media. The updates on social media will then also help drive traffic back to the website?”* The response from OrgB.Interview\_4:

*“Yes, and most of the time there will be a link. It could be attached to a photo that links back (circular) to the website. So, yes social media is a big traffic driver to the website” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

#### *4.2.1.13. Data slice 13 - Interview with Marketing and Communications Manager [OrgB.Interview\_5]*

Both organisations agreed that social media use was important to them; however, their use came with challenges. For this reason, I wanted to consolidate my understanding on those solutions that addressed the challenges in social media use e.g. the power imbalance, team working dynamics, achieving the benefits of using social media, etc. Consequently, more investigation was needed to clarify my understanding. The source selected was OrgB.Interview\_5, who is the marketing and communications manager in the Commerce faculty, and has been in the role for six years. The role is responsible for the use of Facebook within the Commerce faculty. OrgB.Interview\_5 has been managing the use of Facebook for the last six years and is in the perfect position to discuss the journey of using social media within the Commerce faculty, including: why social media is important, the challenges and how to overcome them. No new concepts emerged during the coding phase. Previous analytical memos were also reviewed as part of my analysis.

### **Corroborated Concepts**

The discussion below includes those emerging concepts that have been corroborated and extended by OrgB.Interview\_5. Previous analytical memos were also reviewed as part of my analysis.

## A. Levels of social media interaction

The quotation below corroborates the concept of *levels of social media interaction*, and extends it to highlight a proliferation of social media accounts within organisation B as well:

*“I think social media has exploded and there has been a lack of co-ordination and a lack of vision of how to roll it out. I am not sure how many Twitter feeds and how many Facebooks sites there are at organisation B, but it is a lot. I think it could be several hundred”* (OrgB.Interview\_5).

In support of the quotation above, Table 5 reflects the active social media accounts in the Commerce faculty alone (only focusing on Facebook and Twitter). The information was taken from an official document I obtained from OrgB.Interview\_5. The Commerce faculty also has a LinkedIn, Youtube and Social Blog, further highlighting the proliferation of social media within the Commerce faculty.

Table 5: Active Social Media Accounts in Organisation B

Active Social Media Sites (Reflecting Some overlap and duplication)	
<b>Twitter Accounts (10 Accounts)</b>	Organisation B Commerce
	EDU Commerce Organisation B
	EDUSO (EDU Student Organisation)
	Organisation B College of Acc 1
	Organisation B Commerce User 1
	JKP Africa
	Organisation B College of Acc 2
	Organisation B Commerce User 2
	DataFirst
	SALDRU
<b>Facebook Accounts (7 Accounts)</b>	Organisation B Commerce Families
	Organisation B Tourism and Events Management Forum
	Development Policy Research Unit (DPRU)
	DataFirst
	Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU)
	Organisational Psychology students (Facebook group)
	Mphil in Programme Evaluation graduates (Facebook group)

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_1, which corroborates the concept of *levels of social media interaction* that first emerged in organisation B: *“As an organisation we always going to need more staff to try and keep up with our online social engagements. Social is really growing and these social channels proliferate themselves”* (OrgA.Interview\_1). This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B.

## B. Benchmarking

The quotations below corroborate the *benchmarking* concept, and extends it by providing some examples of how to incorporate ideas obtained from the benchmarking exercise into organisation B’s social media platforms:

*“Some of our competitor sites like Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge, the top universities globally are using social media to publish top research and to generate exciting new ideas and all this is done in a way that is very clever and well thought through”* (OrgB.Interview\_5).

The next quotation supported by Figure 4 was an observation I made during my interview with OrgB.Interview\_5, who went onto the organisation’s Facebook platform to illustrate a benchmarking exercise: *“What we are looking at now is Harvard Business Review. We sometimes share some of their content and I think their social media platforms are cutting edge in the way they present their research. It is just so exciting, and their presentation is so visually exciting like, the little keywords they use that are so cleverly executed, and I think we can learn a lot from Harvard. It is a lively site and it is nice to benchmark against them. I think that is my goal. To see what the top universities are doing with social media and how we can do similar things if not as good but similar. Benchmarking is a good thing”* (OrgB.Interview\_5).

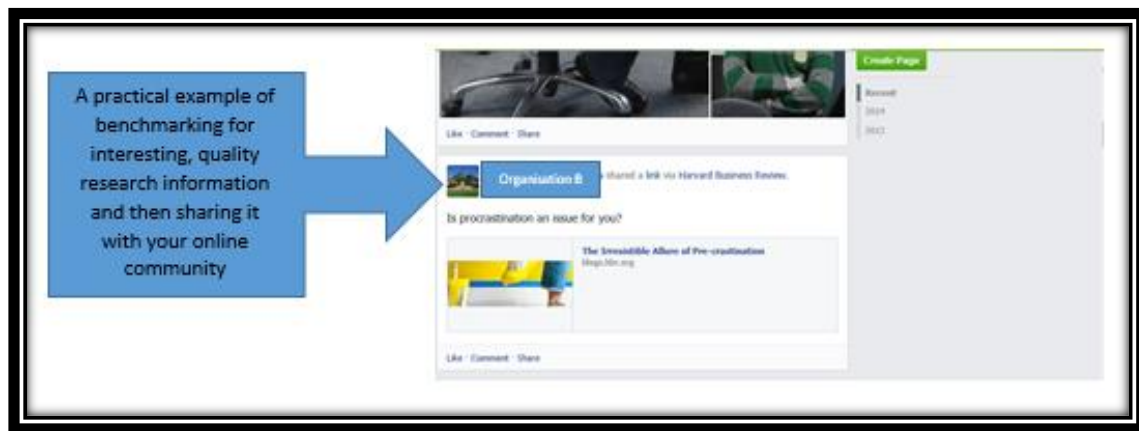


Figure 4: An observation of a benchmarking exercise done by OrgB.Interview\_5 highlighting an interesting article from Harvard Business Review which was then shared with the organisation B commerce families Facebook

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_1, which corroborates the concept of *benchmarking* that first emerged in organisation B:

*“We benchmark with the United Kingdom (UK), Not with South Africa (SA). The reason is that we do not want to copy, so you benchmark with those that are a technological age ahead of us. I think it is about benchmarking more internationally” (OrgA.Interview\_1).*

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. However, one difference though is that the organisation A tends to benchmark mostly with international organisations.

### **C. Supporting effective conversations**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of supporting effective conversations, and introduces the idea of boosting a story or post that is trending, so that it reaches a much broader audience, with the intention of supporting effective conversations:

*“If a post is going really big then I will boost it by putting in an advert of 54 Rand<sup>26</sup>. This boost to the story increases the number of people one can reach and it is quite easy to do and one pays for that. We don’t boost posts very often. We don’t have a big budget, but occasionally when I see something is going viral. I would then boost the post with an advert. It is often a great way to increase our number of likes, so that is how we can also grow the likes on our site” (OrgB.Interview\_5).*

Planning social media work activities become important in ensuring no duplication of stories being posted across multiple social media platforms. OrgB.Interview\_5 explains how duplication is minimised in organisation B:

*“There is a bit of overlap in that quite a few people who are on the Commerce family Facebook site is also on the official organisation B Facebook site. We will then change the story slightly and give it a slightly different flavour (minimise duplication) so that people don’t see exactly the same posting twice” (OrgB.Interview\_5).*

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Conference\_1, which corroborates the concept of supporting effective conversations that first emerged in organisation B:

*“Customers don’t always react the way you would like them to react. It could be that the audience is not as interested in the story as you are or sometimes the trends don’t land so well or land in a funny way. The challenge is for the organisation to recognise this disjoint and then make the necessary adjustments” (OrgA.Conference\_1).*

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<sup>26</sup> A Rand is the basic monetary unit of South Africa where 1 Rand equals 100 cents.

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. OrgA.Conference\_1 then explains the strategy that organisation A followed to overcome this challenge:

*“Firstly, the company needs to be really, really agile and quickly make a whole lot of additional content and trends to keep the conversation going in the right direction. Secondly, don’t be precious about how you are trying to have that conversation because you don’t own the conversation just because you started it. Thirdly, plan as thoroughly as possible beforehand, so you can be as spontaneous as possible during the conversation. Fourthly, the company should not stop talking once the audience responds and continue the conversation until its logical end. Finally, to really do the basics and talk to people about what they care about and feed that back with some respect and some care”* (OrgA.Conference\_1).

#### **D. Building relationships**

The quotations below corroborate the concept of *building relationships*, and extends it by discussing how organisation B tries to foster relationships with those communities surrounding the university:

*“We market to undergraduates and prospective post graduates and part of that is the public relations function whereby I will share our stories on our online platforms. Stories about students or lecturers who are doing noteworthy or newsworthy work. This is a positioning exercise to help give the faculty of commerce a good share of voice (creating visibility) in the community and that we are positioned as the leading faculty of commerce in South Africa and also on the South African continent. Wanting to build relationships with prospective students who are coming onto our social media platforms and wanting to stay in contact with us. Some of them are Alumni as well. We haven’t been doing this for very long so we are expecting the number of people visiting the sites to grow exponentially at some point”* (OrgB.Interview\_5).

This relationship building exercise is intended to help position the university as a possible choice for prospective students. One example below gives insight into how inspirational messages (content) help build these relationships:

*“On social media, one can put up a couple of inspirational messages about holding onto your dreams and never giving up on your dreams. Inspirational messages that many people can relate to because they do have big dreams and they want to make things happen, and social media is a great way to make people feel good about themselves and feeling more connected (relationships) and if they can leave their Facebook interlude with a more connected and a warmer feeling then we have made great strides in closing the gap between where our audience is and where we are”* (OrgB.Interview\_5).

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpts in organisation A from OrgA.Conference\_2 and OrgA.Interview\_4, which corroborate the concept of building relationships that first emerged in organisation B:

*“What also seems to work is celebrating South African special public holidays like Human Rights Day, and making sure your customer knows what is happening in your country. For us we are well known for beautiful images, for example a beaded flag is a nice thing to share in your timeline on Human Rights Day and it was shared by quite a few people. We also create small spot prizes which are much better for engagement than just one major prize, which keeps more people interested in that they could potentially win a prize”* (OrgA.Conference\_2).

*“Part of social is also to build relationships so, for example, we would send presents to our online influencers on their birthday and in this way, we try to proactively build these relationships”* (OrgA.Interview\_4).

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B, and provides more examples of how organisations can use social media to build relationships.

#### **E. Assisting community with assimilating information**

The quotation below corroborates the concept of assisting community with assimilating information, and extends it to highlight how social media can be used to help breakdown complex information into bite sized portions for easier communication, and it is done in a fun way:

*“Social media is a fun way of giving bite size information to people, rather than a heavy and thick brochure. Our Commerce handbook is very hard to access and with social media you can give very little bite size pieces of information that is easier accessible and if the information is packaged as fun and easy to read, it would be easier for prospective students to understand the information that might otherwise be difficult for them to get”* (OrgB.Interview\_5).

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpt in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_1, which corroborates the concept of assisting community with assimilating information that first emerged in organisation B:

*“With social media, we have a massive information overload so you will have to adapt your strategy to help people who are consuming or sharing information”* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation also extends the concept to highlight strategy as an important mechanism, used by organisations to help facilitate the understanding of content by their community.

## F. Breaking down departmental barriers

The quotation below corroborates the concept of breaking down departmental barriers, and further extends it by explaining the benefits of having a synergistic relationship when it comes to effectively sharing content on social media:

*“The relationship between the Commerce faculty and CMD is a mutually supportive one. CMD gave me training on social media and we work quite closely together. If I have content that is hot news I will then give it to CMD and they will post it, sending it out to about 45 000 people. When CMD has something that they particularly want to emphasize they will send it to me and ask me to post it online. I see it as working quite well. It is a good collegial supportive relationship from my perspective”* (OrgB.Interview\_5).

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpts in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_3 and OrgA.Conference\_2, which corroborate the concept of breaking down departmental barriers that first emerged in organisation B:

*“An issue could be where you put your social media team. Is it marketing, is it in public relations or is it in customer care central. We keep thinking in terms of departmental silos, but now what is becoming more important is not where the team sits but who they speak to”* (OrgA.Conference\_2).

*“Before, we in social media had to shout for attention and the change now is that we get support immediately when there is a crisis within the business. Prior to that we waited for days and we also worked in isolation from public relations, so they were doing their own thing while we were trying to respond to customers. Now we all work together. To overcome working challenges, you need to network within the business. You need to make your contacts. You know who to ask and also how to ask them because with some people you have to be formal and other people you can be more informal. It is knowing your audience. Sometimes I just call a store which is quicker, but with bigger issues like Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) and things that conflict with our policies, we have to wait for public relations and the head of social to sign off official communications before we can go ahead and post the responses on social media”* (OrgA.Interview\_3).

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B, and gives ‘effective networking’ as a skill for overcoming departmental barriers within the organisation.

## G. Managing use expectations

The quotation below corroborates the concept managing use expectations, and extends it to managing the number of social media platforms the organisation has:

*“Early on in our social media journey we had to make a strategic decision on having a single or multiple Facebook sites. I was asked to set up a number of Facebook sites. I thought about this request and then*

*informed the faculty that one official Commerce Facebook site would be best when it comes to managing our online presence. Although we have four different target markets we going to have just one official Commerce Facebook site” (OrgB.Interview\_5).*

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpts in organisation A from OrgA.Interview\_1 and OrgA.Interview\_3, which corroborate the concept managing use expectations that first emerged in organisation B:

*“We need to look at our platforms, and make them work for everybody within the organisation because, the foods department would just like to put up their product specials everyday which means we reached only 2000 people interested in our food products, instead of the 260 000 people we have that are interested in our whole product range” (OrgA.Interview\_1).*

*“A challenge organisation A has is its many brands and it is deciding which campaigns gets the priority, so we need to weigh those priorities, and once the brand managers have been educated about the importance of managing use expectations it becomes easier to assign time to each campaign, unless when there is a crisis and a directive comes from the leadership to deal with the crisis first” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B, and the need to better leverage the social media capacity within the organisation.

#### **H. Facebook use by the organisation**

The concept of Facebook use by the organisation first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_5, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. A preference for using Facebook over Twitter is also given with reasons:

*“From a communication point of view, I like a few more words and I also don’t like the click through. I sometimes find it a waste of time and I also like the very strong marrying of visual elements to the texts. In Twitter, one sees a lot of text and I find it a bit boring as a marketing person, there is too much text and sometimes they do use images. The quality of the images I find to be not as good on Twitter as is on Facebook. It seems like not enough care is taken to put out a good post, because it is such a quick thing and maybe not as friendly and Facebook looks more like the official communication channel” (OrgB.Interview\_5).*

#### **I. Real-time conversations with customers**

The concept of real-time conversations with customers first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_5, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The interviewee expresses pleasure about the immediacy of the conversations with their online community:

*“Yes, I really love this. It is so immediate to have hot news and be able to send it out quickly and get a response. It gives me a natural high to actually go and see how many hits (online visitors) we got” (OrgB.Interview\_5).*

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpts from OrgB.Interview\_2 and OrgB.Interview\_3, which further extends my understanding of social media use:

*“It is much more effective, and it is much more real-time because I will be able to communicate to people now about something, as opposed to waiting for a print document and then having to distribute it” (OrgB.Interview\_2).*

*“The ability to immediately engage with our audience on a daily basis so, they don’t have to wait for a letter to come back by the post or a message to come by the fax or via an email” (OrgB.Interview\_3).*

These quotations highlight that the real-time online use of social media, reduces the dependency on using printed material for conversations. Additionally, using printed material introduces a lag time in communication between the organisation and their community. This lag time is reduced when using social media.

## **J. Collective understanding of social media**

The concept of *collective understanding of social media* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_5, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. OrgB.Interview\_5 also extends the concept to include a lack of budget for social media, staff showing a lack of interest in social media, an organisational structure that challenges a consolidated use of social media and having no ‘rule book’ to help organisations with using social media.

A question I posed to OrgB.Interview\_5 about the challenges relating to social media use, was answered as: *“Yes, having a bigger budget for social media would help” (OrgB.Interview\_5).*

In organisation B, the use of social media is dispersed across the university. Accordingly, the challenge is that there should only be one official organisation B voice which is the Communication and Marketing department (CMD). The quotation below highlights this challenge:

*“We (CMD) are the official voice of organisation B but there are other departments and faculties who will deal with an issue and do their own thing instead of consulting with us (these are the unofficial voices) (OrgB.Interview\_4 interviewed earlier). I don’t report into CMD and I think maybe they have some frustrations that the faculties just go off and do their own thing” (OrgB.Interview\_5).*

Moreover, the challenge of convincing academics on the importance of social media to an academic institution: *“Some of the staff thinks that Facebook is a bit trivial and they can’t see the value in it. I think that we are slowly bringing the academics on-board but not all of our academics like us*

(organisation B) being on Facebook and they are a little bit standoffish and not quite sure if it is the right thing to do and thinks that we should rather go onto LinkedIn” (OrgB.Interview\_5).

What is becoming more evident is this ‘big gap’ of not knowing what really works best when using social media within an organisational context: “We (organisation B) have tried to think about the use of social media quite carefully but, there is no real rule book on how to go about using it. You know we have looked at Quirk and there is quite a lot of information you can get online but, I don’t think that the information has been scientifically validated as such and it seems to be a lot of thumb suck, saying well this has worked here so try it and see if it works for you. Different target markets may respond differently and I think it is quite contextual” (OrgB.Interview\_5).

### **K. Collective interest in social media**

The concept of *collective interest in social media* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_5, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

“Stories do overlap across the various target markets and we often find if we post a couple of really fun stories our numbers of students following us go up. We then get some of the academics saying Oh No, this is not for me and then we lose some of the seriously minded academics. If we then have too many academic stories our students or prospective students think Oh No, this is too complex for me and then we lose those (students)” (OrgB.Interview\_5).

OrgB.Interview\_3 interviewed earlier states in the quotation below that the youth market is very important, and the fact that they have a keen interest in social media use, drives the interest at the university to use social media:

“The market that we work with, we are working with a young, youthful market who use social media platforms as a form of communication all day, every day that is what they do. The challenge though in having such a wide diverse audience means that everyone has a say in your brand” (OrgB.Interview\_3).

A clear challenge is finding ways to effectively cater to a broader community that includes students, academics, alumni and parents.

### **L. Product information and descriptions**

The concept of *product information and descriptions* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.Interview\_5, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B:

“This year we are having our first online postgraduate diploma in management and marketing. It is part-time and we are expecting it to really take off. There is interest by the high number of hits (interest)” (OrgB.Interview\_5).

*“The audience will see it is Harvard Business Review and they know we are sharing cutting edge stuff (useful). They can go into the blog for more information” (OrgB.Interview\_5).*

#### *4.2.1.14. Data slice 14 - Official office document [OrgB.OfficialDoc1]*

Overall, the risk to reputation comes across as one of the major influencers for using social media. Consequently, the question I asked myself is why this is the case. The source selected was OrgB.OfficialDoc1, which outlines the standards to be maintained when posting online content. The purpose of the document is to standardise the use of online channels and content creation. The document is thus an appropriate source on how to deal with risk to reputation and content creation. No new concepts emerged during the coding phase. Previous analytical memos were also reviewed as part of my analysis.

### **Corroborated Concepts**

The discussion below includes those emerging concepts that have been corroborated and extended by OrgB.OfficialDoc1. Previous analytical memos were also reviewed as part of my analysis.

#### **A. Taking accountability for organisational online image**

The quotation below emanates from the content management document and corroborates the concept of taking accountability for organisational online image: *“Content owners must ensure consistency, currency, accuracy and reliability of information published online and to conform to all South African legislation that applies. To ensure consistency and accountability, the contact information of all content owners who are posting content must be made visible to the online community” (OrgB.OfficialDoc1).*

Looking through previous data slices, I noticed the following excerpts in organisation A from OrgA.Conference\_2, which corroborate the concept of taking accountability for organisational online image that first emerged in organisation B:

*“So, if someone is complaining on Twitter about milk going off too quickly then we need to speak to people in dairy quickly. If a significant influencer is complaining about us we need to know that quickly and to get someone senior to speak to him or her as soon as possible. Speed is everything in a moment of crisis. When a crisis happens the first thing is to get the senior people into a room and second is to get a press release out on the website in its entirety. Then highlight bits from the press release to give to the social media team to communicate those chunks on the social media channels” (OrgA.Conference\_2).*

*“Be as thorough and transparent as possible. Obviously, you are not going to have all the answers and it is fine to say that you are sorry that the customer had a terrible experience, I will find out what happened and get back to you. People will understand when you are transparent, you are just an*

ordinary person doing a job. They do expect as prompt a response as is humanly possible” (OrgA.Conference\_2).

This corroboration shows that the concept is relevant to both cases of organisation A and organisation B, with the emphasis on being transparent and giving a quick response.

**B. Experiencing social media use failures**

The concept of *experiencing social media use failures* first emerged in organisation A and now the concept is corroborated in organisation B as well by OrgB.OfficialDoc1, thus showing relevance to both cases of organisation A and organisation B. The quotation extends the concept to highlight that strategy failures resulting from non-compliance, and could result in an organisation being liable for damages or losses suffered by users, if users were to act on incorrect postings:

*“Out of date or inaccurate information may render organisation B liable should a user act on it in good faith. Failure to maintain and update content and to display appropriate branding will be deemed as being non-compliant with our strategy. CMD reserves the right to take the necessary steps to remove such content should attempts to have them updated by their owners fail”* (OrgB.OfficialDoc1).

4.2.1.15. Summary of emergent concepts

In total 57 emergent concepts were identified with corroborating evidence for each concept from within the case it emerged, as well as from across cases. Related concepts were grouped into 11 initial categories as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: A summary of emergent concepts and initial categories

Initial category	Related concepts
Online community engagement	Content sharing, Building relationships, Assisting community with assimilating information, Marketing through engagement, Brand awareness
Collective storytelling	Customers speaking directly to the organisation, Following community conversations, Real-time conversations with customers, Discussions that create a shared understanding, Researching the organisation’s products
Interrelating content and social media within the organisation	Social media strategic leadership, Social media operational leadership, Digital content team, Social media team, Aligning social media and the organisation
Characteristics of social media for use	Facebook use by the organisation, Twitter use by the organisation, Instagram use by the organisation, Integrating the organisational website and social media

Initial category	Related concepts
Social media landscape	Social media following, Age profile of the social media community, Reporting on social media use
OmniChannel	Planning cycles, Benchmarking, Organisational marketing campaign initiatives, Generating interest in products
Content quality	Tailoring content, Feeding of community comments back into content, Product information and descriptions, Supporting effective conversations, Joint crafting of content by organisation and community
Risk to reputation	Collective interest in social media, Community loyalty, Taking accountability for organisational online image, Collective understanding of social media
A supportive social media strategy	Link between digital content, social media and strategy, Experiencing social media use failures
Online community and organisation power dynamic	Attention seeking society, Levels of social media interaction, Challenges in supporting social media growth, Community posting of complaints, questions and queries, Addressing community concerns through social media
Education interventions	Benefits realisation, Breaking down departmental barriers, Managing use expectations, Driving awareness of social media

In the next section, the link between categories and related concepts will be explored in greater detail through the process of axial coding, where concepts, sub-categories and categories are reassembled and related to each other.

#### 4.4.2. Axial coding

Axial coding involves the relating of concepts, sub-categories and categories to each other (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, 2008). As pointed out by Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1998) the separation between open and coding is rather artificial, as in the process of identifying concepts, relationships are also identified, as per the grouping of categories specified in Table 6. In this section, I focus on the 11 identified elevated central concepts which have the most explanatory power to form categories and sub-categories. I followed the advice and guidelines given by Seidel and Urquhart (2013) and used axial coding flexibly with the intent of enhancing my theoretical sensitivity when it comes to documenting causal relationships. To improve readability, the sub-sections have been grouped by elevated category with the relationships presented in a sequential order.

##### 4.2.2.1. *Online community engagement*

Organisations are shifting away from merely using social channels to broadcast content and towards having a two-way conversation with the online community. Through this interactive online community engagement process, the organisation is building relationships and taking care of their online community. The concept of *online community engagement* presents a distinct (or clear) theme linking related concepts together. For this reason, the concept of *online community engagement* was elevated to become a category. Concepts and relationships around its axis are discussed next.

#### A. The relationship between brand awareness and online community engagement

Organisations are making a conscious effort to promote and build their level of *brand awareness* within the social media landscape. To facilitate this increase in *brand awareness* organisations, use social media as a customer care and relationship building tool through which *online community engagement* takes place. Posting of positive and encouraging stories allows *online community engagement* to take place on a more personal level, raising the level of brand awareness. Refer to Figure 5 for the linking of emerging concepts (the rectangular shapes represent concepts).



Figure 5: *Online community engagement and its relationship with brand awareness*

#### B. The relationship between marketing through engagement and online community engagement

The use of social media has brought an explicit shift in *marketing through engagement*, away from the traditional marketing approach of using pamphlets and newspaper articles to online content marketing. Organisations should always remember that the online space of social media users is both private and personal, so *marketing through engagement* must be done in a subtle way. The result is much less billboard broadcasting and pushing of content towards *online community engagement* done on a much more personal level. Refer to Figure 6 for the linking of the emerging concepts.



Figure 6: Online community engagement and its relationship with brand awareness and marketing through engagement

**C. The relationship between content sharing and online community engagement**

Content sharing within organisations is focused on sharing high-quality content that is both relevant and on diverse topics. The content is also shared widely so that organisations can reach as many people across all of the organisations’ social channels. Relevant content that is of interest to both the online community and organisations helps facilitate online community engagement and to take place on a much more personal level. Refer to Figure 7 for the linking of the emerging concepts.

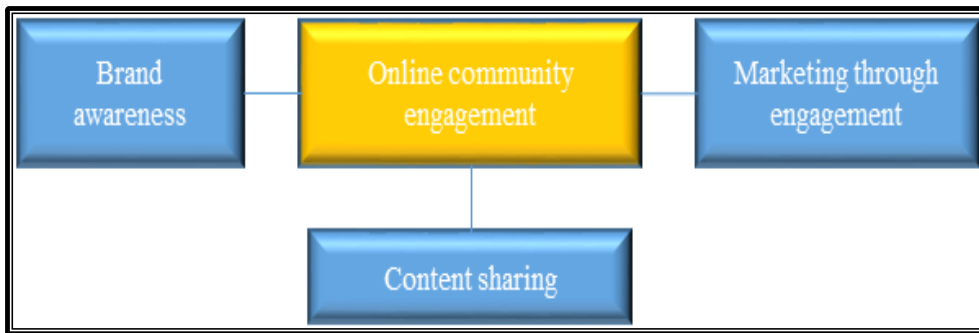


Figure 7: Online community engagement and its relationship with brand awareness, marketing through engagement and content sharing

**D. The relationship between building relationships and online community engagement**

Building relationships are very important to organisations. An online community that actively follows an organisation’s online brand is an asset to any organisation. The proactive use of social channels helps organisations foster and grow these relationships. Sharing of stories that are both personal and inspirational helps stimulate community interest and builds relationships which encourages online community engagement on a much more personal level. Refer to Figure 8 for the linking of the emerging concepts.

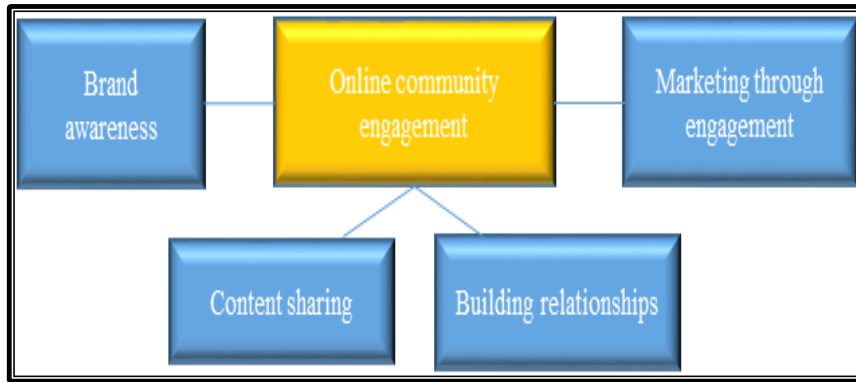


Figure 8: Online community engagement and its relationship with brand awareness, marketing through engagement, content sharing and building relationships

**E. The relationship between assisting community with assimilating information and online community engagement**

*Assisting community with assimilating information* is an attempt by organisations to help their online community through the maze of online content and to then find what they are looking for. Organisations breakdown complex information into bite sized portions for easier communication. Everything is done in a fun way which allows for *online community engagement* to take place on a much more personal level. Refer to Figure 9 for the linking of the emerging concepts.

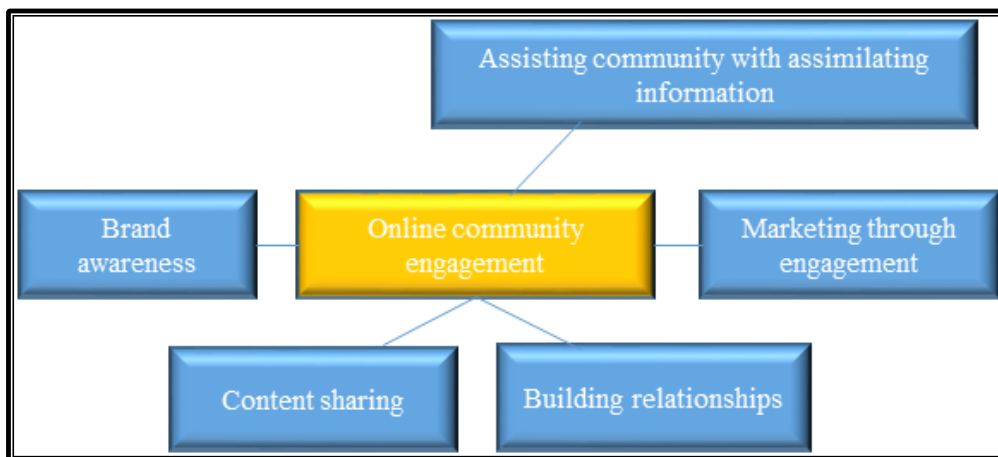


Figure 9: Online community engagement and its relationship with brand awareness, marketing through engagement, content sharing, building relationships and assisting community with assimilating information

4.2.2.2. Content quality

The online community is looking for meaningful, relevant and compelling information that adds value to their lives. Organisations who share high quality content on social channels will stimulate more engagement and a greater online following. The result is an enjoyable social media experience for organisations and their online community. The concept of *content quality* presents a distinct (or clear)

theme linking related concepts together. For this reason, the concept of *content quality* was elevated to become a category. Concepts and relationships around its axis are discussed next.

**A. The relationship between feeding of community comments back into content and content quality**

It is important for organisations to manage the *content quality* of their social media posts. The information being shared needs to be both relevant and compelling to keep the online community interested and coming back for more. Content that is of high quality will have more engagement and a better following, whereas content that is of a low quality will struggle to get an online following. *Feeding of community comments back into content* helps organisations to actively generate articles that its community would be interested in. Refer to Figure 10 for the linking of emerging concepts.



Figure 10: Content quality and its relationship with feeding of community comments back into content

**B. The relationship between product information and descriptions and content quality**

Sharing *product information and descriptions* that the online community finds useful improves the overall *content quality* of the organisation’s online posts. The organisation uses these posts to tell their online community how to use their products as well as the benefits associated with the use of the products. Refer to Figure 11 for the linking of emerging concepts.

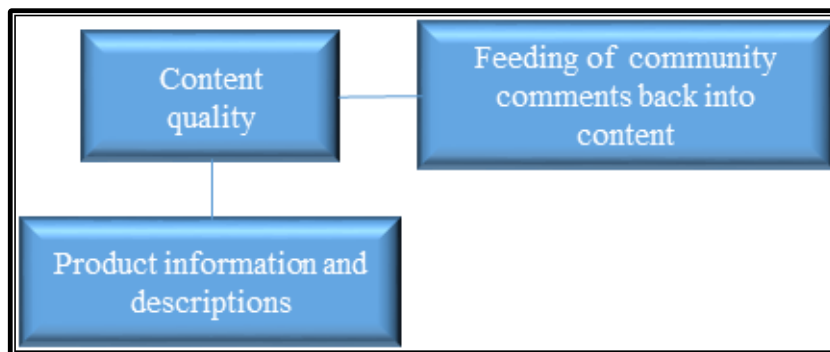


Figure 11: Content quality and its relationship with feeding of community comments back into content and product information and descriptions

**The relationship between tailoring content and content quality**

*Tailoring content* is one of the techniques used by organisations to improve on their online *content quality*. During this exercise organisations tailor their content to be more specific and appropriate to each of their different social media channels. The focus is either on organisational campaign initiatives where organisations showcase their products (homeware, fashion or beauty), or

community initiatives like a feeding scheme to feed pupils from poor schools. Refer to Figure 12 for the linking of emerging concepts.

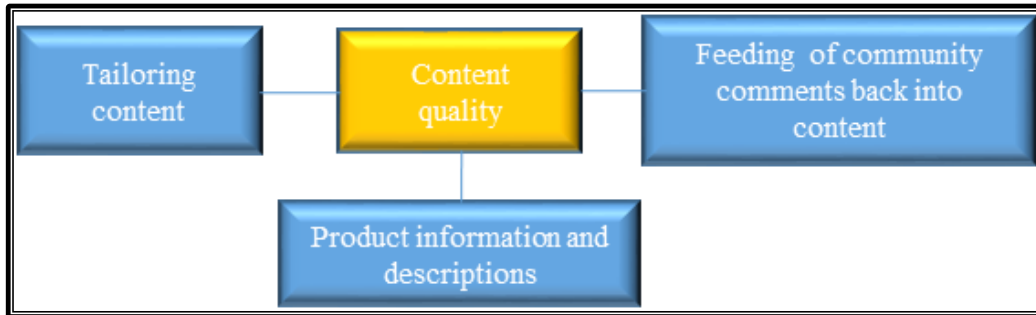


Figure 12: Content quality and its relationship with feeding of community comments back into content, product information and descriptions and tailoring content

**C. The relationship between joint crafting of content by organisation and community and content quality**

The online conversation between organisations and their online community is co-owned. Content is created during this conversation, then posted which leads to the creation of more content. This is a circular process where the *joint crafting of content by organisation and community* helps improve the *content quality* of online posts. This activity only ends when the online community is happy. Refer to Figure 13 for the linking of emerging concepts.

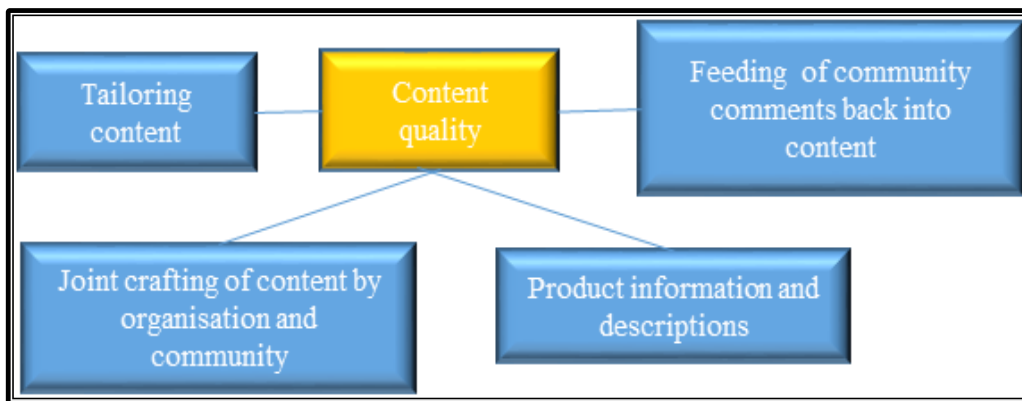


Figure 13: Content quality and its relationship with feeding of community comments back into content, product information and descriptions, tailoring content and joint crafting of content by organisation and community

**D. The relationship between supporting effective conversations and content quality**

Organisations can improve on their *content quality* by *supporting effective conversations*. This is achieved by planning work activities associated with social media campaigns. These activities include: (1) ensuring that there are no duplicate stories across their multiple social media channels, (2) boosting popular stories with advertisements which will result in more people seeing the story and

increase the number of organisational likes on social media, and (3) deciding when it is best to use text or visuals to tell a story. Refer to Figure 14 for the linking of emerging concepts.

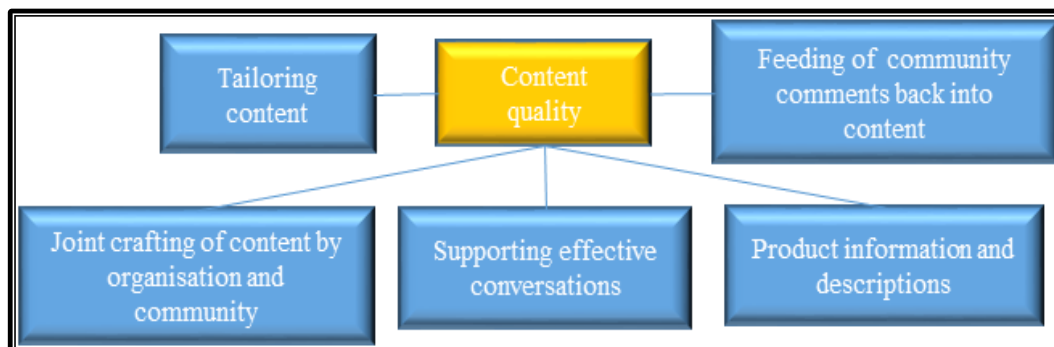


Figure 14: Content quality and its relationship with feeding of community comments back into content, product information and descriptions, tailoring content, joint crafting of content by organisation and community and supporting effective conversations

#### 4.2.2.3. Online community and organisation power dynamic

Organisations must understand that the online community controls their online engagement and that the conversation only ends once the audience is happy. The online community allows organisations into their personal online space so organisations need to respect these engagement opportunities afforded to them. Organisations who proactively engage with their online community on resolving issues, can manage the power dynamic in a more positive way. The concept of *online community and organisation power dynamic* presents a distinct (or clear) theme linking related concepts together. For this reason, the concept of *online community and organisation power dynamic* was elevated to become a category. Concepts and relationships around its axis are discussed next.

#### A. The relationship between community posting of complaints, questions and queries and online community and organisation power dynamic

The online audience is in charge of the conversation that takes place between themselves and the organisation. The result is a complicated power struggle that creates an *online community and organisation power dynamic*. This power struggle becomes more manageable once organisations play a more proactive role in impacting the conversation and responding truthfully. The power dynamic extends to include the *community posting of complaints, questions and queries*. To constantly respond to complaints, questions and queries is time-consuming and acts as a hindrance. On the other hand, these complaints, questions and queries are helpful when they show what organisations are doing wrong and how they can fix their mistakes. Refer to Figure 15 for the linking of emerging concepts.

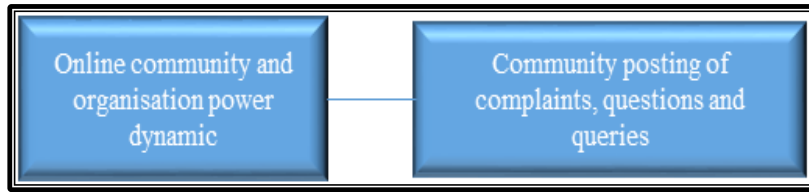


Figure 15: Online community and organisation power dynamic and its relationship with community posting of complaints, questions and queries

**B. The relationship between addressing community concerns through social media and community posting of complaints, questions and queries**

Addressing community concerns through social media forms part of the organisation’s customer caring function. These concerns stem from the community posting of complaints, questions and queries. Addressing customer concerns is a very time-consuming activity which emphasises the dominant nature of this customer caring function. Refer to Figure 16 for the linking of emerging concepts.



Figure 16: Online community and organisation power dynamic and its relationship with community posting of complaints, questions and queries and addressing community concerns through social media

**C. The relationship between attention seeking society and online community and organisation power dynamic**

Humanity has become an attention seeking society and this insatiable need for attention has extended online to now include the social media world. Organisations are forced to deal with this increasing societal need for attention which further complicates the online community and organisation power dynamic. Organisations who fail run the risk of having their online brand being hijacked and losing control of their online presence. Refer to Figure 17 for the linking of emerging concepts.

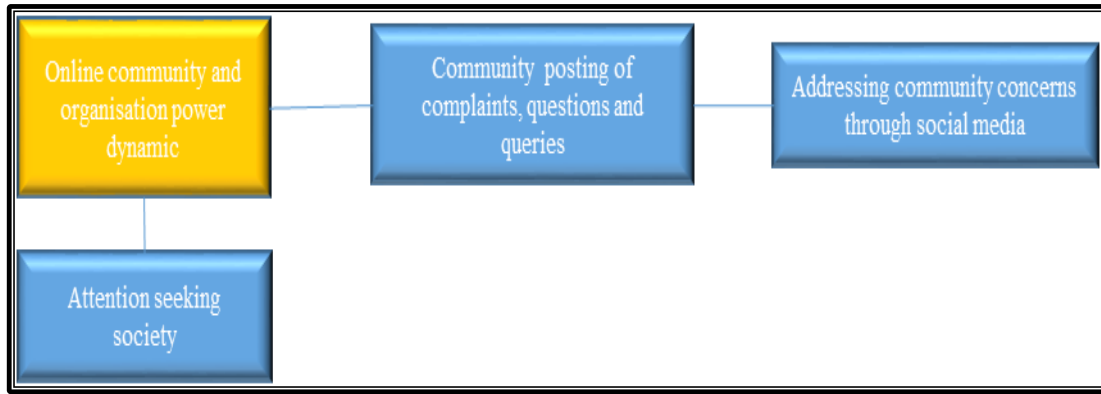


Figure 17: Online community and organisation power dynamic and its relationship with community posting of complaints, questions and queries, addressing community concerns through social media and attention seeking society

**D. The relationship between levels of social media interaction and online community and organisation power dynamic**

The *levels of social media interaction* have increased significantly. This prolific nature of social interaction becomes evident by more people wanting information in electronic format and from their social media networks. Organisations are also adding more social media accounts to their online presence. This is an attempt by organisations to be more accessible to their growing online community. This need to appease their online community further complicates the *online community and organisation power dynamic*. Refer to Figure 18 for the linking of emerging concepts.

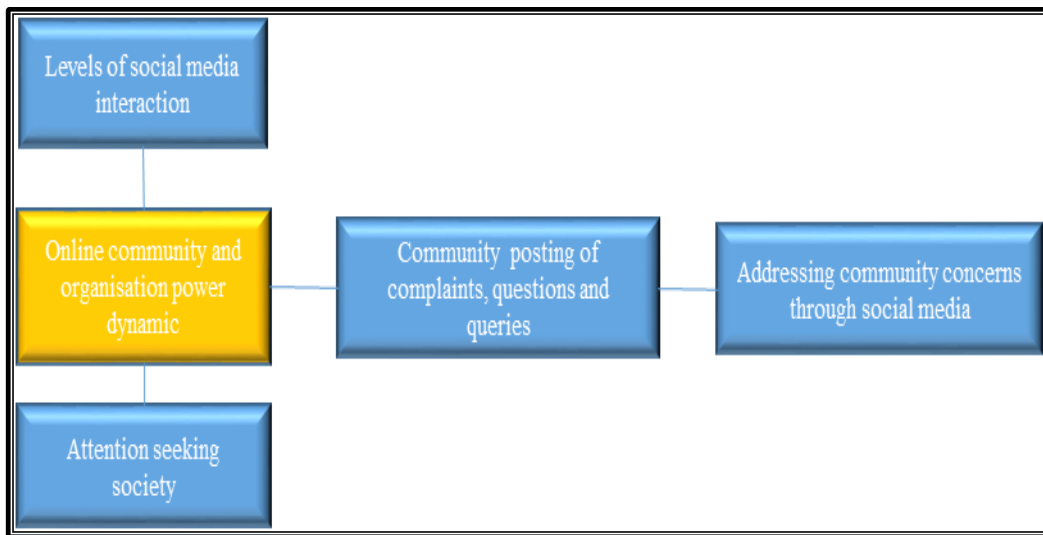


Figure 18: Online community and organisation power dynamic and its relationship with community posting of complaints, questions and queries, addressing community concerns through social media, attention seeking society and levels of social media interaction

**E. The relationship between levels of social media interaction and challenges in supporting social media growth**

Social media teams are unable to effectively support the increasing *levels of social media interaction*. This inability to support the organisation’s growing social media presence are underpinned by: (1) having too little social media staff to support the organisation’s social media channels, (2) organisational social media users not adequately trained which results in additional support needs, and (3) having a limited or no social media budget at all, which means that the social media team cannot make any strategic decisions on how best to support social media growth. These points highlight that the *challenges in supporting social media growth* confronting social media teams are diverse. Refer to Figure 19 for the linking of emerging concepts.

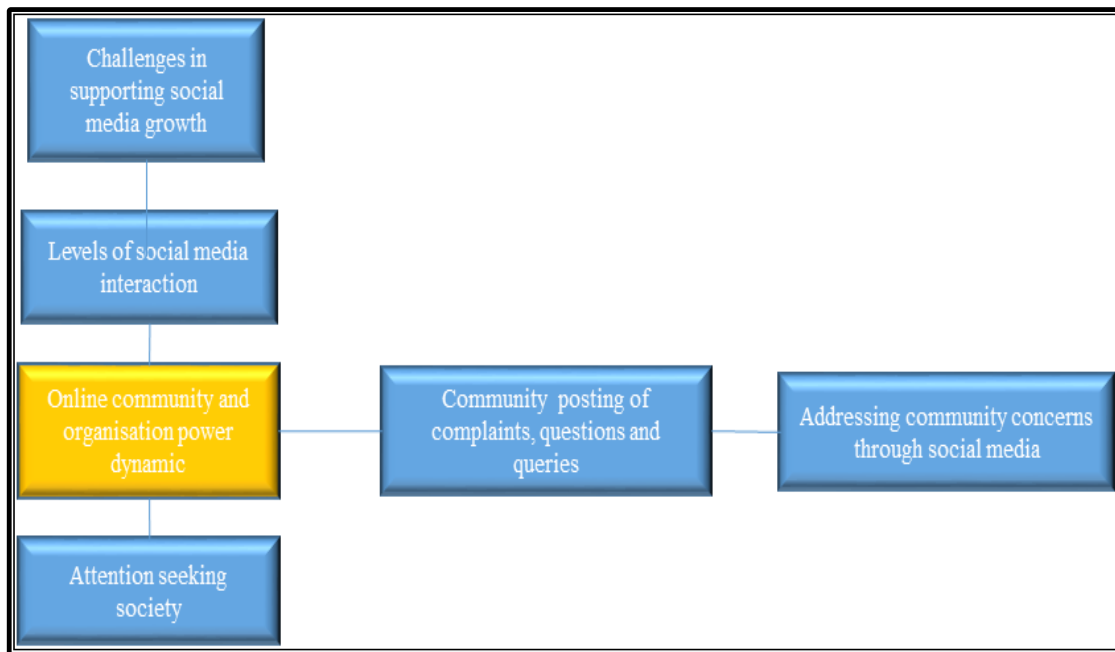


Figure 19: Online community and organisation power dynamic and its relationship with community posting of complaints, questions and queries, addressing community concerns through social media, attention seeking society, levels of social media interaction and challenges in supporting social media growth

4.2.2.4. OmniChannel

The organisational use of social media is successful when the customer is placed at the centre of the communication strategy. Creating this OmniChannel experience for the customer is very difficult. Success is possible when organisations can use social media to take the full online customer journey from its beginning to the end. This seamless integration between the social media channels will also provide the online community with a cohesive organisational message across all the social media channels. The benefit is that the online community can use any social media channel to get the full customer experience. The concept of *Omnichannel* presents a distinct (or clear) theme linking related

concepts together. For this reason, the concept of *Omnichannel* was elevated to become a category. Concepts and relationships around its axis are discussed next.

**A. The relationship between organisational marketing campaign initiatives and generating interest in products**

Social media plays a supportive role during *organisational marketing campaign initiatives* by providing an online platform for organisations to showcase their products they wish to sell. *Organisational marketing campaign initiatives* are effective when organisations take a balanced approach to *generating interest in products*. Refer to Figure 20 for the linking of the emerging concepts.

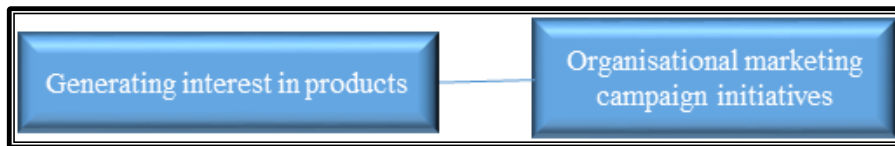


Figure 20: *Organisational marketing campaign initiatives and its relationship with generating interest in products*

**B. The relationship between organisational marketing campaign initiatives and OmniChannel**

Creating an authentic *OmniChannel* experience for the customer would mean that organisations must go along and take the customer journey with each customer. They also must share one message across all their social channels. These are very difficult tasks for any organisation to successfully achieve. What helps is having the customer at the centre of the communication strategy when working on *organisational marketing campaign initiatives*. Refer to Figure 21 for the linking of the emerging concepts.

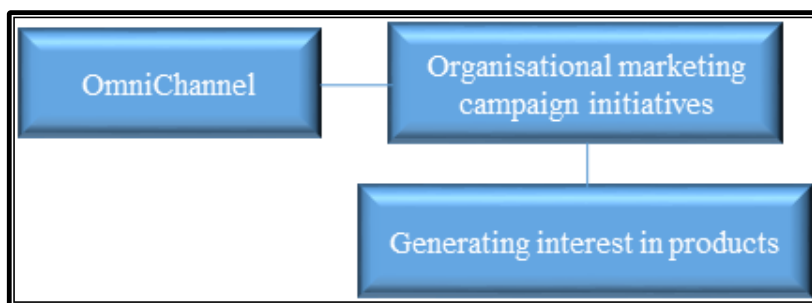


Figure 21: *OmniChannel and its relationship with organisational marketing campaign initiatives and generating interest in products.*

**C. The relationship between planning cycles and OmniChannel**

The *OmniChannel* experience is achieved using a content schedule that is broken down in daily, weekly, monthly and yearly *planning cycles*. Refer to Figure 22 for the linking of emerging concepts.

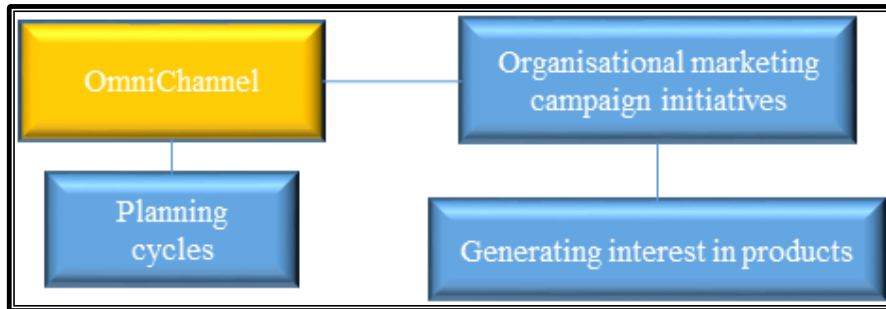


Figure 22: *OmniChannel* and its relationship with organisational marketing campaign initiatives, generating interest in products and planning cycles

**D. The relationship between benchmarking and OmniChannel**

Organisations carry out *benchmarking* exercises against both local and international competitors to improve on their customers’ *OmniChannel* experiences. Refer to Figure 23 for the linking of the emerging concepts.

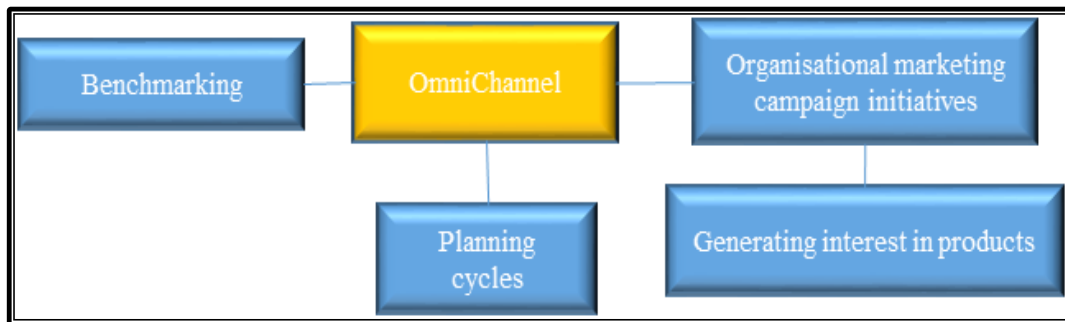


Figure 23: *OmniChannel* and its relationship with organisational marketing campaign initiatives, generating interest in products, planning cycles and benchmarking

4.2.2.5. *Interrelating content and social media within the organisation*

The content and social media teams cannot be effective by themselves. They are not seen as separate entities, but as being mutually dependent on each other and related in a circular fashion. Both teams are needed to create an effective online brand presence. The concept of *interrelating content and social media within the organisation* presents a distinct (or clear) theme linking related concepts together. For this reason, the concept of *interrelating content and social media within the organisation* was elevated to become a category. Concepts and relationships around its axis are discussed next.

**A. The relationship between aligning social media and the organisation and interrelating content and social media within the organisation**

The activity of *interrelating content and social media within the organisation* is very difficult. This circular relationship is achieved by *aligning social media and the organisation* where social media and the organisation are integrated and do not behave as silos. Refer to Figure 24 for the linking of emerging concepts.

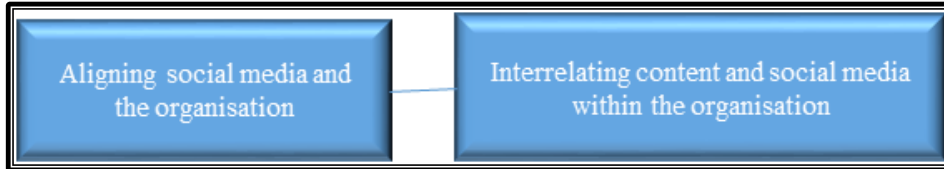


Figure 24: *Interrelating content and social media within the organisation and its relationship with aligning social media and the organisation*

**B. The relationship between social media strategic leadership and interrelating content and social media within the organisation**

Another way of achieving the difficult task of *interrelating content and social media within the organisation* is for the *social media strategic leadership* in the form of the digital editor and the deputy director for communications and marketing to take on the ownership of achieving this task. Refer to Figure 25 for the linking of emerging concepts.

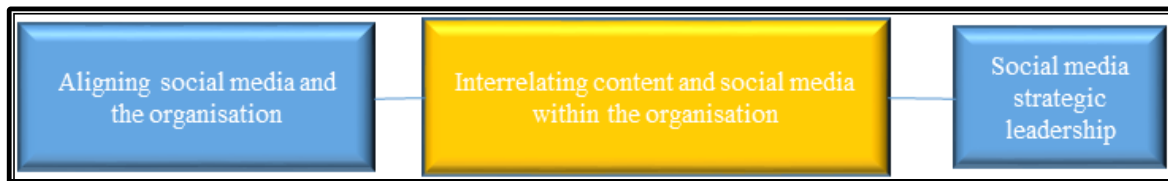


Figure 25: *Interrelating content and social media within the organisation and its relationship with aligning social media and the organisation and social media strategic leadership*

**C. The relationship between social media strategic leadership and social media operational leadership**

Organisations may have a social media management function and a marketing and online communications management function working as the *social media operational leadership* within an organisation. The latter reports to the *social media strategic leadership*. Refer to Figure 26 for the linking of emerging concepts.

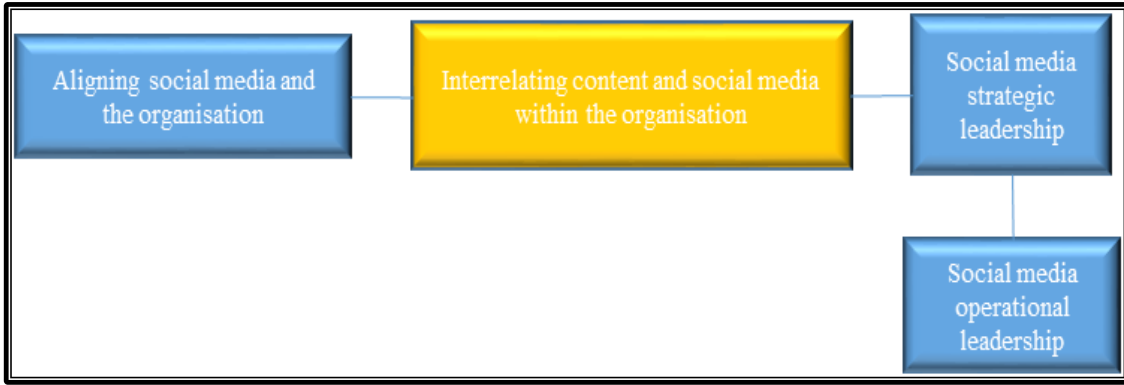


Figure 26: Interrelating content and social media within the organisation and its relationship with aligning social media and the organisation, social media strategic leadership and social media operational leadership

**D. The relationship between social media team, digital content team and social media operational leadership**

The *social media operational leadership* is responsible for managing the work associated with social media campaigns, the influencer work and the building of relationships amongst social media users. These work activities are achieved through a *social media team* which could be made up of platform experts (e.g. Twitter expert, visual media expert, Facebook expert, etc.) and a multi-platform expert. The *digital content team* made up of content editors also plays an important role in delivering the organisation’s social media work activities. Refer to Figure 27 for the linking of emerging concepts.

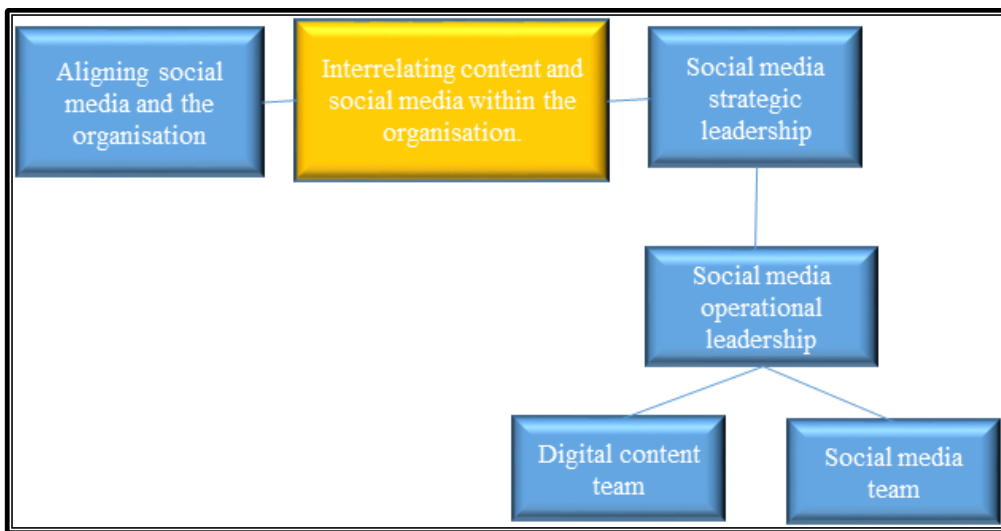


Figure 27: Interrelating content and social media within the organisation and its relationship with aligning social media and the organisation, social media strategic leadership, social media operational leadership, social media team and digital content team

4.2.2.6. Risk to reputation

Organisations with a social media presence run the risk of having online attacks targeted at them from an unhappy online community. An organisational risk to reputation comes from negative online posts by social media users. To deal with the risk, organisations need to be honest and upfront when something goes wrong. Joining in on the conversation to address the issue as soon as possible is necessary. The concept of *risk to reputation* presents a distinct (or clear) theme linking related concepts together. For this reason, the concept of *risk to reputation* was elevated to become a category. Concepts and relationships around its axis are discussed next.

**A. The relationship between collective understanding of social media and risk to reputation**

The *collective understanding of social media* within organisations may range from low to medium to high. Social media teams in organisations have some understanding of what social media platforms are and how these social media channels should be used. However, organisations at large are challenged by the social media phenomenon and its use. The result is a low level in the understanding of social media. This lack of understanding introduces organisational risk where the *risk to reputation* is of a high nature. Refer to Figure 28 for the linking of emerging concepts.

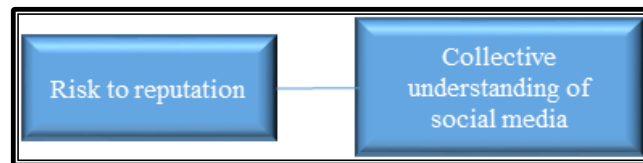


Figure 28: Risk to reputation and its relationship with collective understanding of social media

**B. The relationship between collective interest in social media and risk to reputation**

The *collective interest in social media* within organisations ranges from low to medium to high. A high interest in social media is associated with a growing awareness within organisations that social media shows real promise as an online engagement and communication business tool. However, there are those who are less convinced about the benefits of using social media and question whether social media qualifies as a professional business tool. These individuals show a low to medium interest in social media. An active online community is resulting in organisations having to deal with increasing levels of social media related requests. Failure to do so introduces organisational risk where the *risk to reputation* is of a high nature. Refer to Figure 29 for the linking of emerging concepts.

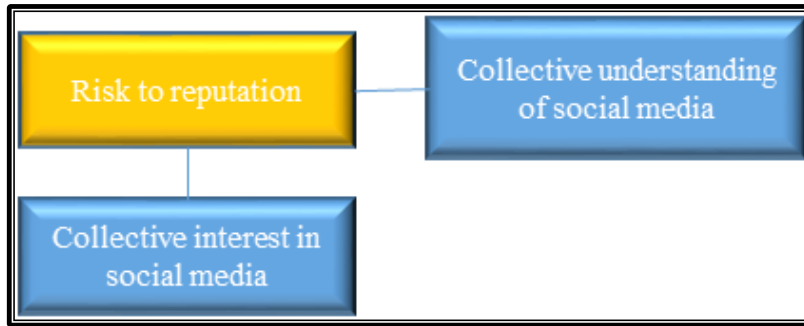


Figure 29: Risk to reputation and its relationship with collective interest in social media and the collective understanding of social media

**C. The relationship between community loyalty and risk to reputation**

Building *community loyalty* is important. Organisations achieve this by posting fresh and interesting online content that will attract and keep their online community coming back. To grow the organisational online community is a balancing act between attracting new people and maintaining the current community base. Getting this balance wrong will negatively impact the organisation, introducing organisational risk where the *risk to reputation* is of a high nature. Refer to Figure 30 for the linking of emerging concepts.

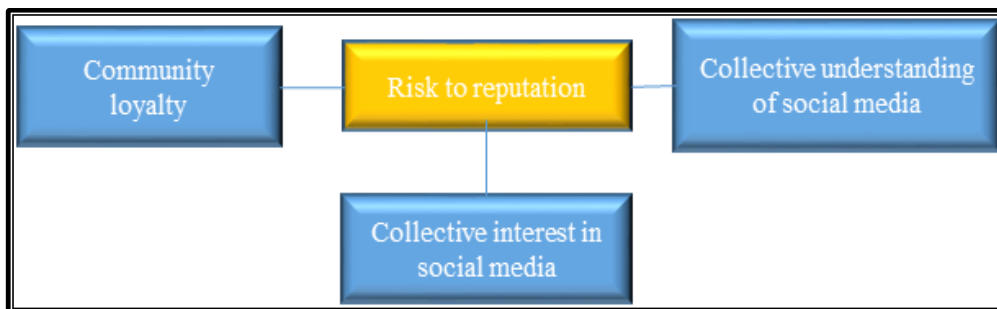


Figure 30: Risk to reputation and its relationship with collective interest in social media, collective understanding of social media and community loyalty

**D. The relationship between taking accountability for organisational online image and risk to reputation**

It is important that organisations manage their online content. Addressing negative comments in a positive way, being transparent and contactable, and owning mistakes and then fixing them are examples of *taking accountability for organisational online image*. Failing to effectively manage online content introduces organisational risk where the *risk to reputation* is of a high nature. Refer to Figure 31 for the linking of emerging concepts.



Figure 31: Risk to reputation and its relationship with collective interest in social media, collective understanding of social media, community loyalty and taking accountability for organisational online image

#### 4.2.2.7. A supportive social media strategy

Organisations find the flexible use of social media problematic. A solution to the problem is a supportive social media strategy that provides a structured approach to the use of social media within an organisational context. A more stable operational environment will lead to a reduction in the organisational challenges associated with social media use. Standardisation of work processes across all social media platforms will also help facilitate a synergistic working relationship amongst different social media organisational users. The concept of *a supportive social media strategy* presents a distinct (or clear) theme linking related concepts together. For this reason, the concept of *a supportive social media strategy* was elevated to become a category. Concepts and relationships around its axis are discussed next.

#### A. The relationship between experiencing social media use failures and a supportive social media strategy

The dynamic and varied nature of social media use within organisations is problematic. Organisations are *experiencing social media use failures*. Delays in providing support are making it difficult to help customers immediately. In addition, a lack of due diligence in checking posts for accuracy before publishing has a negative impact on an organisation’s online brand. What is becoming more evident when trying to address these problems is the need for *a supportive social media strategy*. Setting social media use foundations through strategy is a way of achieving synergy amongst social media users. A form of standardisation across all social media platforms will also facilitate in having a unified organisational voice. Refer to Figure 32 for the linking of the emerging concepts.



Figure 32: A supportive social media strategy and its relationship with experiencing social media use failures

**B. The relationship between the link between digital content, social media and strategy and a supportive social media strategy**

Organisational emphasis should be placed on the social media conversation, with the social media technology fading into the background. This can only be achieved when there is a seamless *link between digital content, social media and strategy*. This seamless integration is made possible through *a supportive social media strategy*. Refer to Figure 33 for the linking of the emerging concepts.



Figure 33: A supportive social media strategy and its relationship with the link between digital content, social media and strategy and experiencing social media use failures

**C. The relationship between education interventions and a supportive social media strategy**

There is a lack of knowledge within organisations when it comes to the use of social media. Senior staff members are often not socially active and are suspicious of the online medium. Those staff members that are using social media are experiencing challenges which places the organisation’s online reputation at risk. *Education interventions* that are focused on showing organisations how to effectively use social media as part of business campaign initiatives are needed. Organisations will then be able to see the potential benefits of social media use in improving their online reputation as well as the marketing of products. A *supportive social media strategy* facilitates such *education interventions*. The strategy provides guidelines on how to effectively use social media and how to address mistakes. Refer to Figure 34 for the linking of the emerging concepts.

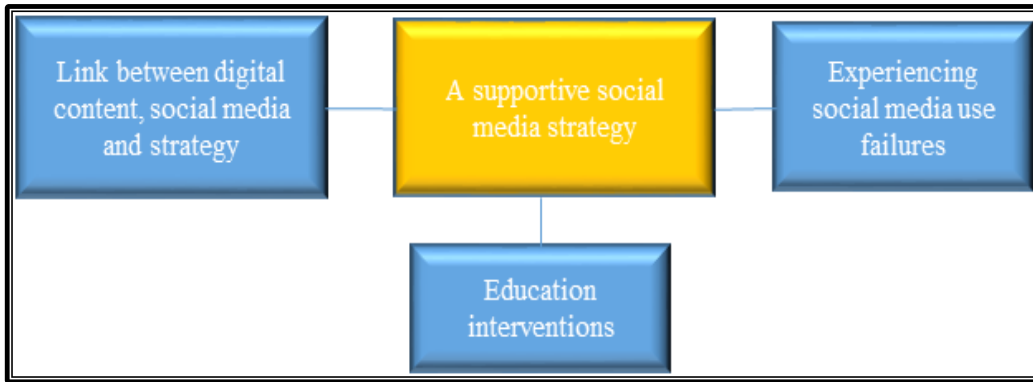


Figure 34: A supportive social media strategy and its relationship with the link between digital content, social media and strategy, experiencing social media use failures and education interventions

**D. The relationship between driving awareness of social media and education interventions**

The members of the social media team see themselves as being invisible within the organisational context. Their focus is on *driving awareness of social media*. Being more visible means more support for the social media team, and *education interventions* are being used to create this visibility. Refer to Figure 35 for the linking of the emerging concepts.

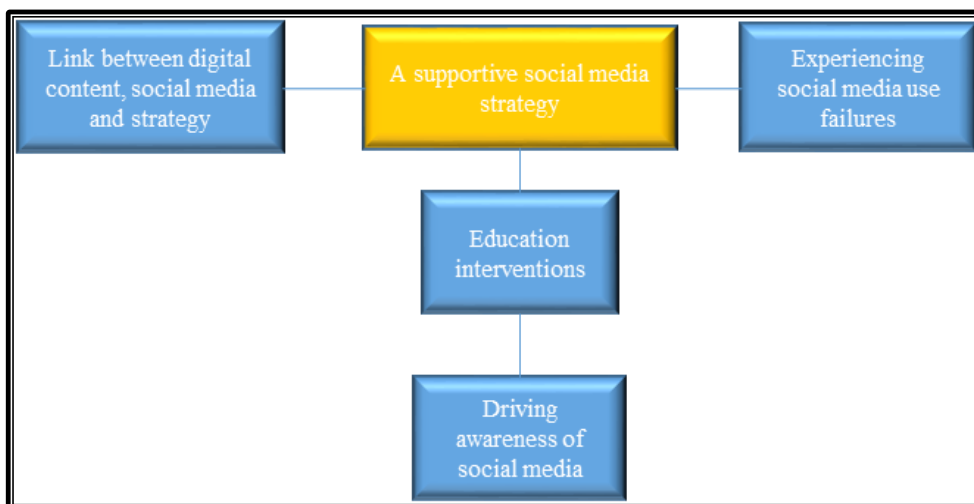


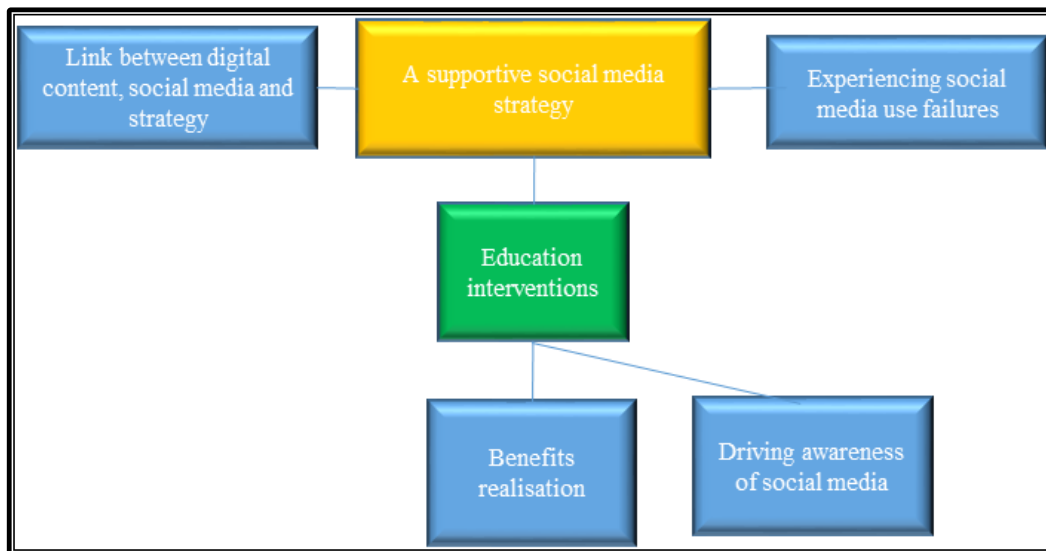
Figure 35: A supportive social media strategy and its relationship with the link between digital content, social media and strategy, experiencing social media use failures, education interventions and driving awareness of social media

**E. The relationship between benefits realisation and education interventions**

Being socially relevant and being able to communicate with an online community anywhere in the world are benefits organisations can access when using social media. However, *benefits realisation* through social media use cannot be based solely on having a strong brand. To achieve the benefits associated with social media use, organisations need a structured approach when engaging with their online community. They need one social media voice across the organisation and a strong synergistic relationship between the brand and the use of social media. *Education interventions* help support the

structured approach to social media engagement and the realisation of benefits associated with social media use.

A closer look at the emerging theory shows the concept of *education interventions* as playing a prominent role as a distinct (or clear) theme, grouping other concepts together. For this reason, the concept of *education interventions* was elevated to become a sub-category. Refer to Figure 36 for the linking of the emerging concepts.



*Figure 36: A supportive social media strategy and its relationship with the link between digital content, social media and strategy, experiencing social media use failures, education interventions, driving awareness of social media and benefits realisation*

**F. The relationship between breaking down departmental barriers and education interventions**

Departmental barriers within organisations negatively impact departmental teams working on social media campaigns. *Breaking down departmental barriers* need a hands-on approach which includes regular management team meetings with everyone working on social media campaigns. In addition, networking within the business also helps overcome issues of isolation. *Education interventions* help build these supportive relationships amongst departmental teams. Refer to Figure 37 for the linking of the emerging concepts.

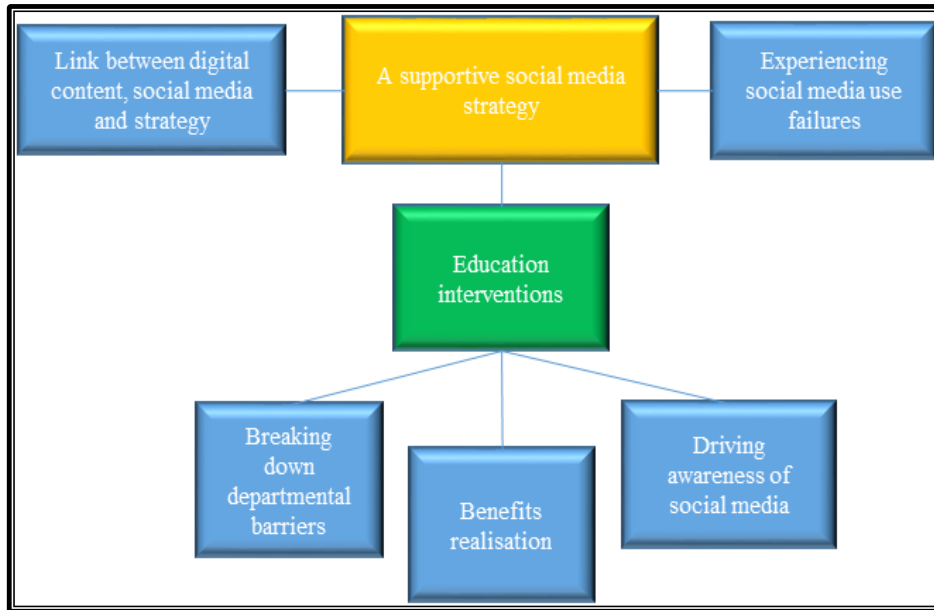


Figure 37: A supportive social media strategy and its relationship with the link between digital content, social media and strategy, experiencing social media use failures, education interventions, driving awareness of social media, benefits realisation and breaking down departmental barriers

**G. The relationship between managing use expectations and education interventions**

There is a steady increase in the number of business campaigns wanting a social media presence. This increase is putting pressure on social media teams and *managing use expectations* is becoming an important aspect of the work done by the social media team. Online posts are formally scheduled with the best and most popular stories receiving priority. These levels of control improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the social media team and reduces the possibility of posting incorrect information that will negatively impact the organisational brand. The social media team also controls the number of social media platforms the organisation has a presence on. Additional social media platforms should only be added if the social media team can actively support them. The social media team uses *education interventions* to manage social media user requirements and expectations. Refer to Figure 38 for the linking of the emerging concepts.

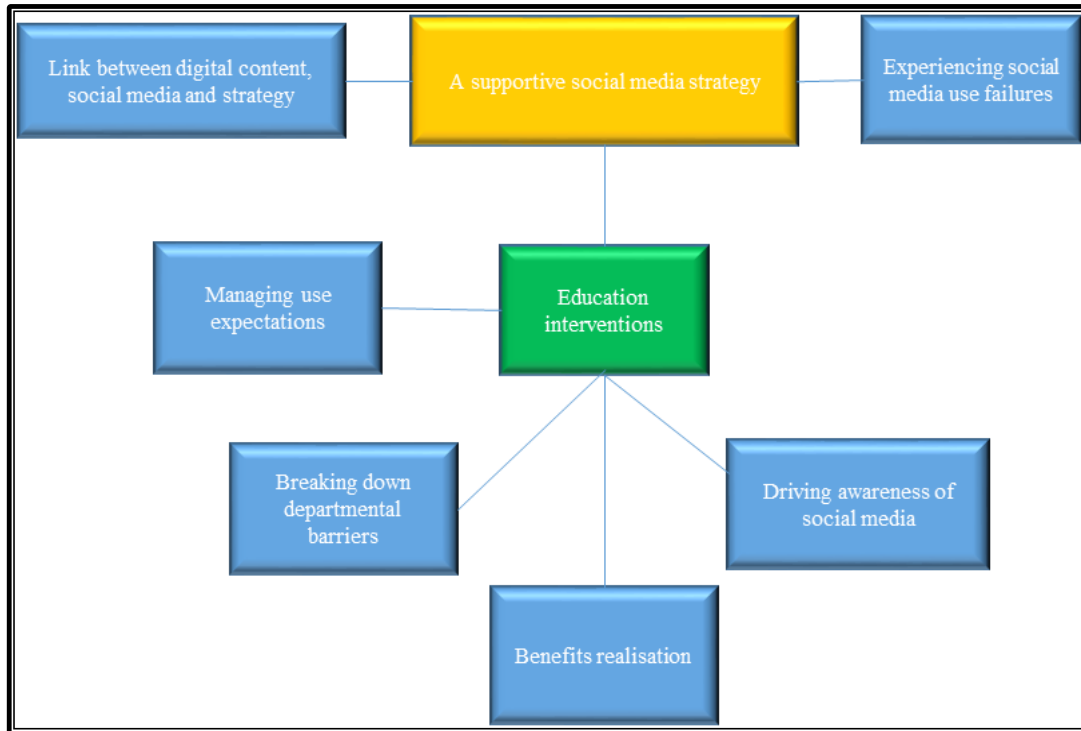


Figure 38: A supportive social media strategy and its relationship with the link between digital content, social media and strategy, experiencing social media use failures, education interventions, driving awareness of social media, benefits realisation, breaking down departmental barriers and managing use expectations

#### 4.2.2.8. Social media landscape

The social media landscape contains many competing social media platforms. Organisations need to select the best social channels that fit their online communication strategy. In addition to selecting social channels for online engagement, organisations also have several social media reporting tools to choose from. These reporting tools allow organisations to generate social media use analytics. The benefit of these analytics is to help organisations better understand the use patterns of their online community and in turn find ways to use social media when engaging with their online community. The concept of *social media landscape* presents a distinct (or clear) theme linking related concepts together. For this reason, the concept of *social media landscape* was elevated to become a category. Concepts and relationships around its axis are discussed next.

#### A. The relationship between social media following and social media landscape

The *social media landscape* is varied in nature. This varied nature applies both to the number of social media platforms that are available to organisations and the patterns of use associated with these online platforms. The levels in *social media following* help organisations distinguish between the more popular social media platforms and those that are less popular within the *social media landscape*.

Organisations focus more attention on those social channels with a higher following as opposed to those with a lower following. Refer to Figure 39 for the linking of emerging concepts.

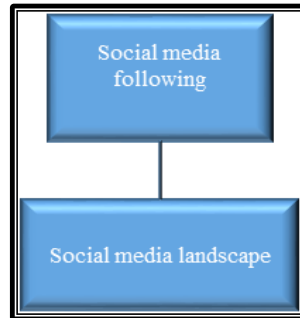


Figure 39: Social media landscape and its relationship with social media following

**B. The relationship between age profile of the social media community and social media landscape**

The age profile of the social media community across the social media platforms are wide-ranging from the very young to middle-aged to older individuals. Organisations use these demographics to better understand the varied nature of the social media landscape. Refer to Figure 40 for the linking of emerging concepts.

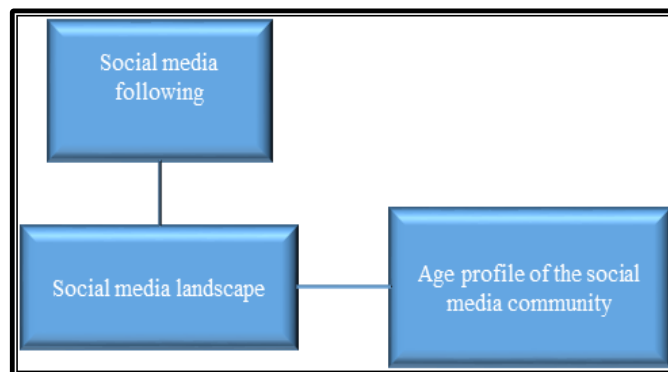


Figure 40: Social media landscape and its relationship with social media following and age profile of the social media community

**C. The relationship between reporting on social media use and social media landscape**

Reporting on social media use helps organisations when planning work activities related to their social media campaigns. The varied nature of the social media landscape will also influence which social media reporting tools organisations will choose that best supports their reporting on social media use needs. Refer to Figure 41 for the linking of emerging concepts.

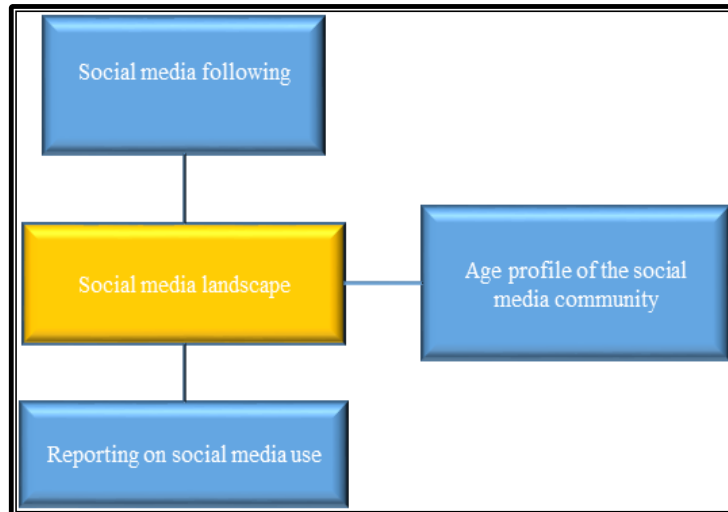


Figure 41: Social media landscape and its relationship with social media following, age profile of the social media community and reporting on social media use

#### 4.2.2.9. Characteristics of social media for use

Organisations see social media platforms as fascinating storytelling devices. To tell the best stories, organisations first need to understand the characteristics of each social media channel. Stories are successful when they are matched with the best suited social media channel. The concept of *characteristics of social media for use* presents a distinct (or clear) theme linking related concepts together. For this reason, the concept of *characteristics of social media for use* was elevated to become a category. Concepts and relationships around its axis are discussed next.

#### A. The relationship between Facebook use by the organisation, Twitter use by the organisation, Instagram use by the organisation and characteristics of social media for use

Social media are online content sharing devices that offer a variety of uses to organisations. Organisations need to look at the *characteristics of social media for use* to determine which online channels are best suited for posting content stories with certain characteristics. Content stories varies from long text, text and pictures to having pictures only. The popularity of a social media platform also plays a role where the use of *Facebook use by the organisation* is often the most popular choice, the use of *Twitter use by the organisation* often comes second as a popular choice and the use of *Instagram use by the organisation* is often the least popular choice, thereafter other channels. Refer to Figure 42 for the linking of emerging concepts.

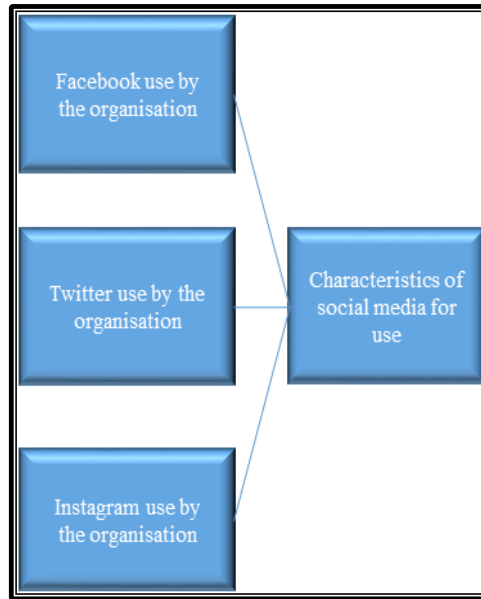


Figure 42: Characteristics of social media for use and its relationship with Facebook use by the organisation, Twitter use by the organisation and Instagram use by the organisation

#### **B. The relationship between integrating the organisational website and social media and characteristics of social media for use**

Organisations see their organisational website as a social channel too, thus closely *integrating the organisational website and social media*. The website is used to extend the social media experience between the organisation and its online community. Not everything that is posted on the website is appropriate for use on social media. Organisations need to look at the *characteristics of social media for use* to determine whether a story posted on the website can be appropriately formatted to fit onto social media and still communicate the true essence of the story. Refer to Figure 43 for the linking of emerging concepts.

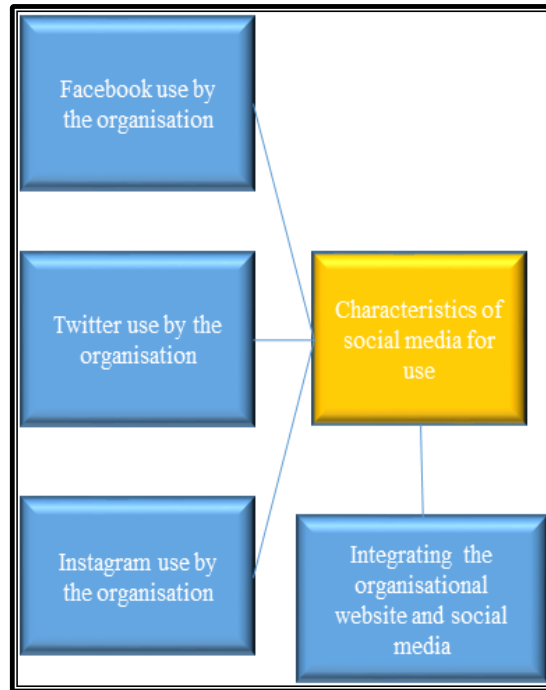


Figure 43: Characteristics of social media for use and its relationship with Facebook use by the organisation, Twitter use by the organisation, Instagram use by the organisation and integrating the organisational website and social media

#### 4.2.2.10. Collective storytelling

The online community will post comments, complaints, questions and praises about organisations they engage with. Organisations who appreciate the value of this information will analyse it and subsequently use the outcome of their analysis as a basis for collective engagement referred to as storytelling. The personal nature of these circular engagements allows organisations to better understand their customers and only ends once the online community is happy. The concept of *collective storytelling* presents a distinct (or clear) theme linking related concepts together. For this reason, the concept of *collective storytelling* was elevated to become a category. Concepts and relationships around its axis are discussed next.

#### A. The relationship between following community conversations and collective storytelling

Both the organisation and their online community are active contributors to their online conversation. This shared narrative between the organisation and their online community is the *collective storytelling* process. Through this engagement, the organisation gets a better understanding on the needs and wants of their online community. This knowledge allows for a more personal approach to be taken during the *collective storytelling* process. Social media users participating in the storytelling process tend to influence each other. Staying informed by *following community conversations* allows organisations to better deal with the influencing power of online community conversations. Refer to Figure 44 for the linking of emerging concepts.

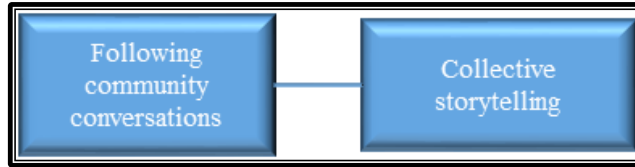


Figure 44: Collective storytelling and its relationship with following community conversations

**B. The relationship between real-time conversations with customers and collective storytelling**

Organisations use social media to have *real-time conversations with customers* with their online community. Organisations that promptly respond to customer comments are seen in a positive light, improving the *collective storytelling* process and increasing the value of the organisation’s online brand. Refer to Figure 45 for the linking of emerging concepts.

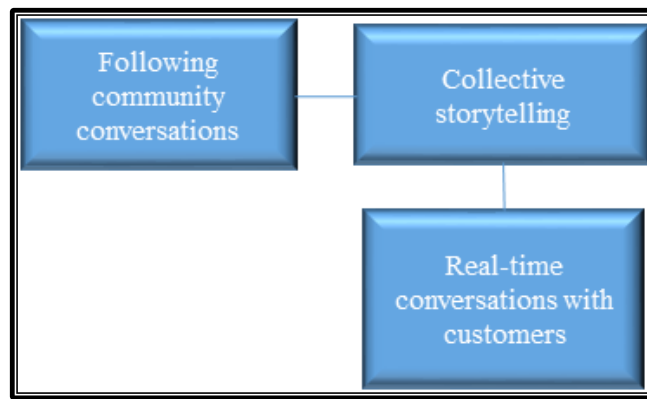


Figure 45: Collective storytelling and its relationship with following community conversations and real-time conversations with customers

**C. The relationship between customers speaking directly to the organisation and collective storytelling**

The social media channels are actively used by *customers speaking directly to the organisation*. The organisation in turn needs to take all online posts on social media seriously. Addressing both positive and negative posts and continuing with each conversation until the online community is happy helps improve the *collective storytelling* process. Refer to Figure 46 for the linking of emerging concepts.

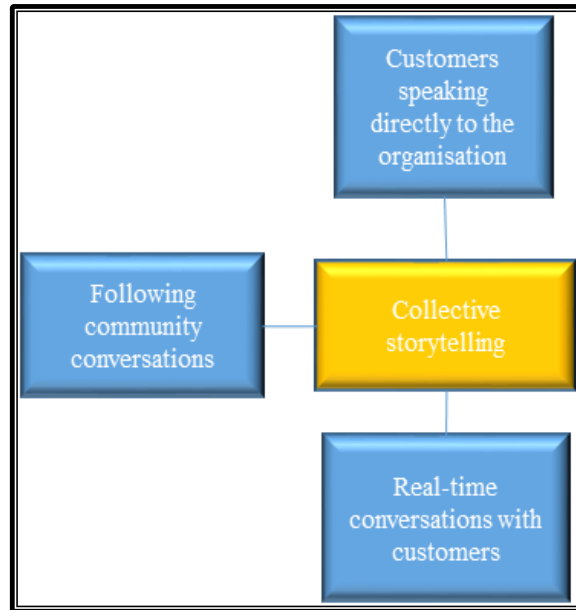


Figure 46: Collective storytelling and its relationship with customers speaking directly to the organisation, following community conversations and real-time conversations with customers

**D. The relationship between characteristics of social media for use and collective storytelling**

The *characteristics of social media for use* contextualises the patterns of social media use within an organisation. Organisations need to decide which characteristics best suit each story, namely: long text, text and pictures or pictures only. Stories that are well-presented facilitate the *collective storytelling* process. Through this relationship, the category *characteristics of social media for use* is recognised as a sub-category of *collective storytelling*. Refer to Figure 47 for the linking of emerging concepts.

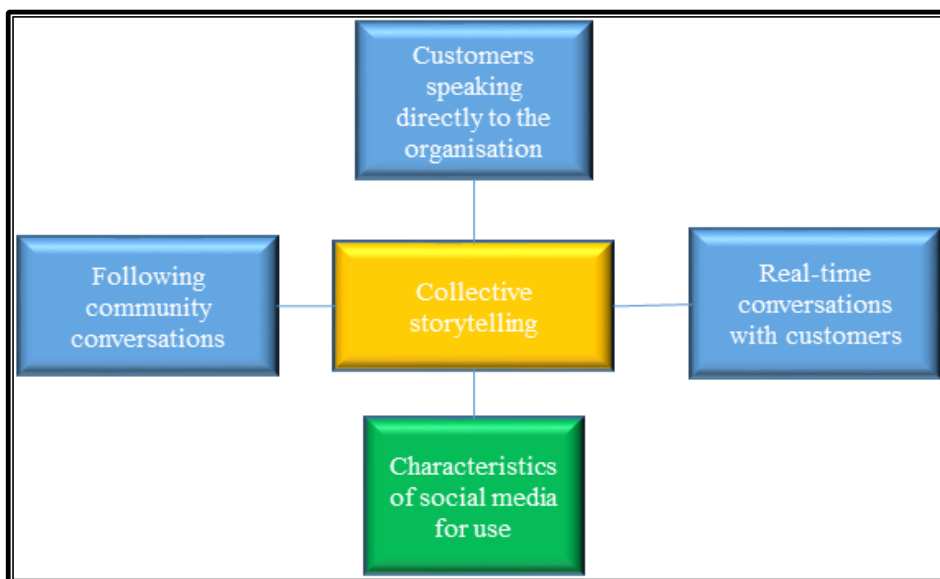


Figure 47: Collective storytelling and its relationship with customers speaking directly to the organisation, following community conversations, real-time conversations with customers and characteristics of social media for use

**E. The relationship between social media landscape and collective storytelling**

The varied nature of the *social media landscape* helps contextualise the patterns of social media use within the organisation. These varying patterns of social media use facilitate the *collective storytelling* process. Through this relationship, the category *social media landscape* is recognised as a sub-category of *collective storytelling*. Refer to Figure 48 for the linking of emerging concepts.

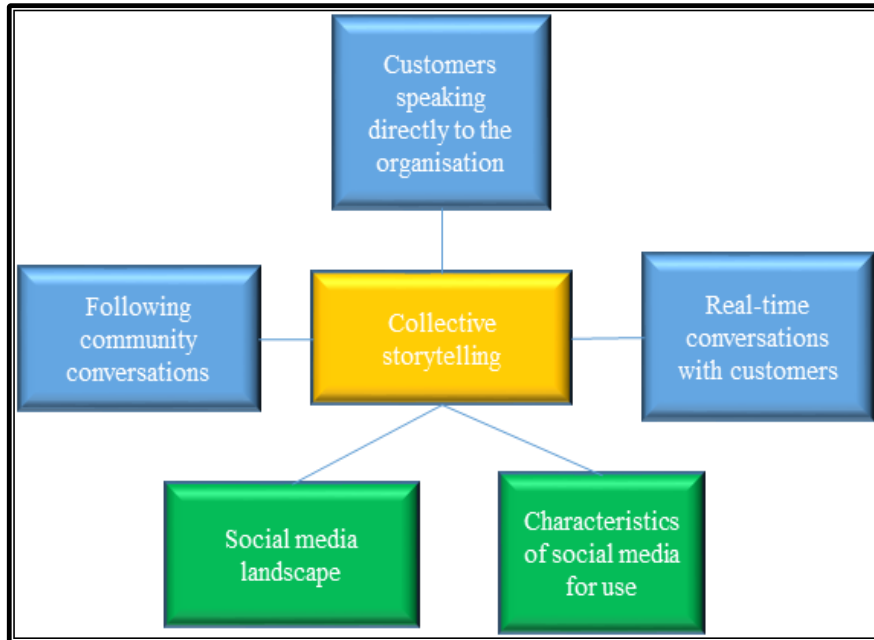


Figure 48: *Collective storytelling and its relationship with customers speaking directly to the organisation, following community conversations, real-time conversations with customers, characteristics of social media for use and social media landscape*

**F. The relationship between researching the organisation’s products and collective storytelling**

The online community use social media when *researching the organisation’s products*. This can range from a minor query to a serious complaint. The information gained through this research activity forms part of the *collective storytelling* process. Refer to Figure 49 for the linking of emerging concepts.

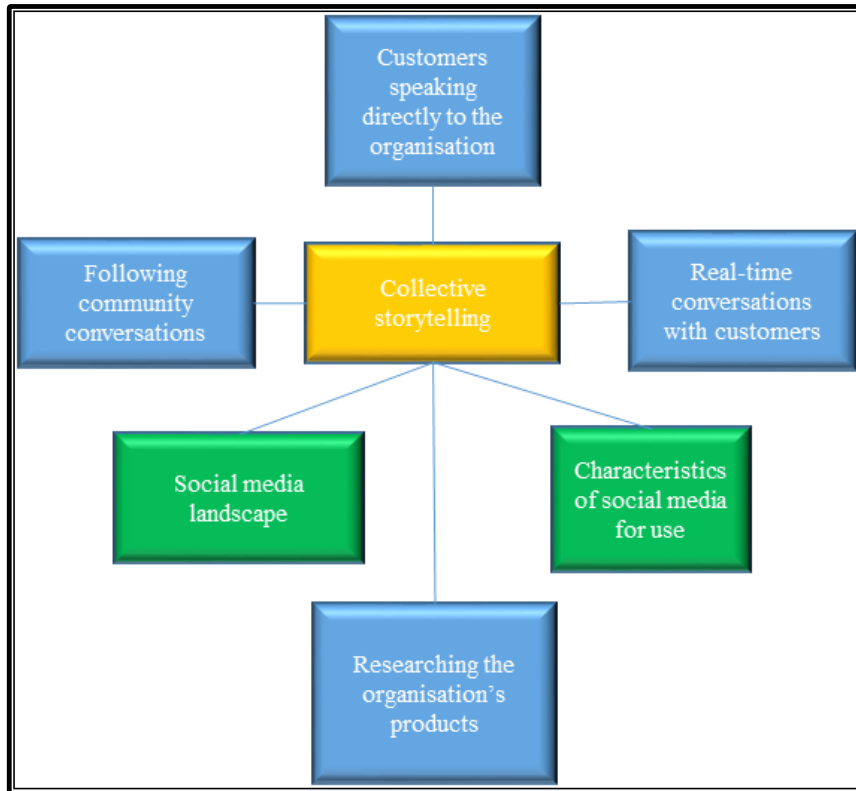
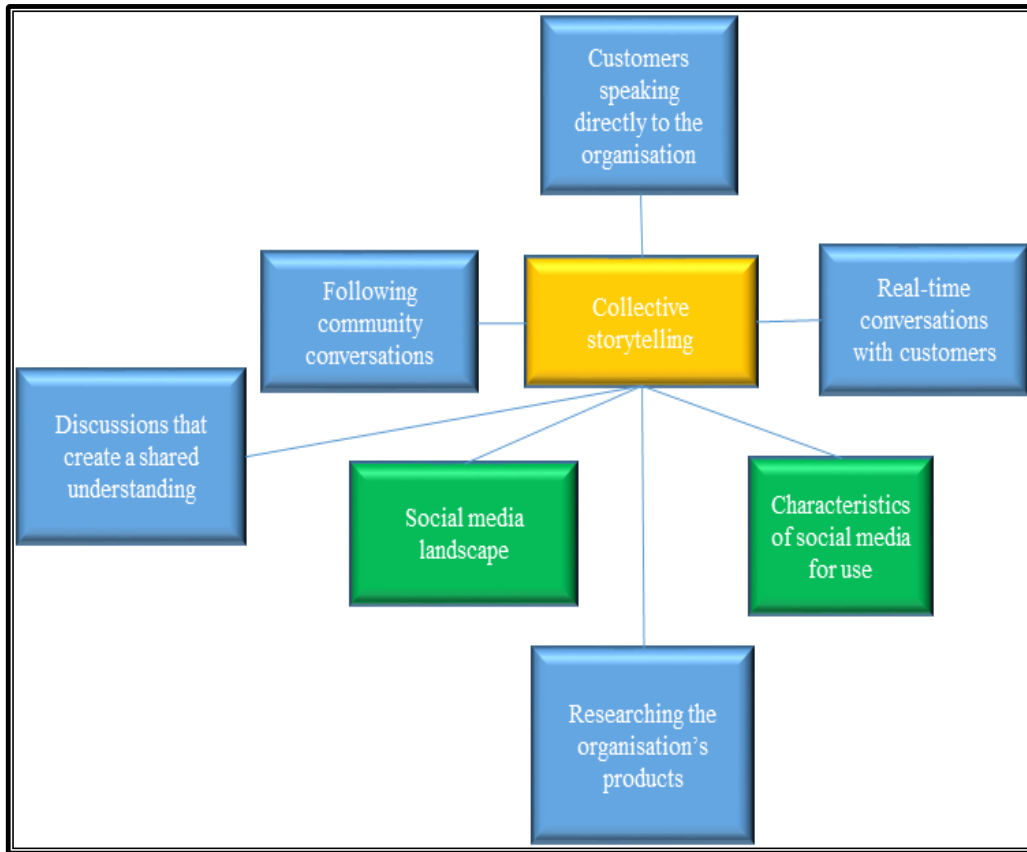


Figure 49: *Collective storytelling and its relationship with customers speaking directly to the organisation, following community conversations, real-time conversations with customers, characteristics of social media for use, social media landscape and researching the organisation's products*

**G. The relationship between discussions that create a shared understanding and collective storytelling**

Social media allows for the creation of online forums on which customers discuss issues related to an organisation. The *collective storytelling* process encourages organisations to enter these online forums and engage with their customers on these issues. These *discussions that create a shared understanding* lay bare what the issues are and lead to an agreement on the actions to be taken to resolve the issues. Refer to Figure 50 for the linking of emerging concepts.



*Figure 50: Collective storytelling and its relationship with customers speaking directly to the organisation, following community conversations, real-time conversations with customers, characteristics of social media for use, social media landscape, researching the organisation's products and discussions that create a shared understanding*

#### 4.4.3. Coding for Process

Coding for process is an aspect of axial coding, where special attention is given to “*the linking of sequences of action/interaction as they pertain to the management of, control over, or response to, a phenomenon*” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 143). In this section, I use the coding paradigm as an analytical tool to illuminate the *collective storytelling* process which is the central process of interest, based on the previous analysis. The data used to illuminate the process is drawn from the previously analysed data slices. In addition, salient data (posted on social media and in news reports) from protest events that occurred concerning the organisations under study were also drawn in to help develop understanding of the processes concerned with organisational use of social media.

The *collective storytelling* process within an organisation involves the social media team which is responsible for the use of social media. The social media team collaborates with the digital content team to create and then post digital content onto the organisation’s social media accounts. This collaborative relationship is mutually supportive in nature. The organisation and the online community converge onto the social media platforms where they both use social media for engagement (also referred to as “*having conversations*” (OrgA.Interview\_1)). The organisation and the online community co-create digital content (where co-creation is the reading of each other’s posts, understanding what is meant in the post and responding to each other in turn). Both parties are essentially part of a *collective storytelling* process where there is a continuous interplay between social media use to co-create digital content. This *collective storytelling* process only ends when the online community is satisfied, which also means that the story has reached its logical conclusion.

To begin with additional data garnered from social media sites and newspaper reports concerning protest events linked to each of the organisations will be highlighted next.

##### ***Organisation A protest event***

In early 2014, organisation A was targeted as one of the South African companies accused of violating an international trade agreement. Organisation A was sourcing some of its produce from certain foreign companies. The protestors who targeted organisation A believed that the company was violating international law on trade relations. The engagement process between organisation A and the protestors was strained from the beginning, with both sides accusing each other of breaking the law and approaching negotiations in bad faith. Organisation A was accused of not being transparent, avoiding meetings, not engaging with their stakeholders, and taking an aggressive stance to the negotiations. On the other hand, the protestors were accused of using scare tactics to intimidate customers and employees, and disrupting normal store operations which led to store closures and a loss in business. The central issue was whether organisation A was in breach of international law on certain trade relations. The protestors were calling for an end to all such trade relations. In contrast, organisation A stated that it would not ban any country from trading with their stores. Social media was extensively used to tell the

story of conflict, the negotiations and finding a resolution between organisation A and their online community.

### ***Organisation B protest event***

Towards the middle of 2015, organisation B experienced a serious challenge to its online reputation and credibility as a result of protest action. The organisation responded by constructively engaging with their online community through the use of social media and other channels to resolve the problem. It was a precarious situation, with students and the management of the university on opposing sides of the problem. Lectures were disrupted, students marched both on and off campus and university property was vandalised. In this context, the organisational social media campaign initiative was to have a collective debate between the student bodies and the management of the university on the issues of contention, underpinned by the spirit of transformation. The discourse in the social media arena showed many diverse viewpoints were exchanged and debated.

Important insights were gained by following these real-life online collective storytelling exercises between organisations and their online community, and how it relates to my research question of “*How do organisations use social media when engaging with their online community?*” These incidents highlight the contemporary nature of social media use within organisations for engagement purposes with their online community, and the importance of conducting more IS research studies to help further understand this phenomenon, where these research outcomes add to the IS body of knowledge. In addition, incorporating the real-life online social media engagement exercises between an organisation and its online community helped enrich the theory development from a practice perspective. Figure 51 is a diagrammatical representation of collective storytelling as it takes place between an organisation and their online community, where there is the use of social media to co-create digital content.

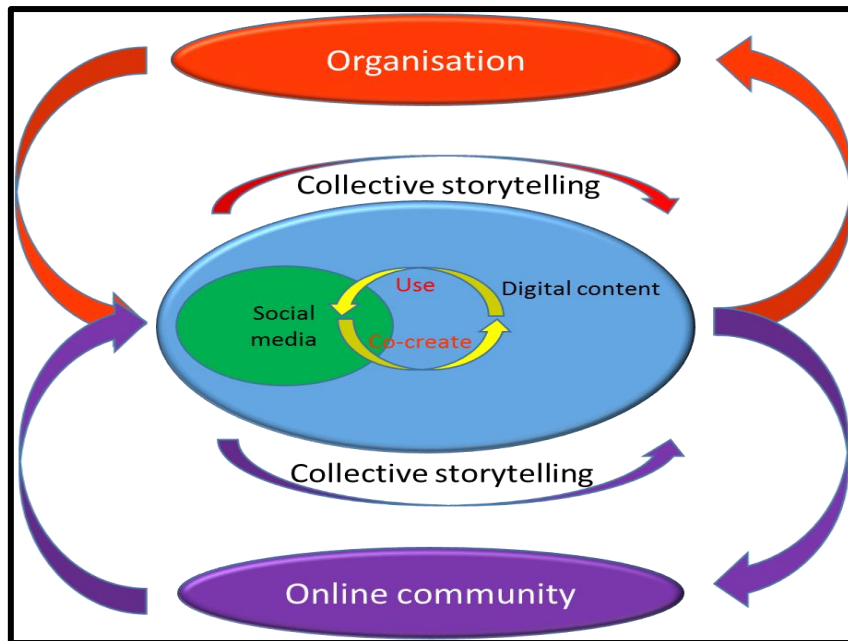


Figure 51: A diagrammatical representation of collective storytelling

In addition, Figure 52 presents the process in which the two main activities are: (1) the organisational use of social media, to (2) co-create digital content. These two activities occur over a period of time, starting with the organisational use of social media and then moving onto the co-creation of digital content. Social media, digital content, the organisation, the community and the engagement between the organisation and its community forms the complex context. In response, there are actions taken with resulting consequences.

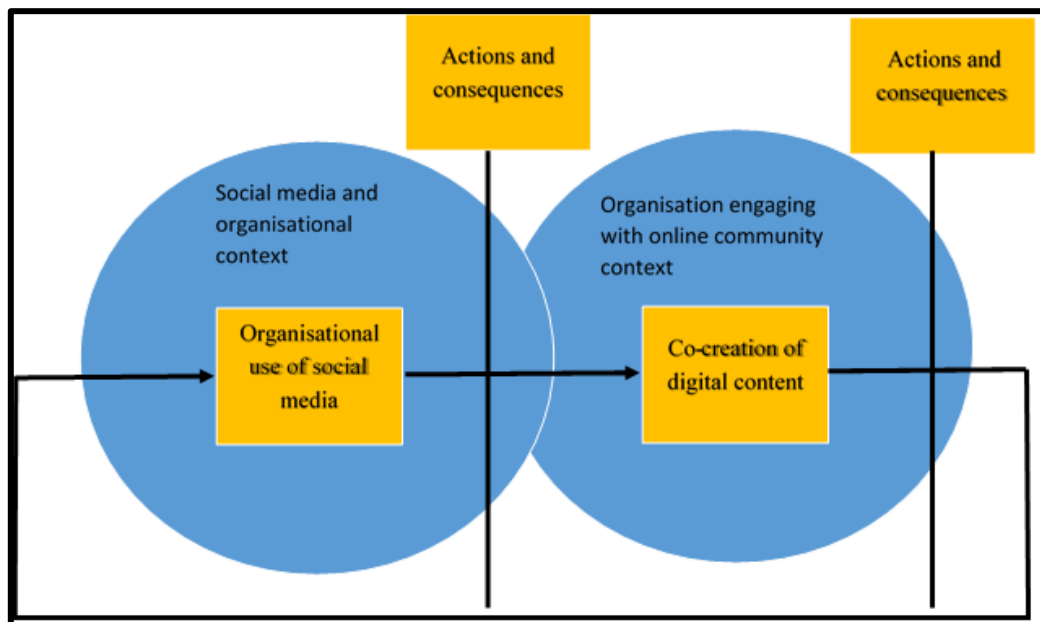


Figure 52: Process of organisational use of social media to co-create digital content

To follow, each activity above is explained with the aim of developing an understanding as to how, why, when and for what purpose an organisation decides to use or not to use social media

platforms for engagement with their online community to co-create digital content whilst engaging in *collective storytelling*.

4.4.3.1. *Collective storytelling: Organisational use of social media*

Figure 53 presents the coding paradigm being used as an analytic device to explain and illustrate the causal conditions that lead to the organisational use of social media which is subsequently influenced by contextual conditions. The organisational use of social media in turn gives rise to action/interactional strategies that are either facilitated/ or hindered by the intervening conditions. The consequences result from the action/interactional strategies taken with a feedback loop back to the causal conditions.

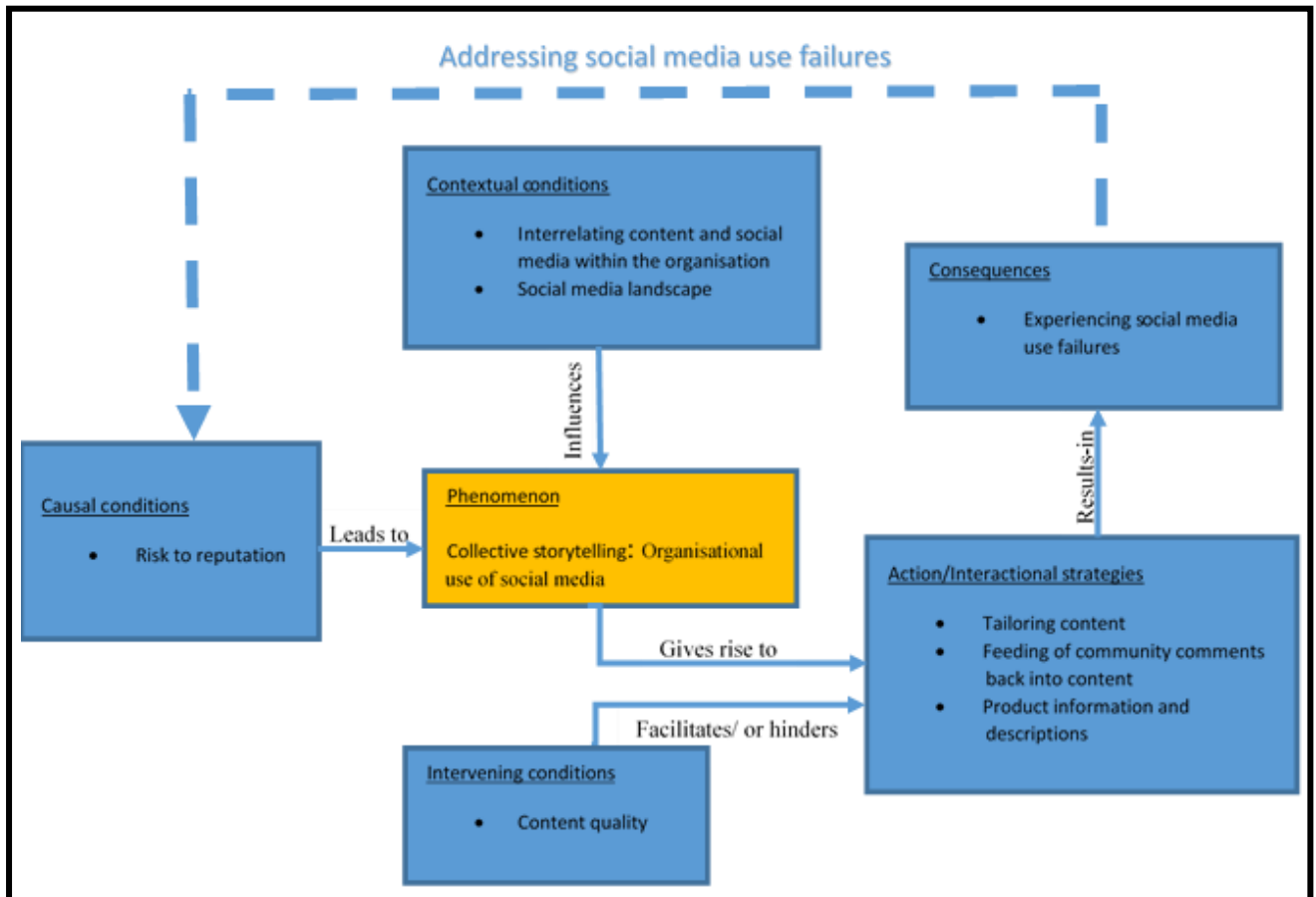


Figure 53: The coding paradigm used as a sensitising device to elucidate the process within the research study: Conditions (Causal, Contextual and Intervening), Action/Interactional Strategies and Consequences for the Organisational Use of Social Media (Adapted: Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998)

Causal conditions that lead to the organisational use of social media

Causal conditions are defined as events that lead to the development of the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The main causal condition that leads to the organisational use of social media is the *risk to reputation*.

At the beginning of a *collective storytelling* process, organisations are confronted by an online *risk to reputation*. Not being part of the online social media community where conversations about the organisation's brand are taking place, increases the organisational *risk to reputation* and reduces brand credibility. The high *risk to reputation* forces organisations to take accountability for their online image leading to the organisational use of social media.

By way of example, in August 2014, organisation A came under fire for certain trade relations and its sourcing of produce. Protestors believed that organisation A was not sourcing responsibly, and violating international law on trade relations. Organisation A defended its trade relationships by stating that it only considers sourcing from abroad if it cannot find the products locally, and follows the guidelines set out in the government policies when doing business in the territories. It went further to say that it would not ban a country from trading with their stores. This response from organisation A was interpreted as being aggressive and seen in a negative light. The result was a call from the protestors on all consumers to boycott organisation A. Many divisive views were expressed on social media channels which confronted organisation A with a reputational nightmare.

Similarly, Organisation B was confronted with protest marches strongly attended by students, academics and university staff who were concerned with transformation in the organisation. The focus of the marches was to draw attention to the need for a national discourse on transforming the shared spaces occupied by South African universities. Through these awareness campaigns, the protestors were calling for collective engagement between student bodies and the university management on a transformation agenda. To an outsider, the content shared on social media, evoked feelings of concern. The university seemed to be stalling, thus not allowing for a collective debate on an issue of national concern - how to transform the South African society and be inclusive of all people living in it. Negative feelings were fuelling a risk to the university's reputation that the university needed to be accountable for.

#### [Contextual conditions that influence the organisational use of social media](#)

Contextual conditions are defined as the events in which the phenomenon is embedded, and represent the specific set of properties pertaining to the phenomenon within which the action/interactional strategies are performed in (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The main contextual conditions that influence the organisational use of social media are: (1) *interrelating content and social media within the organisation*, and (2) *social media landscape*.

It is important for organisations to understand that content and social media need to be related in a circular fashion. This alignment is complicated by organisations viewing social media as a department that operates as a silo within the organisational landscape. Organisations that treat social media as a silo, negatively impact the organisational use of social media and the organisation's online brand credibility. Having social media and content integrated, positively impacts the organisational use

of social media and the organisation's online brand credibility. The following quotations support the relationship between content and social media:

*"I can't really think of a part of the business social media doesn't affect. There are challenges when digital as a social business hits a bunch of silos like an industrial business structure. These challenges arise because the perception within this business is that digital is seen as a silo"* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

The social media platforms found within the *social media landscape* are varied. The following quotations from organisation A and B show this variety in social media use:

*"In terms of platforms we use Twitter, Facebook, Google Plus, Instagram, Pinterest, LinkedIn and Youtube. In terms of social reporting tools, we use Radian6, Socialbakers and Google Analytics. We not very active on LinkedIn yet, because that is more for career's integration and we haven't really got there yet"* (OrgA.Interview\_1).

*"In organisation B we use Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and we use LinkedIn. Those are the ones we are on currently. For reporting we use Facebook insights and for Twitter we use Twitonomy and for Youtube we use Youtube Analytics"* (OrgB.Interview\_1).

The variety of social media platforms to choose from, coupled with the use of social media within organisations still regarded as being relatively new, leads to a negative impact on the organisational use of social media. Proper organisational planning related to social media initiatives is therefore imperative to bring about a positive impact on the organisational use of social media.

[The organisational use of social media gives rise to action/interactional strategies with intervening conditions that either facilitates or hinders action/interactional strategies](#)

To set the context for the discussion to follow, a phenomenon gives rise to action/interactional strategies that are performed within context or under a specific set of perceived events where intervening conditions either facilitates or hinders these action/interactional strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

#### **A. Action/Interactional strategies to create organisational content**

Strategies used by organisations to create organisational content include: (1) *tailoring content*, (2) *feeding of community comments back into content*, and (3) *product information and descriptions*.

The actions associated with the category *tailoring content* within an organisation are based on the following criteria: (1) content sharing must accommodate wide-ranging age groups and their differing interests within the online community, and (2) for each business campaign, content structured for a specific audience and for a specific social media channel. The following quotations from organisation A and B support the actions associated with the tailoring of content and social media use:

*“Our Facebook audience is aging, so we can specifically start tailoring content towards a more mature target, but for campaigns specially targeting a younger market we could still use Facebook to reach a broader customer base. Twitter appeals to a younger age group” (OrgA.Interview\_1).*

*“Online allows you to be friendlier and more casual with people. I have been having a lot of conversations with my team recently about how do we have a conversation with our audience that is friendly; that is engaging and people focused as opposed to focusing on campaigns only” (OrgB.Interview\_2).*

The actions associated with the category feeding of community comments back into content within an organisation are based on: (1) creating quality content by reworking the community’s comments back into the organisation’s response, (2) using the feedback from the community to extract ideas for topics that the online community will be interested in, and (3) discontinuing those articles that receive negative feedback from the community. The following quotations from organisation A and B support the actions associated with the feeding of community comments back into content:

*“Quality content is essential if you want to have a conversation with your online community. The conversation continues as the organisation reworks the community’s comments back into the content” (OrgA.Interview\_1).*

*“The cycle continues by the online community responding to the posts and the organisations posting follow-up articles that are of interest. It is a very circular relationship” (OrgA.Interview\_3).*

*“We search social channels to identify trends (stories) our online users are interested in. This information is used in marketing to increase our search engine optimisation and to create more interesting stories for online community engagement” (OrgB.Interview\_4).*

The actions associated with the sharing of product information and descriptions are based on: (1) the sharing of specific organisational information related to its products, and (2) packaging of information in a way, that adds value and is useful to the online community. The following quotations from organisation A and B support the actions associated with the sharing and packaging of product information and descriptions:

*“I have built a significant amount of interesting content that integrates the content and our products. I now want to use that content to get conversations started with our customers on our social media channels” (OrgA.Conference\_1).*

*“The audience doesn’t want us pushing them straight to a product without giving them content associated with the product. They want to know how to use the product and that is how the content helps” (OrgA.Interview\_2).*

“This year we are having our first online postgraduate diploma in management and marketing. It is part-time and we are expecting it to really take off. There is interest by the high number of hits” (OrgB.Interview\_5).

“The audience will see it is Harvard Business Review and they know we are sharing cutting edge stuff (useful). They can go into the blog for more content” (OrgB.Interview\_5).

### B. Intervening conditions either facilitating or hindering the action/interactional strategies

Intervening conditions are defined as the events in which the phenomenon is embedded that in turn either facilitates or constrains action/interactional strategies within a specific context (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The main intervening condition that either facilitates or constrains action/interactional strategies is content quality. Table 7 presents the action/interactional strategies and the impact of the intervening condition.

Table 7: Presenting the impact of the intervening condition on the action/interactional strategies.

Action/Interactional strategies	Intervening conditions
<u>Tailoring content, feeding of community comments back into content, product information and descriptions</u>	The <u>content quality</u> of social media ranges from high to low. High <u>content quality</u> in social media will act as a facilitator to these action/interactional strategies. Whereas, low <u>content quality</u> in social media acts as a hindrance to these action/interactional strategies.

The following quotation supports the relationship that the quality of online content has with the tailoring of content, the feeding of community comments back into content, and the sharing of product information and descriptions:

“Content is King (important), meaning that you need to create quality information, share quality content which includes a high number of meaningful comments and quality blog posts” (OrgA.OfficialDoc1).

#### Resulting consequences from action/interactional strategies and feedback loop

Consequences are the outcomes of these action/interactional strategies taken (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The consequence, experiencing social media use failures, stems from the action/interactional strategies taken by the organisation, namely: (1) tailoring content, (2) feeding of community comments back into content, and (3) product information and descriptions. One of the primary reasons for using social media is online community engagement. Organisations are realising that social media use also comes with failures which negatively affects their engagement with their online community. Addressing these challenges will have a positive feedback loop to online community engagement.

By way of example, in the case of organisation A protestors claimed the organisation was not actively engaging with them and that negotiations were being done in bad faith. These failures in communication resulted in an escalation of protests and shareholders taking their concerns to the media. Both local and international media were involved with coverage in The New York Times, Sunday Times, City Press, The Star and Business Day. The television channels who got involved were the South African Broadcast Corporation (SABC), African News Network 7 (ANN7), and Al Jazeera. Protestors started protesting within the stores of organisation A. Organisation A then lodged a court application to stop protestors from entering their stores. The reasons for the court application was that the protestors were intimidating employees and customers, and were preventing the stores from trading by restricting access to the stores.

In the case of Organisation B, the furore on social media about organisation B created a ripple effect that extended past the boundaries of the university and South Africa, to include students from universities elsewhere who also took part in the heated online engagements. Local news agencies like the SABC as well as international news agencies like Cable News Network (CNN) and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) also entered this engagement space and started reporting on the protests as they unfolded. Social media followers from across the world showed a significant interest in the unfolding dialogue taking place in South Africa on transforming society. Their active interest in this campaign highlights the fact that these engagements, around transforming society are really important, and need collective dialogue at both the national and the international level.

#### *4.4.3.2. Collective storytelling: Co-creation of digital content*

Figure 54 presents the coding paradigm being used as an analytic device to explain and illustrate that the causal conditions lead to the co-creation of digital content which is subsequently influenced by the contextual conditions. The co-creation of digital content in turn gives rise to action/interactional strategies that are either facilitated/ or hindered by intervening conditions. The consequences result from action/interactional strategies taken with a feedback loop back to the causal conditions.

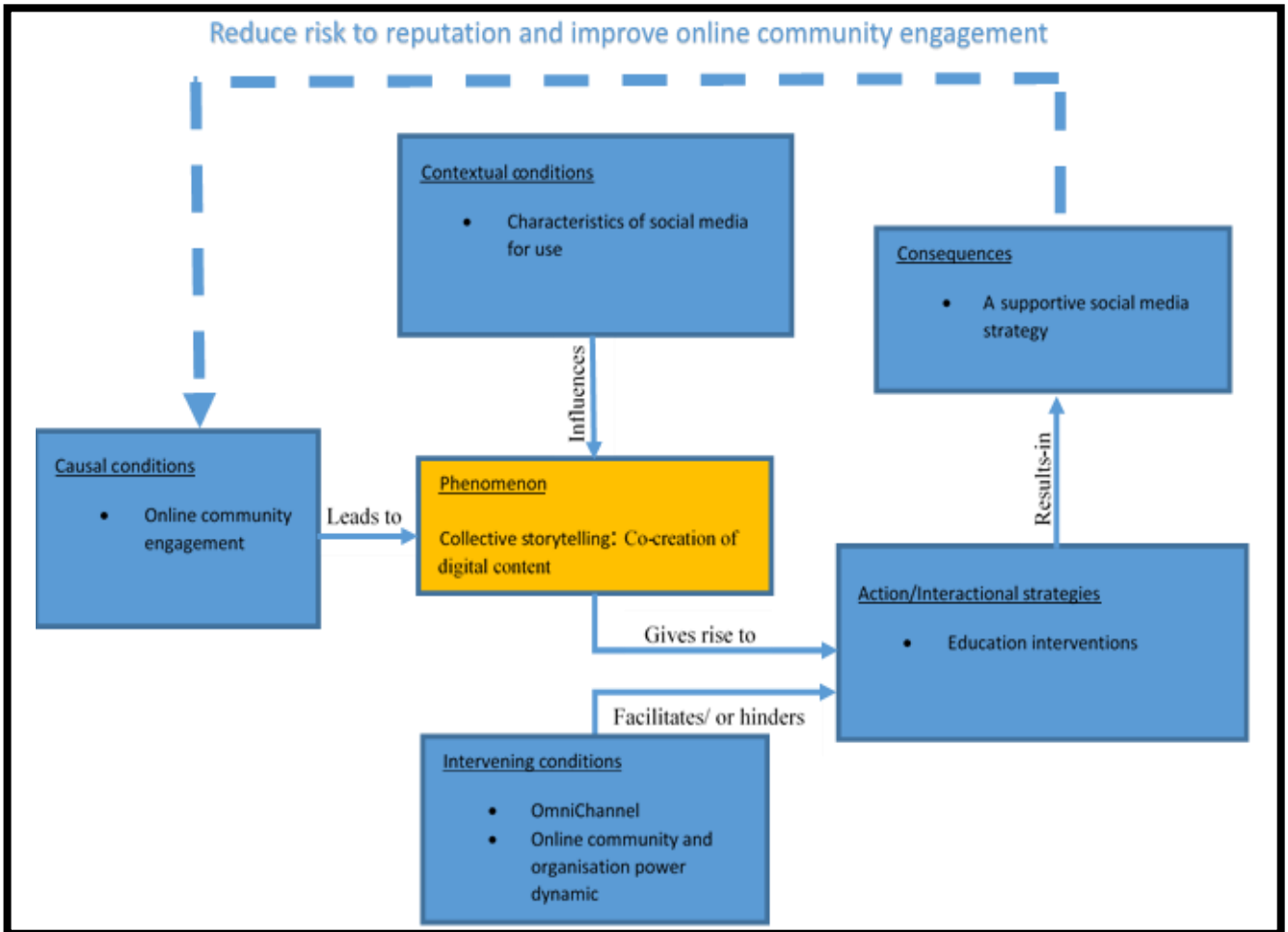


Figure 54: The coding paradigm used as a sensitising device to elucidate the process within the research study: Conditions (Causal, Contextual and Intervening), Action/Interactional Strategies and Consequences for the Co-creation of Digital Content (Adapted: Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998)

Causal conditions that lead to the co-creation of digital content

The main causal condition that leads to the co-creation of digital content is *online community engagement*. The primary reason for *online community engagement* is to reduce the organisational *risk to reputation*. The secondary reasons are to strengthen its online brand awareness, sharing of organisational content as widely as possible, building relationships with its online community and finding creative but subtle ways of incorporating its marketing through engagement.

In the case of the protests, both organisation A and B decided to meet both online and physically and engage with the protesting parties. This was an attempt at finding the best way of resolving the conflict.

Contextual conditions that influence the co-creation of digital content

The main contextual condition that influences the co-creation of digital content is the *characteristics of social media for use*. It is important for organisations to first understand the characteristics of each social media platform before embarking on the use of these social channels.

Online communications are not limited by geographical boundaries and social media supports a wide range of digital text. The content requirements of each social media campaign must be compared with the characteristics of each social channel. In this way, organisations will be able to select the best suited social channel for each social media campaign. Facebook is better suited for larger campaigns with large amounts of information being shared. Twitter is for shorter posts with quicker response and Instagram is for visual content. The organisational website is seen as being part of and extending the social media experience. However, not all information is appropriate for posting online and could rather be printed and distributed as a hardcopy.

Stakeholders that internalise the characteristics of these social media platforms will positively impact organisational campaign initiatives. The outcome is a positive impact on the organisational use of social media, the co-creation of digital content and the organisation's online brand credibility. In contrast, social media use failures in organisational campaign initiatives negatively impact on the organisational use of social media, the co-creation of digital content and the organisation's online brand credibility.

The following quotations from organisation A and B support the relationship between understanding the characteristics of social media channels and their influence on the co-creation of digital content:

*“Content stories for online community engagement will be posted on the best suited social media platform. Facebook is used for longer content stories and Twitter for more quick and short content stories. Visual media is posted on Instagram and Pinterest” (OrgA.Interview\_4).*

*“On Facebook, we can fit much more information in one post and that translates into how many times we actually post on these different platforms. For Facebook, usually on a day on average we would post 2 to 3 posts a day; on Twitter, it might be 9 to 10 or less or more depending on what is happening. So yes, we think differently on Facebook where you can put more information, whereas for Twitter we are limited by the character space which could lead to us dividing one story that we are trying to share into 3 tweets, or we might first decide to post a picture up on Twitter and then later post the supporting statements for community engagement, whereas on Facebook you would have one post containing everything. So, it is definitely different when we create content for Facebook and for Twitter” (OrgB.Interview\_1).*

[The co-creation of digital content gives rise to action/interactional strategies with intervening conditions that either facilitates or hinders action/interactional strategies.](#)

#### **A. Action/Interactional strategies to elucidate and overcome organisational social media use barriers affecting online engagement**

The main knowledge sharing strategy used by organisations is education interventions. The actions associated with the category education interventions are: (1) the social media team effectively

communicating to the organisation on what is respectful online behaviour, (2) the posting of content that is of a high standard, containing both quality content (i.e. accurate content with no grammar and spelling errors) and quality graphics, (3) involving the social media team early on in organisational campaign initiatives, which allows for the earlier flagging and addressing of social media related issues, (4) making it common knowledge that there are ‘centres of excellence’ within the organisation that can help struggling social media users in the organisation, and (5) using a ‘common’ language within the organisation when speaking about social media. Removing all the social media jargon when engaging with the organisation and providing social media users with useful information that is easily understood helps facilitate these actions. The co-creation of digital content therefore gives rise to these actions associated with education interventions.

There are several benefits to educating the organisation on social media use. Firstly, it is the breaking down of departmental barriers between the social media team and other departments within the organisation. Secondly, the interaction of digital natives with the rest of the business helps in increasing the awareness of social media use within an organisational context. Finally, social media as an organisational resource has a limited capacity, so it is important that the digital natives highlight this limitation and manage use expectations. The following quotation supports the actions associated with education interventions:

*“Much of my time as a social media manager is spent on educating the organisation about social media use. South Africa has been in the social media space for quite a long time, but corporates I do find move quite a bit slower than the earlier adopters. So much of the job is about education. I need to help the business better understand social media and to overcome their intimidation of the technology”* (OrgA.Interview\_3).

**B. Intervening conditions either facilitating or hindering the action/interactional strategies**

The main intervening conditions that either facilitate or constrain action/interactional strategies are: (1) *OmniChannel*, and (2) *online community and organisation power dynamic*. Table 8 presents the action/interactional strategy and the impact of the intervening conditions.

*Table 8: Presenting the impact of the intervening conditions on the action/interactional strategy*

Action/Interactional strategies	Intervening conditions
<u>Education interventions</u>	<u>OmniChannel</u> is a difficult concept to understand and to implement. These challenges are a hindrance to the action/interactional strategy. Organisations who successfully engage with and find solutions to the complexities associated with the <u>OmniChannel</u> concept will facilitate the

Action/Interactional strategies	Intervening conditions
	action/interactional strategy. A complicated <u>online community and organisation power dynamic</u> is a hindrance to the action/interactional strategy. On the other hand, where the power dynamic is successfully managed, it facilitates the action/interactional strategy.

The following quotation supports the relationships between education interventions and both *OmniChannel* and the power dynamic between the organisation and their online community:

“Whenever I give a talk, I say that I don’t trust anybody who can say *OmniChannel* without a twitch because it is so incredibly difficult and *OmniChannel* gaps are being faced by everybody in the world” (OrgA.Interview\_1).

Resulting consequences from action/interactional strategies and feedback loop

The resulting consequence from the action/interactional strategy education interventions is a supportive social media strategy. This consequence feeds back into the major categories of risk to reputation and online community engagement. A positive net result of this consequence reduces the organisational risk to reputation. However, a negative net result of this consequence increases the organisational risk to reputation. Similarly, a positive net result of this consequence improves the online community engagement between the organisation and their online community. However, a negative net result of this consequence, adversely impacts the online community engagement between the organisation and their online community.

Both organisation A and B are realising the power of social media as an engagement tool that can be used by the online community to spread negative sentiment associated with a company’s brand. The result is reputational damage to the company. Conversations on social media about brand cannot be ignored anymore, which further underpins the need for a supportive social media strategy that guides the use of social media within an organisational context and the co-creation of digital content with the online community.

In the case of the protest actions against Organisation A, the protestors successfully used social media to lodge complaints linked to the incorrect labelling of product origin as well as price irregularities. The result was a nationwide investigation by the national consumer commission of all retailers and their labelling practices. These types of awareness campaigns on social media help monitor retail practices and benefits all consumers. In addition, the protests also brought an increased awareness on international trade practices. The result of this increased awareness was getting organisation A to re-evaluate its trade agreements when sourcing products from abroad. At the annual general meeting,

organisation A gave an affirmation that it would not purchase any products that violated international trade agreements and law.

In the case of Organisation B, the protests, which included the use of social media, similarly resulted in an outcome deemed positive for transformation of social spaces and the environment on campuses. As posted on Facebook:

*“...What comes next? An acceleration, a renewed commitment to transformation to making the campus inclusive and to addressing the many issues which it faces, not just the campus but the country and higher education” (University Management).*

#### 4.4.4. Selective coding

Researchers could use the Strauss and Corbin (1998) coding procedures for data analysis only and not continue onto building theory; however, those who are interested in building theory would continue onto theoretical integration. With theory building “*concepts alone do not make theory, but must be linked and filled in with detail to construct theory out of data*” (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p.103). During this integration process the researcher is focused on identifying the category with the most explanatory power in conveying what the research is about. This category is referred to as the central or core category, representing the main theme of the research and all the other concepts are related to it.

To help researchers with building theory, Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998, 2008) suggest three techniques that could be used to identify the core category, and integrating the core category with the other major categories identified during the research process: (1) writing a storyline – this involves the selecting of a core category, and then telling the story of how the major categories emerging from the research study are linked to the core category through using explanatory statements of relationships; (2) the use of integrative diagrams – this technique is for those researchers who are more visual, where relationships between the core category and other major categories are visually represented. Successful diagrams would have a logical flow, be clear and parsimonious in nature, and (3) the reviewing and sorting through of memos – this helps the researcher with ideas on what could possibly be the central or core category and gives clues to possible integrations amongst concepts. Urquhart (2013) suggests that one should be conscious of the research problem when selecting the core category, and when integrating the major categories with the core category. Looking at concepts and relationships within the research data that takes one away from answering the research questions are not helpful. Hence, staying focused on the research problem and the research questions helps researchers to stay within the boundaries of their area of discipline (Glaser, 1978).

By following the guidelines above, I kept my research problem and research question of “*How do organisations use social media when engaging with their online community?*” central during the theory building process. I used a storyline, integrative diagrams and the reviewing and sorting through of my memos as integration techniques, to weave together the major categories and concepts identified during the open and axial coding sections and to finally construct my theory. Revisiting my major concepts and categories, relationships, memos, figures, interviews, document reviews, organisational videos, field notes and observations from previous data slices, formed the basis for the integration exercise and the subsequent theory building process.

Urquhart et al. (2010), Seidel and Urquhart (2013) and Urquhart (2013) emphasise the use of theoretical memos to support the theory building process. I started writing theoretical memos during open and axial coding and continued during the integration process, as well as the selection of the core category. The theoretical memos helped me document the relationships amongst categories, which in

turn supported the theory building process. For the purpose of building the final theory the relationships amongst categories will be denoted as propositions previously defined in Appendix A1 as conceptual relationships that are testable and are grounded in the what and how (description) and why (explanation) of the theory development process (Whetten, 1989).

As part of my research study, I conducted member-checking exercises with the interviewees after the analysis of each interview. This follow-up session was intended to confirm the main high-level themes the interviewees wished to express during the interview, on the use of social media by organisations for engagement with their online community. The reason for including the member-checking documents as part of my analysis process, is its strength in helping the researcher check and confirm the accuracy of the qualitative findings with the research participants during the research process (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2009).

Coding the member checking documents helped to further elaborate on the emerging categories and their relationships (Charmaz, 2006, 2014). Quotations from the member checking documents have been included to help illustrate and support the theory building process. These inclusions are important to help clarify the research procedures and to provide a ‘chain of evidence’ (Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Urquhart, 2007, 2013; Walsham, 1995). Table 9 is a list of member checking participants.

*Table 9: Data slices and member checking participants*

Data Slice	Member Checking Participants
<b>OrgA.Interview_1</b>	MemberChkA1
<b>OrgA.Interview_2</b>	MemberChkA2
<b>OrgA.Interview_3</b>	MemberChkA3
<b>OrgA.Interview_4</b>	MemberChkA4 (Work commitments and scheduling issues make member checking a challenge)
<b>OrgB.Interview_1</b>	MemberChkB1
<b>OrgB.Interview_2</b>	MemberChkB2
<b>OrgB.Interview_3</b>	MemberChkB3
<b>OrgB.Interview_4</b>	MemberChkB4
<b>OrgB.Interview_5</b>	MemberChkB5

In the next sections, the major propositions arising from the data are abstracted, so as to clarify the nature of relationships between the main categories, and generate the final theoretical framework.

#### *4.4.4.1. Risk to reputation*

What became clear from examining the empirical data is that the high *risk to reputation*, motivates organisations to use social media for the co-creation of digital content during the *collective*

*storytelling* process. This linking of the categories introduces proposition 1a, which is corroborated by the quotations below that emanated from the member-checking exercise:

**Proposition 1a: The high risk to reputation motivates collective storytelling.**

The risk is made clear in MemberChkB5: *“The risk of social media is getting negative comments and having to deal with them”*

*“Users of online social media platforms will use these platforms to connect and engage in conversations with one another. These online conversations can also be used to discuss organisations, and their products and their services. Online conversations will continue even if organisations do not have social media accounts (risk), so it is a good idea for organisations to join the conversations and in this way, try to influence the conversation where they can”* (MemberChkA2).

*Collective storytelling* is described as a process where: *“organisations are using social media to have two-way conversations with their online community. It is not just broadcasting but focusing on engagement and interaction with your online community”* (MemberChkA3).

*Collective storytelling* is further described as a circular process: *“Through social media the online community has a direct relationship with the brand through which they can engage and discuss social trends linked to the brand and posed questions directly to the brand. The organisation in turn will respond to the questions creating a circular relationship between the online community and the organisation”* (MemberChkB3).

See Figure 55 for the linking of the categories and the evolving storyline.

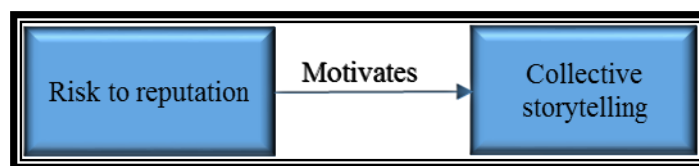


Figure 55: An early diagram and evolving storyline on risk to reputation and collective storytelling

Evolving storyline  
 The high risk to reputation motivates collective storytelling.

4.4.4.2. *Online community engagement*

Further analysis highlighted that the organisational need for *online community engagement*, also motivates the use of social media for the co-creation of digital content during the *collective storytelling* process. The linking of these categories introduces proposition 1b, which is corroborated by the quotations below:

**Proposition 1b: The need for online community engagement motivates collective storytelling.**

“Organisation B uses social media to be relevant to the times and to engage and communicate with more people who might not have gone to the organisation's website. This allows for a greater reach to different people across the world and the organisation is able to engage with their online community in a way they wouldn't have been able to do just through the website” (MemberChkB1).

The same line of thinking continues in MemberChkB2: “More and more of the engagement process is moving online which highlights the importance of organisation B having a social media presence. The online community is central in this relationship and organisation B plays a supportive role in the engagement process. Being globally responsive allows organisation B to build a community that is much wider than the people they see on a daily basis. This is an exciting opportunity for organisation B” (MemberChkB2).

See Figure 56 for the linking of the categories and the evolving storyline.

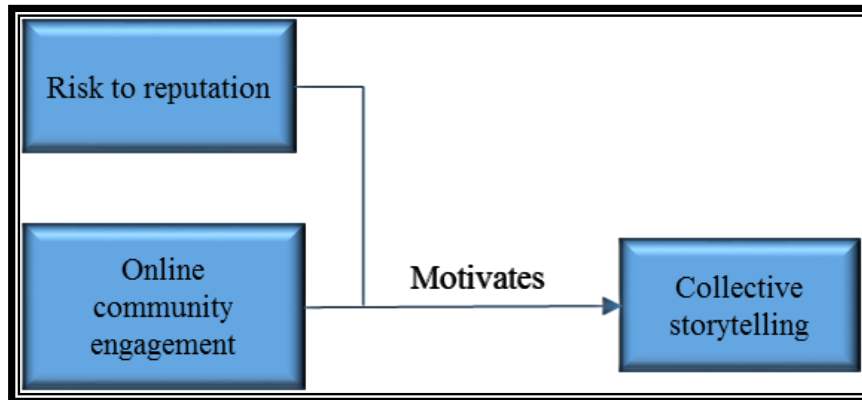


Figure 56: Extension to earlier diagram and evolving storyline on the risk to reputation, online community engagement and collective storytelling

**Evolving storyline**  
**Collective storytelling is motivated by the high risk to reputation and the need for online community engagement.**

4.4.4.3. *Social media landscape*

The need for organisations to understand the varied nature of the *social media landscape* within which the *collective storytelling* process operates is important. Restated, the *social media landscape* sets the backdrop against which the *collective storytelling* process takes place. The linking of the categories introduces proposition 2a, which is corroborated by the quotations below:

**Proposition 2a: The social media landscape sets the backdrop for collective storytelling.**

From MemberChkB1 I got a description of social media as being: “a platform or space where you can do social networking with different people without the limitations of geographical space, and where you can share any kind of content - you can share pictures and you can share videos and there are different platforms to cater for different types of content” (MemberChkB1).

The organisation’s website plays an important role within the social media landscape: “The university website is the first page visitors see about the university. It introduces the university and creates our brand awareness. The official university website caters for news related stories, galleries, social media and everything that relates to community communication and marketing, e.g. from the student’s admissions policy to the latest inaugural lectures. The website and social media mutually support each other in posting stories that are consistent and accurate across the online platforms” (MemberChkB4).

From the social media landscape, organisation A uses 11 social media platforms: “Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Youtube, Google Plus, Linkedin and the organisation’s website, which is referred to as a nascent social platform. These social media platforms are the tools used by both the organisation and the online community to engage in real-time online conversations. Additionally, social media reporting tools like Radian6, SocialBakers and Google Analytics are used for reporting on social media activity” (MemberChkA1).

See Figure 57 for the linking of the categories and the evolving storyline.

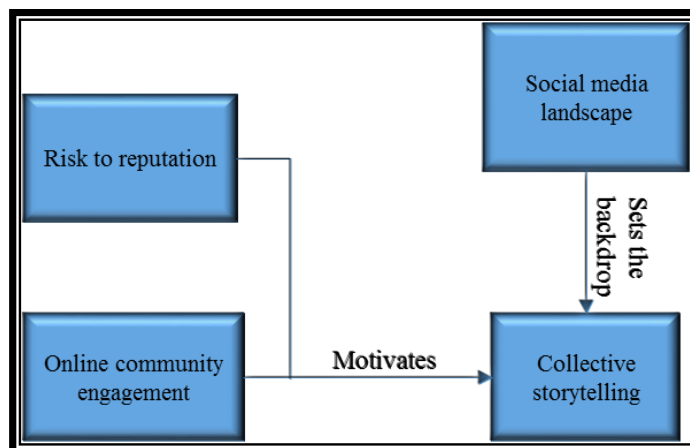


Figure 57: Extension to earlier diagram and evolving storyline on the risk to reputation, online community engagement, social media landscape and collective storytelling

Evolving storyline

Collective storytelling is motivated by the high risk to reputation and the need for online community engagement, where understanding the social media landscape sets the backdrop for social media use to co-create digital content within an organisational context.

4.4.4.4. Characteristics of social media for use

My analysis reveals that there is a need for organisations to understand the *characteristics of social media for use*, which sets the backdrop for the *collective storytelling* process. The linking of the categories introduces proposition 2b, which is corroborated by the quotations below:

**Proposition 2b: The characteristics of social media for use sets the backdrop for collective storytelling.**

“As an organisation, you have to go on social media to keep up with the times. It is a modern form of sharing information and you want to operate in that space. It is easy, it is fast, it is cheap, it makes content sharing easy and increases interactions” (MemberChkB1).

“Social Media also allows the organisation to better target a wider audience which isn’t easy when using more traditional marketing techniques like pamphlets and flyers” (MemberChkB3).

“With traditional marketing, it is quite difficult to get a sense of the individuals you are communicating with and marketing to, without having personal information that identifies their needs, wants, aspirations and interests. Here the strength of social media analytics is able to help you improve your ability to better target the audience you are communicating and marketing to. The benefits of social media are that everything happens immediately and in real-time. You are able to get important information out very quickly, especially in times of a crisis, like student registration, and get a response back. Adding visuals like photos with text is an important way of stimulating interest in your social media site” (MemberChkB5).

See Figure 58 for the linking of the categories and the evolving storyline.

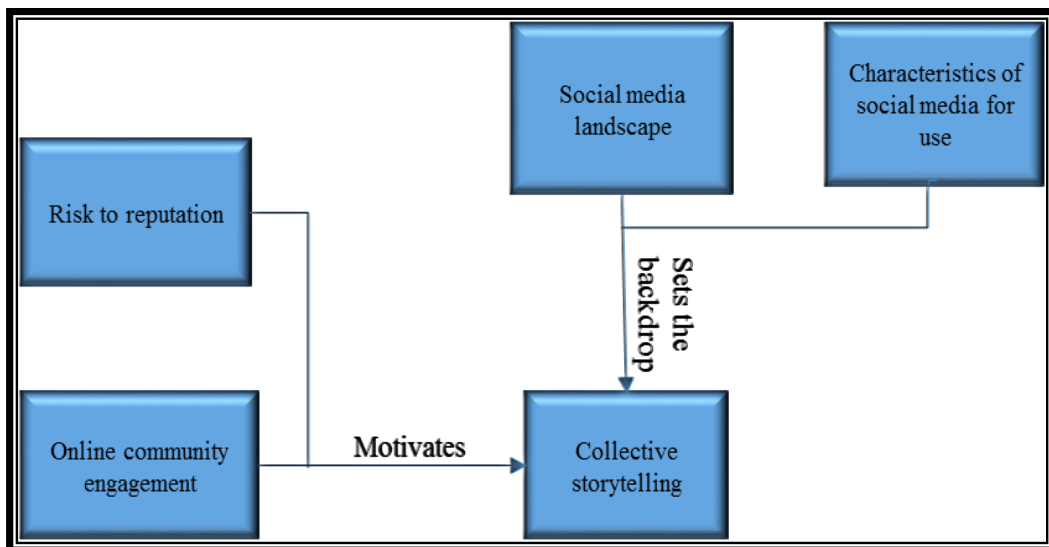


Figure 58: Extension to earlier diagram and evolving storyline on risk to reputation, online community engagement, social media landscape, characteristics of social media for use and collective storytelling

### Evolving storyline

*Collective storytelling* is motivated by the high *risk to reputation* and the need for *online community engagement*, where understanding the *social media landscape* and the *characteristics of social media use* sets the backdrop for social media use to co-create digital content within an organisational context.

#### 4.4.4.5. *Interrelating content and social media within the organisation*

The empirical data corroborates that social media and content are closely related. This relationship manifests itself within the social media team responsible for supporting the use of social media within the organisation. The relationship then circles outward to include other teams within the organisation that have to work with the social media team on business campaigns. All of these teams are working together to co-create campaign content and then posting it onto the organisation's social media platforms. *Interrelating content and social media within the organisation* thus also sets the backdrop for the *collective storytelling* process. The linking of the categories introduces proposition 2c, which is corroborated by the quotations below:

Proposition 2c: The **interrelating of content and social media within the organisation** sets the backdrop for **collective storytelling**.

*“The interconnectedness of social media and content is expressed by the following quotation: Social media is an effective platform to share the university's digital content. The social media and digital content relationship is very interlinked, intertwined and cyclical”* (MemberChkB1).

*“One of the responsibilities of the digital editor is to manage the circular relationship between digital content and social media”* (MemberChkA1).

*“The content team and social media team have a circular working relationship where the content team provides brilliant content that is on trend, adds value, is relevant, easily digestible and is content that consumers want to follow. The social media team supports and manages the online channels through which the organisation is able to share this brilliant content with their online community”* (MemberChkA3).

See Figure 59 for the linking of the categories and the evolving storyline.

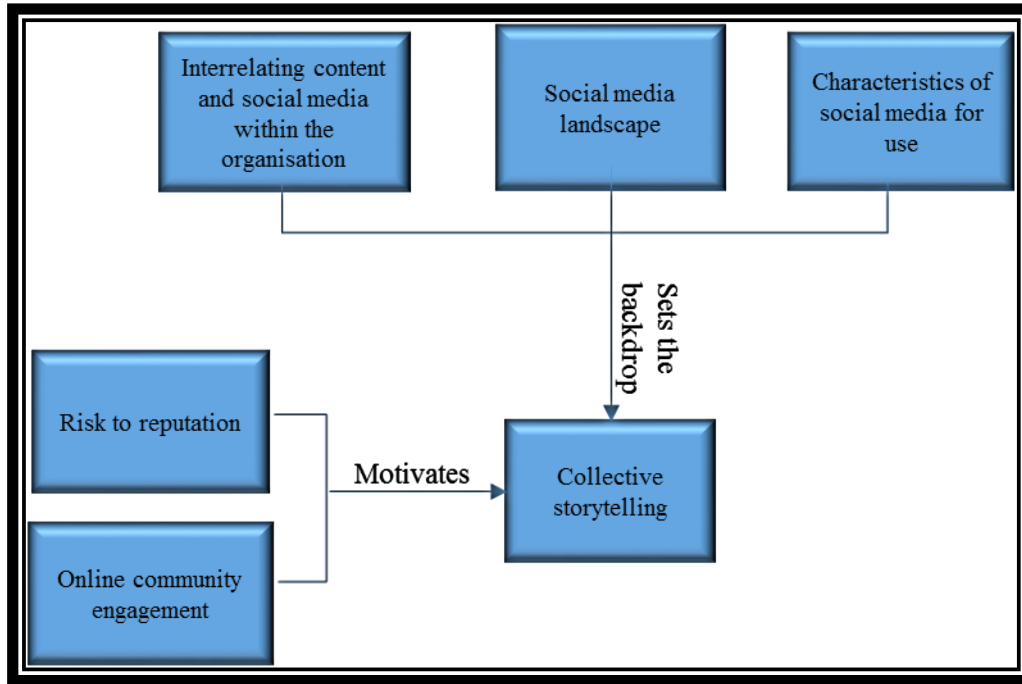


Figure 59: Extension to earlier diagram and evolving storyline on risk to reputation, online community engagement, social media landscape, characteristics of social media for use, interrelating content and social media within the organisation and collective storytelling

Evolving storyline

Collective storytelling is motivated by the high risk to reputation and the need for online community engagement, where understanding the social media landscape, the interrelating of content and social media within the organisation and the characteristics of social media use sets the backdrop for social media use to co-create digital content within an organisational context.

4.4.4.6. Content quality

The quality of content shared by the organisation is important and high-quality content will keep the online community interested in what the organisation has to say, as well as its products and services. Content that is out-dated, inaccurate or poorly written will negatively impact the perception held by the online community of the organisation. For this reason, content quality influences the collective storytelling process taking place. The linking of these categories introduces proposition 3a, which is corroborated by the quotations below:

**Proposition 3a: Varying levels in content quality influences collective storytelling.**

“Sharing high quality content that is relevant creates a lot of positive responses online. This positive energy is used to keep the online conversation going and through this online engagement the university is able to market itself as a top-notch learning and research institution” (MemberChkB2).

“The role of the content team is to create high quality digital content that is both engaging and that the online community will respond to. One of the social tactics used by the content team to encourage online engagement is content mixing, where both campaign and non-campaign content is used in an online post” (MembeChkA1).

“Organisations are using social media tools to help them create high quality content: Facebook Insights is actively used as an analytic tool to try and get a better understanding of the online community visiting the Commerce Facebook site. With this information, you are able to build a profile of those individuals visiting your social media site and as a faculty be able to customise your communication and marketing activities to better target these individuals. Feel-good stories from students and academics doing well in their studies and research, graduation stories and getting free stuff like ‘Android’ Apps are very popular. These popular stories can be used to extend the reach of the Commerce faculty by boosting the story with an online ad. The stories will then be sent along to their social network of friends which increases the reach of the commerce faculty” (MemberChkB5).

See Figure 60 for the linking of the categories and the evolving storyline.

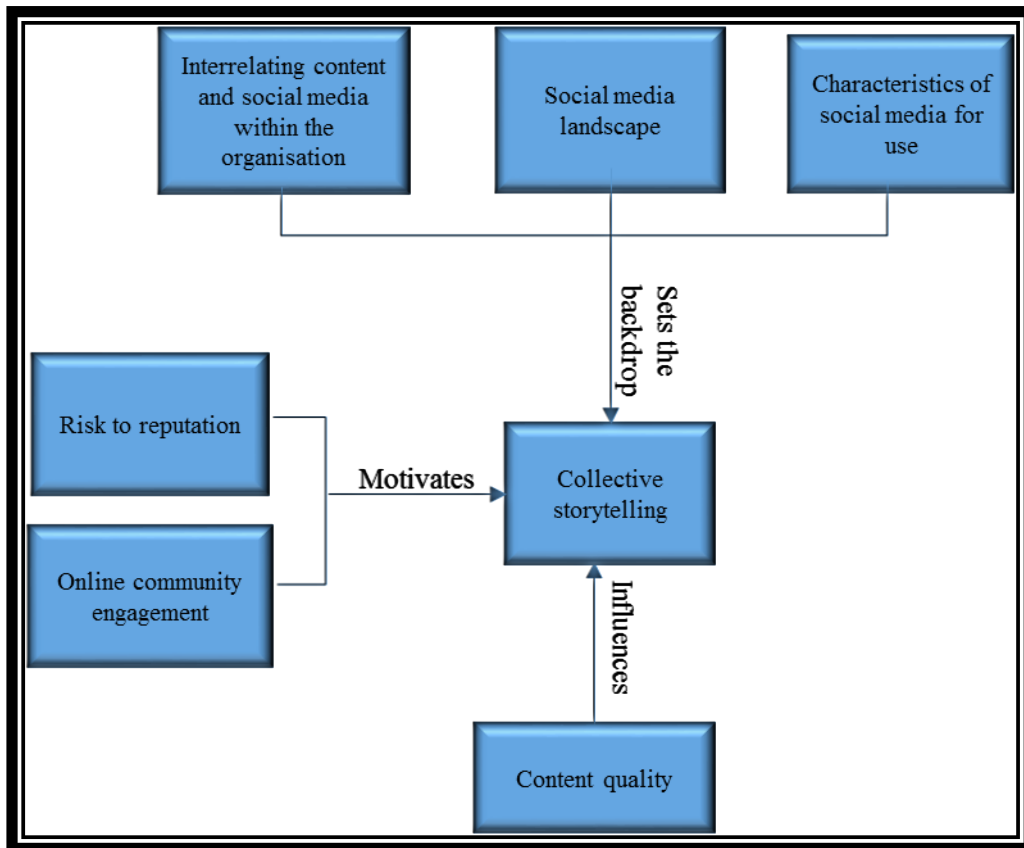


Figure 60: Extension to earlier diagram and evolving storyline on risk to reputation, online community engagement, social media landscape, characteristics of social media for use, interrelating content and social media within the organisation, content quality and collective storytelling

### Evolving storyline

Collective storytelling is motivated by the high risk to reputation and the need for online community engagement, is influenced by content quality; where understanding the social media landscape, the interrelating of content and social media within the organisation and the characteristics of social media use sets the backdrop for social media use to co-create digital content within an organisational context.

#### 4.4.4.7. *OmniChannel*

Organisations strive toward giving their online community the best possible OmniChannel experience throughout their online journey, with consistent and accurate messaging across all social media channels. The difficulty of achieving an OmniChannel experience is reconfirmed once again by the following quote: “Whenever, I give a talk, I say that I don’t trust anybody who can say OmniChannel without a twitch because it is so incredibly difficult and OmniChannel gaps are being faced by everybody in the world” (OrgA.Interview\_1).

Working towards achieving an OmniChannel experience will thus have an influence on the collective storytelling process as well. The linking of the categories thus introduces proposition 3b. The excerpts presented below from the member-checking exercise provides corroboration and gives guidelines on how an OmniChannel experience can be achieved:

Proposition 3b: Achieving an **OmniChannel** experience influences **collective storytelling**.

“Benchmarking to achieve an OmniChannel experience: Social media is an evolving and learning environment and the Commerce faculty uses benchmarking as an exercise to help improve their social media presence. Competitive top university social media sites like MIT, Harvard, Oxford and Cambridge are used to benchmark against. These universities are actively using social media to share top research taking place at their institutions, and there is a significant amount of engagement between academics, researchers and staff on research being done. This is where the Commerce faculty wants to go” (MemberChkB5).

Working together to achieve an OmniChannel experience: “The University receives many questions through their Facebook platform. The action is to respond to the questions by directing them to the website. To provide an accurate response the digital and social media officer and the web editor need to work together in a close synergistic relationship. The relationship between the website and social media is that social media drives traffic to the website and supports the online work being done. For consistency in messaging across all the platforms, the stories on the website are used to feed the social

media platforms, which helps in sharing a consistent message. The online community will thus read the same story on whichever platform chosen for their engagement” (MemberChkB2).

Planning to achieve an *OmniChannel* experience: “The CMD team has a monthly overview on what campaigns are coming up and then creates a weekly schedule of activities that need to be completed within the coming week. This schedule is used to manage the priority and sequence of posts for the week and helps to manage stakeholder expectations as to what is achievable within the week” (MemberChkB1).

See Figure 61 for the linking of the categories and the evolving storyline.

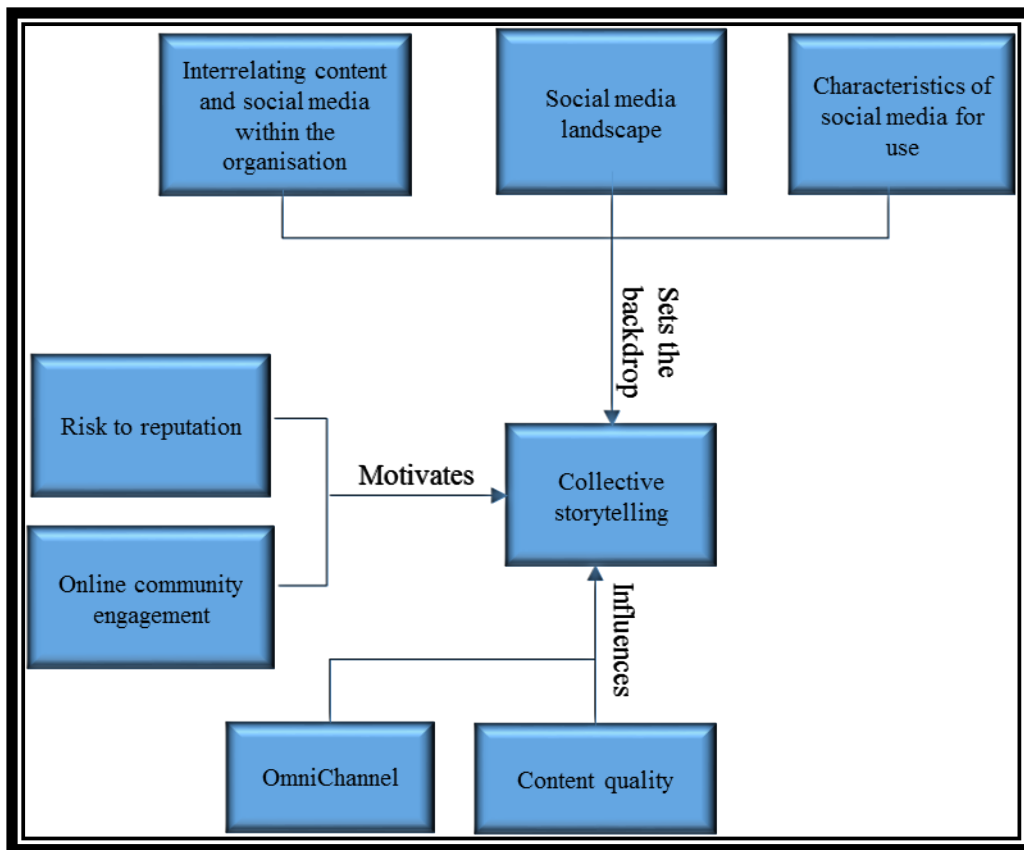


Figure 61: Extension to earlier diagram and evolving storyline on risk to reputation, online community engagement, social media landscape, characteristics of social media for use, interrelating content and social media within the organisation, content quality, OmniChannel and collective storytelling

Evolving storyline

*Collective storytelling* is motivated by the high risk to reputation and the need for online community engagement, is influenced by varying levels in content quality and achieving an OmniChannel experience; where understanding the social media landscape, the interrelating content and social media within the organisation and the characteristics of social media use sets the backdrop for social media use to co-create digital content within an organisational context.

#### 4.4.4.8. *Online community and organisation power dynamic*

The organisation and its online community engage in online conversations. However, the parties involved in this engagement are not equal. The online community is at the centre and controls the online conversation. The *online community and organisation power dynamic* has an influence on the *collective storytelling* process. Accordingly, the linking of the categories introduces proposition 3c, which is corroborated by the quotations below:

Proposition 3c: The **online community and organisation power dynamic** influences **collective storytelling**.

*“The online community controls the conversations and these conversations only end when the customers say it ends” (MemberChkA2).*

*“The challenge that comes along when engaging with an online community is having your brand hijacked by the online community for their personal reasons. It is important for the organisation to take control of the power dynamic between the organisation and the online community. Allow the audience to discuss their thoughts about the brand, but at the end of the day the organisation needs to take back control of their online brand. To represent the interests of the organisation first and then secondly the diverse online voices” (MemberChkB3).*

See Figure 62 for the linking of the categories and the evolving storyline.

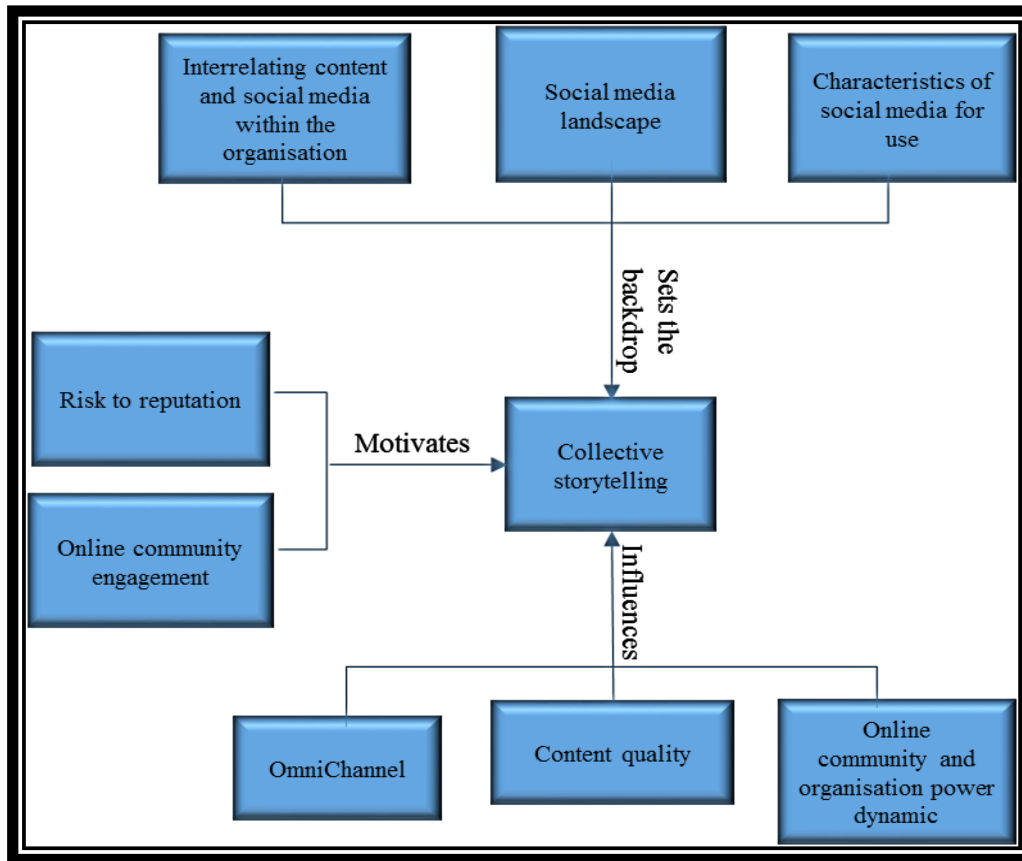


Figure 62: Extension to earlier diagram and evolving storyline on risk to reputation, online community engagement, social media landscape, characteristics of social media for use, interrelating content and social media within the organisation, content quality, OmniChannel, online community and organisation power dynamic and collective storytelling

Evolving storyline

Collective storytelling is motivated by the high risk to reputation and the need for online community engagement, is influenced by content quality, OmniChannel and the online community and organisation power dynamic; where understanding the social media landscape, the interrelating content and social media within the organisation and the characteristics of social media use sets the backdrop for social media use to co-create digital content within an organisational context.

4.4.4.9. Experiencing social media use failures

The collective storytelling process is not without challenges, where these challenges emerge as failures in social media use. The collective storytelling process sometimes results in organisations experiencing social media use failures. The linking of the categories introduces proposition 4 which is corroborated by the quotations below:

Proposition 4: **Collective storytelling** results in organisations **experiencing social media use failures**.

*“The proliferation of social media has led to an increased interest in social media and the growth of social engagement within the organisation. The consequence of this growth has resulted in departmental challenges when it comes to supporting the social media platforms” (MemberChkA1).*

*“Everyone in the organisation wants space on the social media platforms. Space is limited so this is a challenge. Additionally, not all content is appropriate for all of the social media channels. The reason is that each social media channel has its specific online community” (MemberChkA2).*

*“An organisation with too many active social media accounts where the official accounts used for organisational engagement are not clearly identified runs the risk of confusing their online community. This proliferation of social media accounts would also negatively impact the quality and consistency of the messages being posted online across all the platforms amongst the different departments and faculties” (MemberChkB3).*

*“Out-dated websites will negatively impact the social media references found on these websites: Over the years there has been quite a bit of proliferation of the website which resulted in over 1000 web pages being created. The result is that certain web pages do not have clearly identified owners and the content on some of the web pages is old and out-dated” (MemberChkB4).*

*“The challenge experienced by CMD is that some faculties or departments do not actively maintain their social media platforms, which negatively impacts the university brand to the point that it can be seen as being de-marketing” (MemberChkB5).*

See Figure 63 for the linking of the categories and the evolving storyline.

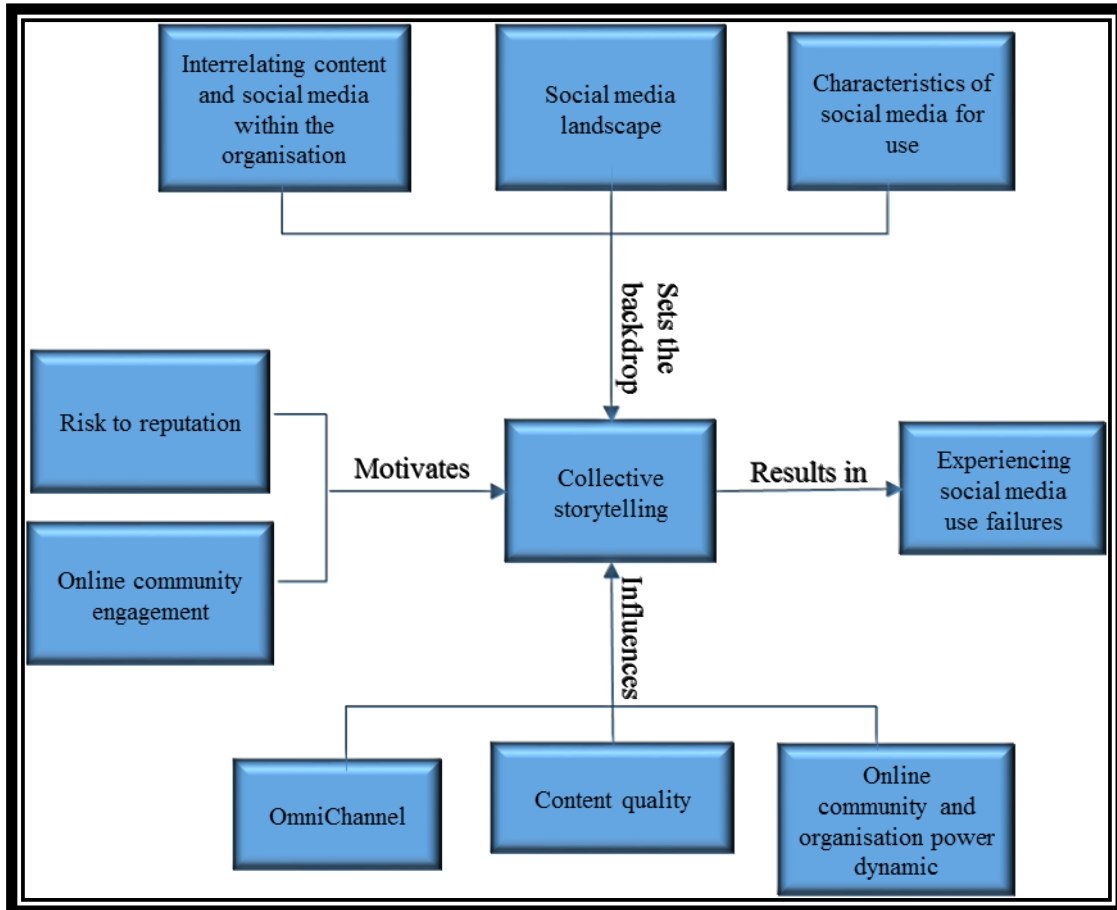


Figure 63: Extension to earlier diagram and evolving storyline on risk to reputation, online community engagement, social media landscape, characteristics of social media for use, interrelating content and social media within the organisation, content quality, OmniChannel, online community and organisation power dynamic, experiencing social media use failures and collective storytelling

Evolving storyline

Collective storytelling is motivated by the high risk to reputation and the need for online community engagement, is influenced by content quality, OmniChannel and the online community and organisation power dynamic; where understanding the social media landscape, the interrelating of content and social media within the organisation and the characteristics of social media use sets the backdrop for social media use to co-create digital content within an organisational context. Through the collective storytelling process the organisation experiences social media use failures.

4.4.4.10. Education interventions

Educating the organisational stakeholders on how best to use social media and thus overcoming the failures associated with the organisational use of social media is identified as an important theme. Organisations experiencing social media use failures implement education interventions as strategies to address social media use failures. The linking of these categories introduces proposition 5, which is corroborated by the quotations below:

**Proposition 5: An organisation experiencing social media use failures leads to implementing education intervention strategies.**

*“Because social media is still relatively new, the university is still struggling with its role so more educational interventions are needed to increase the visibility and awareness around social media. More awareness will also help with the budget constraints in the department. How to improve the visibility is to write stories on the successes and to create personalised key performance indicators (KPI) measurements that tangibly show the benefits to senior management” (MemberChkB2).*

*“You need to manage expectations and decide on which stories have a high interest factor and share those stories. This helps in building brand awareness, increases content sharing and increases traffic” (MemberChkB4).*

*“Breaking down business silos - the digital and social business structure is dynamic and fluid whereas the traditional business structure operates as silos. A challenge for the digital and social business structure is to find ways to integrate with the traditional business silos” (MemberChkA1).*

*“Effective communication between the social media team and the organisation is needed, to highlight that space on the online social media channels is limited. Effective planning is thus needed so that everyone who needs to use social media can be accommodated. Also, educating the organisation that online communities differ across the social media channels which means that content appropriate to a particular community should be posted” (MemberChkA2).*

*“When social media users within the organisation get stuck they should come to the CMD where they will be assisted. This will create a brand synergy by breaking down those barriers (silos) found between departments and faculties, allowing all social media users to speak with one voice - the collective voice of the university” (MemberChkB3).*

*“Current and prospective students within the Commerce faculty are most eager to engage on social media. The challenge is to keep staff, academics and alumni interested in social media. Staff and academics seem to think that social media is not important or would prefer LinkedIn since this social media platform is seen as being more professional. The alumni haven't grown up with social media so there is little interest from this target market to engage on social media. Academics are slowly coming on-board but more education is needed to grow the interest. The Commerce faculty is planning a campaign that will specifically target the alumni through the Commerce Facebook site with the expectation of getting more alumni to become fans and follow the Commerce faculty. This is also seen as an opportunity to educate alumni on the benefits of social media” (MemberChkB5).*

See Figure 64 for the linking of the categories and the evolving storyline.

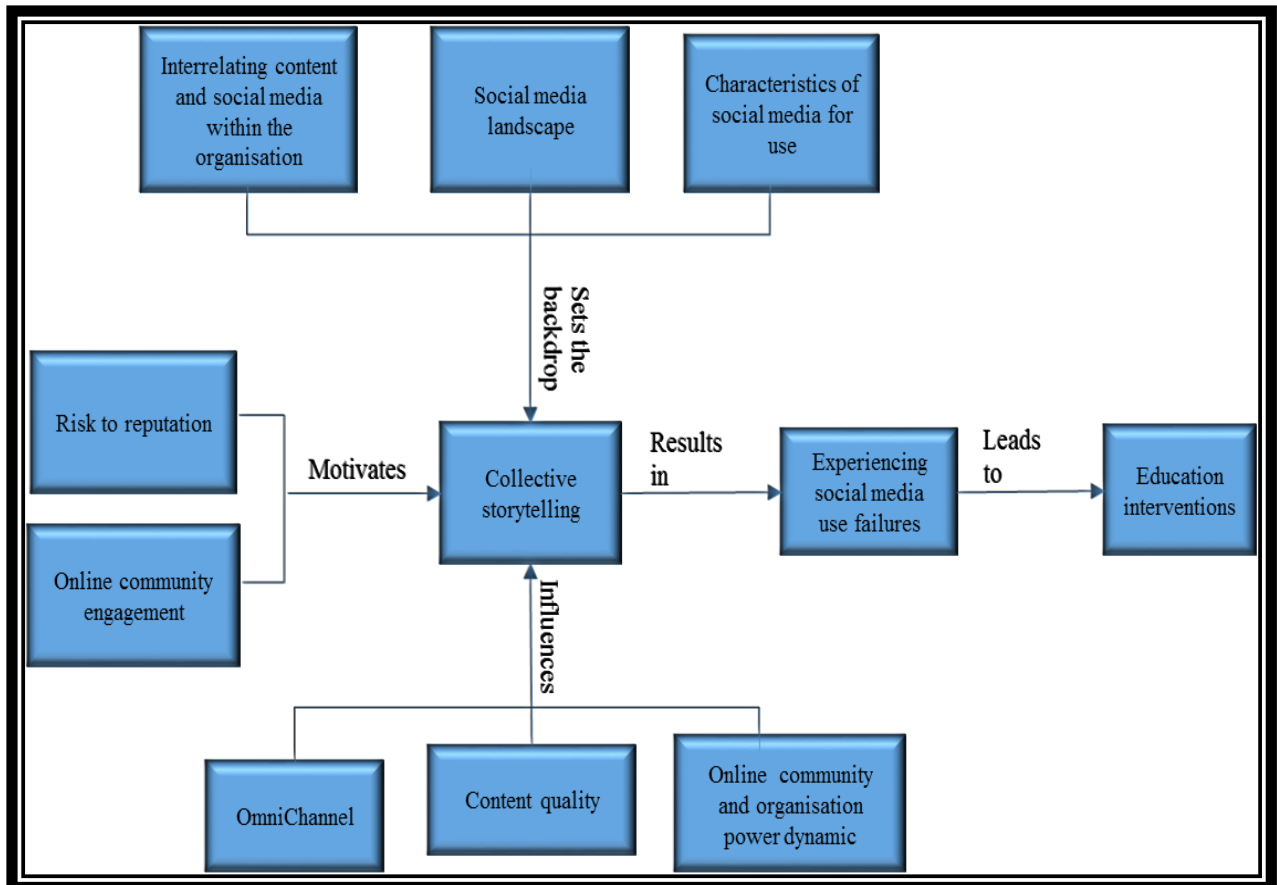


Figure 64: Extension to earlier diagram and evolving storyline on risk to reputation, online community engagement, social media landscape, characteristics of social media for use, interrelating content and social media within the organisation, content quality, OmniChannel, online community and organisation power dynamic, experiencing social media use failures, education interventions and collective storytelling

Evolving Storyline

Collective storytelling is motivated by the high risk to reputation and the need for online community engagement, is influenced by content quality, OmniChannel and the online community and organisation power dynamic; where understanding the social media landscape, the interrelating of content and social media within the organisation and the characteristics of social media use sets the backdrop for social media use to co-create digital content within an organisational context. Through the collective storytelling process the organisation experiences social media use failures which then lead to the implementation of education interventions as important strategies to overcome social media use failures within the organisation.

4.4.4.11. A supportive social media strategy

Implementing education interventions as strategies to overcome social media use failures, reveal a shift by organisations toward having a framework that supports the use of social media within the organisation and addresses failures in use. Education interventions bring about a shift towards a

supportive social media strategy, thus introducing proposition 6, which is corroborated by the quotations below:

**Proposition 6: Education interventions bring about a shift towards an increasing importance for a supportive social media strategy.**

*“Moving onto social media platforms without doing proper planning and where the social media strategy does not support the use of the platform, will risk the failure in social media use. The resulting impact to the brand will be negative and you will not be seen as a credible source of information. Moving onto a new social media platform would mean that you will be an active participant and you are posting updates regularly - at least every 24 hours. If you are unable to do this then do not move onto a new social media platform. If you do you risk your online credibility” (MemberChkB2).*

*“The nature of social media is dynamic and consistently changing and this is a challenge. A social media strategy and policy is needed to provide structure and governance within such a dynamic environment. The proliferation of social media accounts within the university has been identified as a problem. The university’s social media strategy and policy is addressing this problem by advocating governance across the platforms and establishing synergies - protecting the brand and speaking with one voice” (MemberChkB2).*

*“The social media strategy and policy is designed to help address the issues related to the quality and consistency of the online messages being posted across the platforms by different departments and faculties. The idea is to establish synergies amongst the social media users, where they are provided with a guide of how to use social media - what to do and what not to do” (MemberChkB3).*

The following quotation is important in illuminating the need for more research when it comes to the use of social media: *“There is no real rule book out there saying how to go about planning your social media approach. There is a lot of information online, but it doesn’t seem to be scientifically validated as such and is also quite contextual. To successfully engage with all four of our target groups (prospective & current students, staff, academics and alumni) requires a social media approach that is all-inclusive. Organisation B has traditions and you want to hold onto those traditions through the Alumni. In contrast, you have a bubbly, young generation which you also want to attract. The way to do this is having a social media approach that caters for the traditions within the university and also be dynamic enough to bring on-board the younger generation as well. It is to find that balance and not having to pick a side - overcoming the generation gap in providing engaging opportunities for both younger and older audience” (MemberChkB5).*

See Figure 65 for the linking of the categories and the evolving storyline.

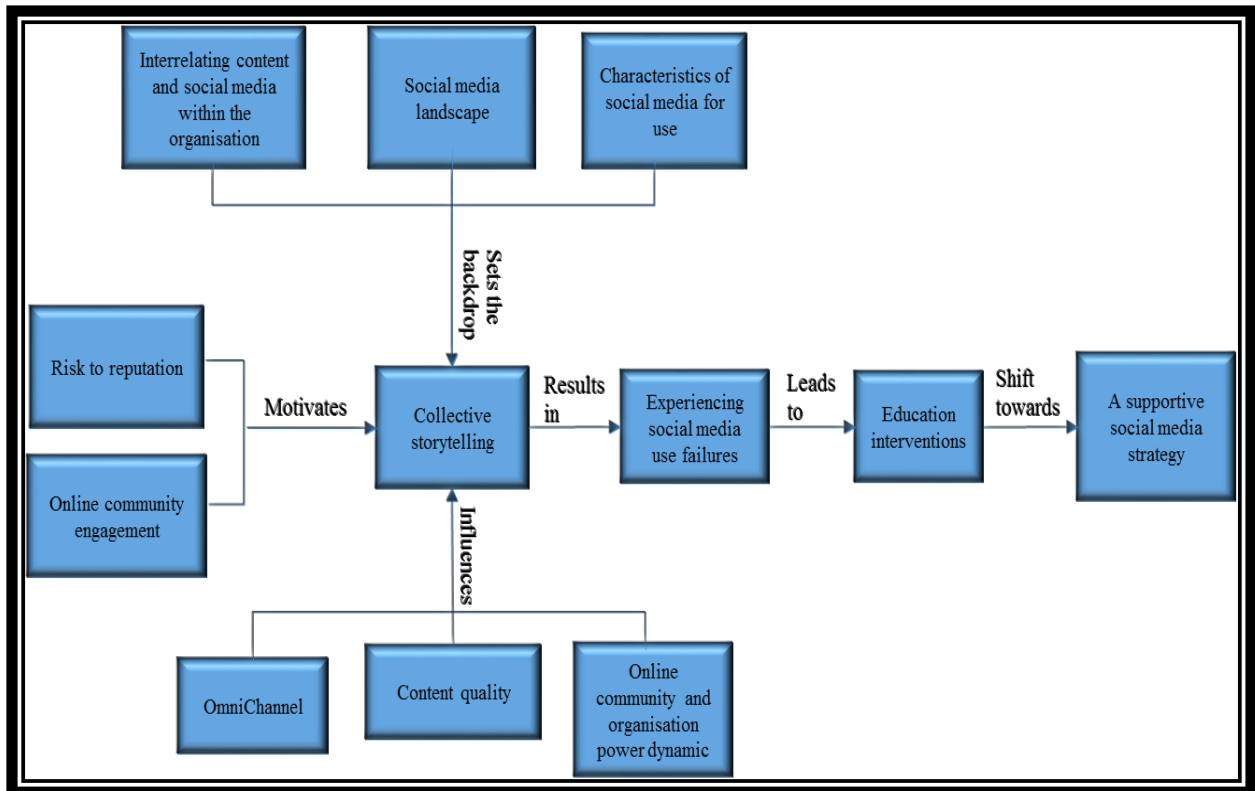


Figure 65: Extension to earlier diagram and evolving storyline of risk to reputation, online community engagement, social media landscape, characteristics of social media for use, interrelating content and social media within the organisation, content quality, OmniChannel, online community and organisation power dynamic, experiencing social media use failures, education interventions, a supportive social media strategy and collective storytelling

#### Evolving storyline

Collective storytelling is motivated by the high risk to reputation and the need for online community engagement, is influenced by content quality, OmniChannel and the online community and organisation power dynamic; where understanding the social media landscape, the interrelating of content and social media within the organisation and the characteristics of social media use sets the backdrop for social media use to co-create digital content within an organisational context. Through the collective storytelling process the organisation experiences social media use failures which then lead to the implementation of education interventions as important strategies to overcome social media use failures within the organisation. Education interventions used as strategies by organisations to overcome social media use failures, highlight a shift towards a supportive framework in the form of a supportive social media strategy.

#### 4.4.4.12. Addressing risk to reputation and online community engagement

From the discussion above, there is a clear indication that implementing a supportive social media strategy in turn addresses the organisation's risk to reputation (introducing proposition 7a) and

Proposition 7a: The increasing importance for a **supportive social media strategy** reduces the organisation's **risk to reputation**.

its need for *online community engagement* (introducing proposition 7b). Additional quotations have been included below to further substantiate the benefits of having a *supportive social media strategy*:

Proposition 7b: The increasing importance for a **supportive social media strategy** improves **online community engagement**.

*“A supportive social media strategy allows the university to deal with any concerns or issues that are raised and in so doing protects the university’s online brand reputation. During a crisis, the benefits of social media are: (1) that you are able to get the information much quicker than the traditional media like email, post, newspapers, and (2) allow you to respond much quicker. This early warning system allows you to contain any possible negative impacts on the brand reputation”* (MemberChkB2).

*“An organisation that is successful in their engagement process with their online community is able to build community relationships. Successful engagements with an online community will give the organisation feedback on what they are doing right, what they are doing wrong and your community also tells you what they want. This information is critical in helping to improve your brand”* (MemberChkB3).

*“Successful organisations are able to positively manage their online reputation and build customer loyalty”* (MemberChkA1).

#### 4.4.5. Final theoretical outcome

The systematic linking of the major categories and concepts that took place in section 4.4.4 culminates in Figure 66, which presents the final theory where all the major categories and concepts have been woven together using the integration techniques suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998, 2008). The final storyline is also presented below.

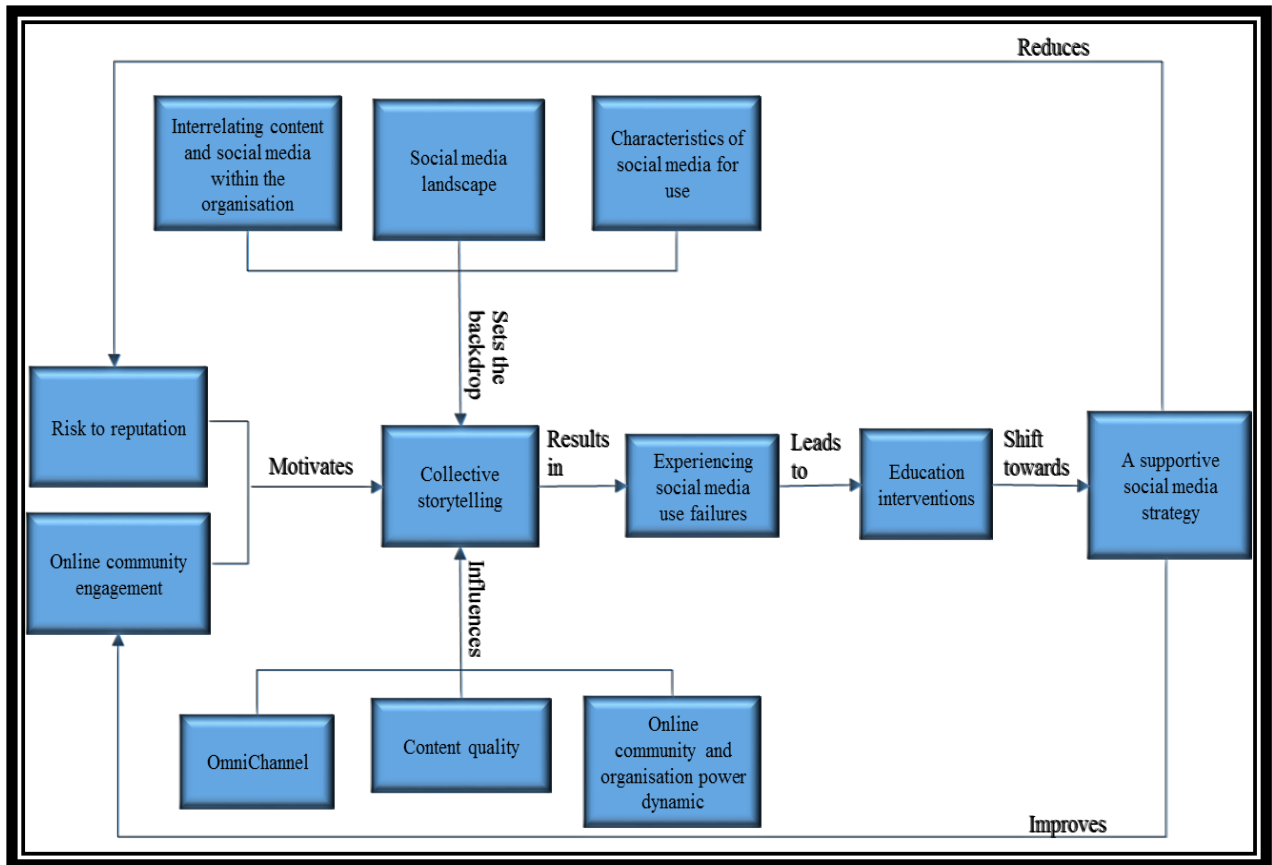


Figure 66: Final construction of my theory that weaves together risk to reputation, online community engagement, social media landscape, characteristics of social media for use, interrelating content and social media within the organisation, content quality, OmniChannel, online community and organisation power dynamic, experiencing social media use failures, education interventions, a supportive social media strategy and collective storytelling

### Final storyline

Collective storytelling is motivated by the high risk to reputation and the need for online community engagement, is influenced by content quality, OmniChannel and the online community and organisation power dynamic; where understanding the social media landscape, the interrelating content and social media within the organisation and the characteristics of social media use sets the backdrop for social media use to co-create digital content within an organisational context. Through the collective storytelling process the organisation experiences social media use failures which then lead to the implementation of education interventions as important strategies to overcome social media use failures within the organisation. Education interventions used as strategies by organisations to overcome social media use failures, highlight a shift towards a supportive framework in the form of a supportive social media strategy. The increasing importance for a supportive social media strategy in turn reduces the organisation's risk to reputation and improves online community engagement.

#### 4.4.6. Reaching theoretical saturation

A researcher reaches theoretical saturation when: (1) no more new information emerges during coding from the research area, (2) categories are fully developed, and (3) the relationships amongst concepts are delineated. However, it is always possible to find new ideas in the research data. Thus, reaching theoretical saturation is more a matter of reaching a point where discovering new information does not add much more to the explanation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008; Urquhart et al., 2010). During my analysis, theoretical saturation became evident in my 13th and 14th data slice, when no new concepts emerged during open coding, and with existing concepts and relationships being repeated. However, I continued to focus on category development and building relationships, using techniques such as coding for process. At this point I reached the conclusion that additional data and analysis would add very little new conceptualisations to the explanation and that the concepts, sub-categories, categories and relationships were appropriately well developed.

#### 4.5. Summary of chapter

Case selection followed the principle of theoretical sampling as set out by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The selection criterion used to select the relevant cases for my study were those organisations that have a dedicated social media team responsible for the use of social media as an engagement tool with their online community. In line with this selection criterion, I selected two cases by means of theoretical sampling. Data collection, coding and analysis were executed iteratively (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constant comparison played a central role during my analysis, and had the aim of achieving construct and relationship validity, in turn leading to the internal validity of my research study, and ultimately, an empirically valid theory. Corroboration was used to relate data across the different data collection methods. I used the Straussian (1990, 1998, 2008) GTM coding procedures and used Seidel and Urquhart's (2013) guidelines for IS researchers when using the Straussian (1990, 1998, 2008) GTM coding procedures. These guidelines are aimed at allowing for emergence and avoiding preconceived preconceptions. My approach to axial coding was intended to enhance my theoretical sensitivity when it came to documenting causal relationships. I strived towards true emergence and minimising 'forcing' of the data.

I used integrative diagrams to visually present the emerging relationships between concepts, sub-categories and categories (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Urquhart, 2007). I used memos to capture my thoughts on my progression through my research study and to support the theory-building process (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Urquhart, 2013). Part of my research study entailed conducting member-checking exercises with the interviewees after the analysis of each interview. This follow-up session was intended to confirm the main high-level themes the interviewees wished to express during the interview (Charmaz, 2006, 2014; Creswell, 2009). Theoretical saturation became evident in my 13th and 14th data slice, when no new concepts emerged during open coding,

and with existing concepts and relationships being repeated. Ultimately, collective storytelling was identified as the core category. The next chapter will focus on theoretical integration.

# Chapter 5 – Theoretical Integration

## 5.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on comparing the *collective storytelling* theory with other existing theories in the literature. The aim is to integrate the emergent theory with other existing theories in the field and to discuss how the emergent theory confirms, extends or contradicts existing theories (Strauss, 1987; Urquhart, 2013). Section two provides a holistic explanation of social media use within organisations as it relates to the emergent theory and highlights the importance of integrating the emergent theory with other existing theories in the field. The focus of section three is on theoretical integration. The section references the paper from Ngai, Tao and Moon (2015) which discusses social media use within organisations. Ngai et al. (2015) is a systematic literature review of social media research studies conducted within organisations and highlights which theories have been used during these studies. Mass communication theories are relevant to my research study, as they explain the process by which a message is sent by a person, group of people or an organisation through a communication channel to a large group of people or another organisation. Communication channels include the television, radio, print, and social media. The main concern of these theories is how content shared through mass communication persuades others and affects attitudes, behaviours, emotions and opinions (Daft & Lengel, 1983, 1986; Hall, 1980; Dennis, Fuller & Valacich, 2008; Ngai et al., 2015). My research study focuses on how organisations use social media to both share content and communicate with their customer community, where communication affects attitudes, behaviours, emotions and opinions. This led me to select the three mass communications theories from this paper. In addition, I selected four other mass communication theories in the field that was relevant to my study.

## 5.2. Emergent theory, its relevance to organisations and related literature

The purpose of my research study was to explore and understand how organisations use social media when engaging with their online community. The result was the development of my *collective storytelling* theory, which explains how organisations use social media and through engagement with their online community, co-create digital content. The emergent theory gives a holistic explanation of social media use within organisations where:

(1) *Risk to reputation* and *online community engagements* are the main factors leading organisations to the use of social media

(2) When deciding on using social media the organisations need to consider:

- which social media platforms within the *social media landscape* are relevant to them,

- how content and social media will be related within the organisation, and
- how best to leverage the characteristics of social media for use

(3) The collective storytelling process of using social media to co-create digital content is influenced by:

- the power dynamics between the organisation and online community,
- the content quality of posts, and
- the need to provide the online community with an OmniChannel experience

(4) Through the collective storytelling process organisations are experiencing social media use failures

(5) The need to address social media use failures leads organisations to implement education interventions

(6) For the continued success of social media use within an organisational context, the education interventions emphasise a shift towards a supportive social media strategy, and

(7) Through a supportive social media strategy, organisations address the initial factors of risk to reputation and online community engagements which led them to the use of social media in the first place.

This theory is relevant both to organisations currently using social media, and to those considering the use of social media for online community engagement. Layder's (1993, 1998) criticism of GTM is its production of low-level theories around micro-phenomena. To overcome this criticism, it is important for a GTM researcher to: (1) 'scale up the theory', and (2) to integrate the emergent theory with those theories already existing in the field. During this 'scaling up' of the emerging theory, the researcher is grouping concepts into major categories (increasing the level of abstraction), and then relating these categories into forming constructs (Urquhart, Lehmann & Myers, 2010). Theoretical integration is the final and one of the most important steps in theory building when using the GTM (Urquhart, 2013).

The appropriate use of literature within a grounded theory study is through phasing (Martin, 2006). Accordingly, the first phase is an initial non-committal literature review intended to help the researcher uncover the research problem (Dey, 1999; Andrews, 2006). I followed the guidance given by Urquhart and Fernandez (2006, 2013) and Urquhart (2013), where I revisit the initial non-committal literature review. Comparing the emergent theory with this initial literature review determines the relevance of this review. The second phase entails an additional round of literature review based on the emergent theory. It is important at this point for GTM researchers to be 'theoretically sensitive' as to what literature is useful and relevant. This second phase facilitates theoretical integration and aides in enriching the emergent theory (Urquhart, 2013).

The use of social media is seen as an interdisciplinary phenomenon, with studies focusing on the individual, the community and organisations, in areas like Information Systems, Marketing, Human Resources, Education, Healthcare and the Empowerment of Society. As a researcher, I was aware of needing to read literature across these disciplines and kept an open mind as to what literature was relevant to my research study. I also integrate the emergent theory with other existing theories in the field and discuss how the emergent theory confirms, extends or contradicts existing theories. Comparing the emergent theory with other existing theories in the literature improves its analytic generalisability (Urquhart, 2013). Urquhart's view confirms Strauss's statement that "*after your theory has begun to integrate and densify to a considerable degree ... then supplementary or complementary or conflicting analyses should be grappled with*" (Strauss, 1987, p. 282).

### 5.3. Comparing the emergent theory with mass communications theories

A systematic literature review conducted by Ngai, Tao and Moon (2015) who analysed 46 journal articles focused on the use of social media within organisations. The aim of their paper was to "*understand how researchers have adopted theories, used research constructs, and developed conceptual frameworks in their studies*" (p. 33). This paper is relevant to my research study in identifying which theories are being used in social media research studies. A total of 31 theories and models were identified. 28 were used in studies focused on individuals and how they interact with social media. My research study is concerned with how organisations use social media to engage with their external customers using a mass communication format. Three of the 31 theories related to mass communication and were hence relevant to my research question and my emergent theory. They are the following:

- Media richness theory – (Daft & Lengel, 1983, 1986; Daft, Lengel & Trevino, 1987)
- Theory of para-social interaction - (Horton & Wohl, 1956)
- Uses and gratification theory - (Herzog, 1940, 1942; Maslow, 1970; McQuail, 1987; Lull 1990)

In addition to these three theories, I will also look at four other theories that are deemed to be relevant to my emergent theory. They are:

- Reception theory - (Hall, 1980)
- Social exchange theory – (Homans, 1958; Cook, 1977; Emerson, 1987)
- Media synchronicity theory – (Dennis & Valacich, 1999; Dennis, Fuller & Valacich, 2008)
- Organisational learning theory - (Cyert & March, 1963; Cangelosi & Dill, 1965; Argyris & Schon, 1978, 1996; Duncan & Weiss, 1979; Weick, 1979; Daft & Weick, 1984; Levitt & March, 1988).

The rationale for selection of each of these theories is discussed next, as well as a comparison between these theories and my own.

### 5.3.1. Media richness theory

Media richness theory (MRT) developed by Daft and Lengel (1983, 1986) explains “*the ability of information to change understanding within a time interval*” (1986, p. 560). The initial intention of MRT was to help organisations cope with communication challenges when there is a possibility of having an unclear or confusing message, with the exchange of this message leading to its misinterpretation. With this theory, Daft and Lengel (1983), evaluated communication mediums used within organisations and based on these evaluations ranked them according to their richness. Richness here represents the ability of communication mediums to enable communication and change understanding amongst users (Dennis & Valacich, 1999). Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987) use the following criteria to determine the richness of a communication medium: (1) feedback ability, (2) allowing multiple cues, (3) language variety, and (4) personal focus. A media richness hierarchy was also created, and includes four media classifications: (1) face-to-face, (2) telephone, (3) addressed documents, and (4) unaddressed documents, where the richest communication medium was face-to-face meetings followed by telephone, addressed documents, and unaddressed documents.

This theory firstly posits that organisations process information to help them overcome uncertainty and equivocality (Daft & Lengel, 1986). In this context uncertainty is defined as “*the difference between the amount of information required to perform the task and the amount of information already possessed by the organisation*” (Galbraith, 1973. p 5) and equivocality refers to the ambiguity of a task. This ambiguity is caused by multiple and conflicting interpretations about a situation within an organisation (Weick, 1979; Daft & Macintosh, 1981; Daft & Lengel, 1986). Secondly, the theory states that when sharing unequivocal messages written media are preferred, whereas with messages containing equivocality face-to-face media are preferred. The more complex and ambiguous a message or task is, the richer the medium needed to communicate the message or task. My theory is similar to MRT in that organisations use several communication mediums, varying in their richness to communicate a message or task related to a social media campaign. Richer communication mediums are used to share more complex messages or tasks. Regular engagement sessions help ensure that there is a common understanding amongst the social media stakeholders.

Social media engagements place an expectation on organisations to be more responsive to their online community. Organisations are expected to increase their commitment levels linked to social media engagement by regularly updating content on all their social media channels. The initial intention by the organisation was to just have an online presence on social media, but this quickly evolved into having to make complicated decisions on how to be more responsive (Panagiotopoulos, Shan, Barnett, Regan & McConnon, 2015; Zhang et al., 2017). This expectation is driven along by an online community and organisation power dynamic and the need to increase online community engagement.

My research confirms this internal organisational conflict over having to decide how, why and when is the right time to increase one's social media commitment.

My *collective storytelling* theory has an answer to this dilemma in the form of a formal *social media strategy*, which supports the organisation when it comes to making these complicated decisions on being more responsive to the online community when using social media for engagement. The media richness hierarchy offered by Daft, Lengel, and Trevino (1987) is too narrow and does not sufficiently cater for the rapidly changing online environment. The question to ask is: How can social media be classified? This question is made more complicated by the fact that online posts can include: (1) text, (2) video, and (3) pictures, so how do organisations decide on the richness of each post? Accordingly, my theory extends MRT by enhancing the media richness hierarchy scale when evaluating social media. My theory explains that information shared on social media is more contextually rich when it contains descriptive text, videos and pictures, as opposed to a post containing only text, a picture or a video. Facebook is seen as being a more contextually richer communication medium, allowing for posts to contain descriptive text, videos and pictures. Twitter is seen as not being as contextually rich as Facebook because of the limits placed on the amount of information the social media platform allows for sharing. This picture is beginning to change, however, with Twitter recently increasing its message character limit on direct messages to 10 000<sup>27</sup> characters. With Instagram and Pinterest, the focus is on sharing photos with minimal text which makes these social media platforms less contextually rich. Hence, media richness can vary across social media platforms as well as within each platform.

The use of social media as an additional communication medium, calls for additional extensions to MRT to include the following contextual conditions identified by my theory that have an influence on the use of the communication medium: (1) *social media landscape*, (2) *characteristics of social media for use*, and (3) *interrelating content and social media within the organisation*. The literature showed that the diversity of applications found within the *social media landscape* and what they can be used for creates confusion for organisations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It therefore becomes important for organisations to understand which mix of social media platforms would best suit their engagement and communication needs (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014).

The effective use of social media requires an organisation to consider the *characteristics of social media for use*. It is not good enough to just have a social media presence. Organisations must find ways to improve their online profile which will generate community interest. A sense of 'stickiness' to the organisation's online profile needs to be created which increases consumer loyalty (Zhang et al., 2017). An organisation could use Facebook for sharing contextually rich information, and Twitter could

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<sup>27</sup> Direct messages are private conversations between 2 people or a group. The character count for public messages still remains 140 characters. (<https://www.twittercommunity.com/t/remvoving-the-140-character-limit-from-direct-messages/41348>)

be used for sharing short informational messages that are relatively shallow in context when engaging with their online community (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel & Chowdury, 2009; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). Youtube, Instagram, Pinterest and Flickr are more appropriate when sharing visual media related information. Most companies prefer using a combination of social media platforms and the use of each social media platform is based on the needs of their *social media strategy* (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). The circular relationship between digital content and social media was reflected in both organisations studied, where the social media team and the digital content team shared a co-dependent relationship in *interrelating content and social media within the organisation* (Fuchs-Kittowski, Klassen, Faust & Einhaus, 2009). Previously the teams operated as separate entities, which created challenges and failures in certain business campaigns (Kuikka & Äkkinen, 2011).

What is surprising is that information is being shared, but the *content quality* of the shared information is not explicitly stated by MRT. The use of social media has extended knowledge creation beyond the boundaries of the organisation, resulting in managers having little control over the *content quality* of the information obtained on social media (Pike, Bateman & Butler, 2013; Saldanha & Krishnan, 2012). This creates an interesting paradox for IS researchers, in terms of how we try to measure and manage the *content quality* on social media (McKinney Jr & Yoos II, 2010). It is therefore important that the organisation is consistently sharing the right kind of messages, at regular engagement intervals on its social media platforms. The right kind of messages contains content that is useful, relevant and attractive, where attractive messages would contain text, images and videos instead of having text only (Saji, Chauhan & Pillai, 2013; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015). Organisations who fail to be engaging or, when they are engaging, share content that is not of a high standard, will negatively impact their online brand (Ahuja & Medury, 2010). My theory thus extends MRT, and adds to the discussion by providing guidance on how an organisation, using social media for engagement with its online community can measure and manage its *content quality*.

In today's interconnected world, social media allows organisations and their online community to stay in contact even if they find themselves geographically located on two different continents. Although face-to-face, video conferencing and the telephone are seen as being more contextually rich communication mediums, they are not always practical when the organisation and their community are far apart. The significant growth in the popularity, and the use of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Tang, Gu & Whinston, 2012; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015) in all facets of our life, has made social media a viable alternative communication medium even though it might not be as contextually rich as face-to-face and video conferencing. This point contradicts the deterministic nature of MRT, which states that senders should use the richest medium possible for communication. My statement finds support from Markus (1994), who states that medium use is influenced much more strongly by social pressures than its richness. The communication process in MRT does not cover social media.

Accordingly, my theory extends MRT by providing a process for using social media to co-create digital content, which is linked to *collective storytelling* as the core category.

### 5.3.2. Theory of para-social interaction

The theory of Para-social Interaction was first hypothesised by Horton and Wohl (1956), and posits that an audience creates a one-sided relationship with the media they consume. Para-social Interactions (PSI) are described as an audience having an illusionary relationship with the personality they are engaging with. This personality can be a talk show host, celebrities, characters, organisations and their brands. The illusion is that the audience believes that the engagement with the personality is a reciprocal relationship and that the personality is talking directly to them (Rubin, Perse & Powell, 1985). This illusion can go as far as the audience believing that they are ‘friends’ with the personality (Stern, Russell & Russell, 2007). The personality facilitates this illusion by ‘engaging’ with the audience through verbal and nonverbal interaction (Labrecque, 2014). Rubin and Step (2000) states that because PSI involves the active use of media, it can affect the attitudes and behaviour of the audience.

Hoerner (1999) showed that the personality, also referred to as a “*personae*”, can be represented by a website where the website is an online representation of a talk show host, celebrities, characters, organisations and their brands. The webmasters responsible for the website, work on fostering para-social interactions by having conversations with the audience and constantly updating the personal characteristics of the *personae*. From a social media perspective, personalities would also communicate with their followers. The immediate nature of social media makes para-social interactions less unidirectional, which results in a more powerful and satisfying relationship (Labrecque, 2014).

Organisations use this theory to find out what their consumers are attracted to and what type of relationships they are nurturing. My *collective storytelling* theory supports PSI in enabling communication and relationship building where interaction and engagement takes place through the use of social media as a communication medium. *Online community engagement* captures the essence of the conversation between the audience and the personality (the organisation). My theory extends PSI by explicitly adding an online dimension to the engagement process. *Online community engagement* with the online audience through using the interactive features of social media, builds and develops the personal relationship between the organisation and their community (Andriole, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011). This relationship is enhanced by the organisation being able to personalise and customise their response to each community member (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Using social media to build a personal relationship with the online community that is based on strong emotional bonds has a positive impact on organisational performance (Mitic & Kapoulas, 2012; Pagani & Mirabello, 2011; Sashi, 2012). To build long-lasting personal relationships between the organisation and its community their engagements need to be grounded in mutual trust and commitment (Sashi, 2012; Brodie, Ilic, Juric & Hollebeek, 2013).

During this online engagement process, the audience tells the organisation what they want, what they are interested in, what makes them happy and what does not. My theory extends PSI by highlighting *risk to reputation* as an important factor to take note of. From these cues, the organisation is able to adjust its communication approach to suit their audience. Organisational reputation within a social media setting relates to its standing, and the level of trustworthiness others associate with it (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Organisations are concerned about their online reputation, and the negative impact employees and their online community could have, if ill-advised or malevolent social media updates were posted online about the organisation and its brands.

The negative impact and damage to a corporate brand is amplified by the limited control organisations have on the online information posted (Cox, Martinez & Quinlan, 2008; Kuikka et al., 2011; Fuchs-Kittowski et al., 2009). During an online crisis, an organisation needs to be transparent in its communication, and to acknowledge and swiftly post an online apology when the organisation is at fault. A sincere response will go a long way in addressing a crisis situation (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). In this way, an organisation can reduce the number of crises on social media, and minimise the threats to its online reputation (Chen, 2010).

In PSI mention is made of a conversation between the audience and the personality, but what is not clear from the theory is how this conversation takes place. My theory extends PSI by providing a process for conversation. The *collective storytelling* theory outlines the use of social media to co-create digital content which forms the basis of the conversation that takes place between the audience and the personality. The co-creation of content ushers in a new dictum linked to open access and collaboration, where co-creation is defined as a value-creation process when combining collaborators together (Normann & Ramirez, 1994; Andreu, Sanchez & Mele, 2010; DesAutels, 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011).

PSI does not, however, provide an understanding on the communication mediums a being used during these conversations. My *collective storytelling* theory extends PSI by highlighting the use of social media as a communication medium for engagement and relationship building. Emphasis on social media further extends PSI to include the *social media landscape, characteristics of social media for use* and *interrelating content and social media within the organisation*. The use of social media has meant a shift in the engagement between organisations and the online community from a centralised website to include different social media channels with varying functionalities and conveying different propositions for engagement (Panagiotopoulos, Al-Debei, Fitzgerald & Elliman, 2012). To facilitate successful engagements, Aladwani (2014) confirms the importance of content management when it comes to relating and aligning the organisational objectives to social media use.

The high volumes of unstructured information provided by social media makes the effective use of this information by organisations very challenging (Mayeh, Scheepers & Valos, 2012). The lack of content quality on social media is further exacerbated by low publication barriers and public

accessibility (Agarwal & Yiliyasi, 2010). The literature thus confirms the need for *content quality* as an essential factor for effective online communication and relationship building. My theory extends PSI by confirming the importance of *content quality* when using social media and its influence on *collective storytelling*. My theory suggests: (1) the importance of having a dedicated content team which is responsible for creating high quality digital content that is both engaging and that the online community will respond to, (2) social tactics like content mixing where both campaign and non-campaign content is used in an online post to encourage engagement, (3) sharing feel good stories is always popular, like students and academics doing well in their studies and research, graduation stories and getting free stuff like ‘Android’ Apps are very popular, (4) enriching posts by including text, pictures and videos, (5) holding formal planning sessions with all stakeholders on a social media campaign, where *content quality* is checked and signed-off, essentially having an approval process in place to approve the content before being released on social media, (6) use of crowdsourcing to find interesting topics that the online community wants to engage on, and (7) the close link between the organisation’s website and social media, makes the sharing of well written content on both communication mediums a very important.

There is a power dynamic within all relationships. Although one of the central elements of PSI is relationship building, there is nevertheless no clear reference to a power dynamic associated with relationship building. So how is this relationship structured? My theory extends PSI by emphasising the importance of an *online community and organisation power dynamic* during engagements and relationship building and its influence on *collective storytelling*. Web 2.0 applications are shifting the balance of power from the organisation to the online community (Li & Bernoff, 2008). Moreover, the advances in social computing are bringing about the empowerment of the online community to “*engage in social interaction, contribute their expertise, share content, collectively build new tools and disseminate information*” (Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007a, p. 753). This shift in power relates to the organisation’s brand as well (Li & Bernoff, 2008; Fisher & Smith, 2011), which means that organisations are no longer in full control of their online brand image. The question an organisation now needs to answer is how to sustain and develop its online brand, so that the brand can continue to grow and be successful in supporting the interests of all its stakeholders (McCarthy, Rowley, Ashworth & Pioch, 2014). Organisations now need to facilitate the online conversations linked to their brand, where the online brand image is a process of co-creation between the organisation and the online community (Fisher & Smith, 2011).

### 5.3.3. Uses and gratification theory

The uses and gratification (U&G) theory proposes that the use of media by an audience is intended to satisfy a certain need. The theory emphasises the what, how and why an audience would use media. Accordingly, the audience is an active rather than a passive participant in the use of the media being shared and uses the media for their own gratification (Herzog, 1940, 1942; Maslow, 1970; McQuail, 1987; Lull 1990). The U&G theory was developed by a number of key researchers interested

in understanding how and why individuals use media for their own gratification. Early work by Herzog (1940, 1942) on the U&G theory state three broad categories linked to gratification, namely: emotion, wishful thinking and learning.

Maslow (1970) suggests that the U&G theory is an extension of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. My *collective storytelling* theory both supports and extends the U&G theory by emphasising that both the audience and the producers of media scan social media to find content that they are interested in. My theory highlights the bi-directional nature of a social media relationship in which both the organisation and the online community will play the role of both audience and producer of media at a particular point in time. With this perspective in mind, organisations will scan social media for messages about them and their brands. Negative messages about the organisation fuels a *risk to reputation*. Thus, the need for an organisation to address a *risk to reputation* straddles both safety and security, and the social (belonging) levels, as stated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

Organisations also want to build relationships with their online community, which speaks to the need for *online community engagement*. This need straddles both the social (belonging) and the ego (esteem) levels found in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The online community in turn scans social media for content that relates to an organisation and its products. Accordingly, organisation A, a retailer selling food and clothing, would satisfy the physiological needs of their audience as linked to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. An online community that is in a reciprocal relationship with an organisation through *online community engagement*, also satisfies their needs associated with social (belonging) and ego (esteem).

McQuail (1987) provides another lens through which to interpret the what, how and why users use media for their gratification. The four uses are: (1) for information gathering - finding out more about an organisation or finding out about a particular community, (2) personal identity – using media to reinforce personal values, (3) integration and social interaction – identifying with others and gaining an insight into their circumstances; what the community is interested in leads to a conversation which forms the basis for an *online community engagement*, and (4) entertainment – the audience agrees with the message and is satisfied by the media being consumed. Lull (1990) agrees that the media being shared creates a common ground for conversations and facilitates communication. According to this guideline information gathering by an audience can be associated with all five levels stated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs; personal identity is linked to the social (belonging) level; while entertainment, as well as integration and social interactions are linked to the three top levels listed in Maslow's hierarchy of needs respectively.

The U&G theory states that in the relationship between the audience and the producer, power lies with the audience and not with the producer of the media. My *collective storytelling* theory partially supports this power dynamic through the *online community and organisation power dynamic*. My

theory agrees that the receiver of the media can accept or reject the message. However, when the engagement is between a consumer and an organisation, what the consumer says about an organisation has a significant impact on the reputation of that organisation. This leads me to maintain that consumers have more influence and therefore more power in deciding the outcome of a conversation than the organisation. Accordingly, social media platforms are shifting the engagement power from organisations to their online community. This shift includes the organisation's online brand image that the online community plays a significant role in co-creating (Li & Bernoff, 2008; Fisher & Smith, 2011).

#### 5.3.4 Reception Theory

The Reception theory was first proposed by Hall (1973). Like the U&G theory, the Reception theory is a mass communication theory focused on text and how an audience engages with the text. In both instances, the audience is seen as being an active participant in using the text. The difference is that the U&G theory is focused more on the reasons why an audience chooses a particular text to consume, whereas the Reception theory is focused more on the audience itself and how it interprets and ascribes meaning to the text it consumes. According to the Reception theory, producers encode media with meaning, which contains a message that the producers wish to share with their audience. The message is then decoded by the audience. Decoding of media entails the process of making sense of what is being consumed. In some instances, the audience correctly decodes the message in the media. In other cases, the intended message is incorrectly decoded which leads to an audience disagreeing with the message and possibly rejecting the message. Decoding of messages takes place in three ways: (1) Dominant, (2) Negotiated, and (3) Oppositional. With dominant decoding – the audience correctly decodes the message in the way the producer intended it to be and agrees with the message. With negotiated decoding – the audience neither agrees nor disagrees with the message, rather, based on previously held views the audience will accept, reject or refine certain parts of the message being shared. With oppositional decoding – the audience rejects the message in its entirety. This rejection is based on a conflict between the ideological, political, social or cultural beliefs held by the audience and those contained in the message (Hall, 1980).

My theory supports the Reception theory in that dominant decoding leads to building relationships through *online community engagement*, while oppositional decoding, on the other hand, introduces a *risk to reputation* that the producer of the media needs to respond to. What is not explicitly stated in both U&G and the Reception theory is the role played by the communication medium. My theory extends both U&G and the Reception theory by stating that social media acts as a conduit through which media is produced and shared by the producer. The audience can then access and decode media they are interested in. Their response varies from fully agreeing, partially agreeing or fully disagreeing with the media. The social media channels will thus enable subsequent conversations and debates. The use of social media as a communication medium is underpinned by the *social media landscape* and

*characteristics of social media for use*, both being contextual conditions that influence the *collective storytelling* process.

The misinterpretation of a message is not adequately dealt with by either the U&G or the Reception theory. My theory extends both U&G and the Reception theory by emphasising the importance of *content quality*, and its impact on the interpretation of media as well as its subsequent influence on the *collective storytelling* process. In addition, my theory addresses the misinterpretation of messages through organisations experiencing *social media use failures* and then conducting *education interventions*. Interactions and conversations are themes associated with both theories which my theory supports as well. However, my theory then goes further, and extends both U&G and the Reception theory to say that those actors involved in the interactions and conversations are *storytellers* and are engaging in *collective storytelling*. With *collective storytelling* comes the co-creation of media. This co-creation phase of media is not explicitly stated in either the U&G or the Reception theory. However, as co-creation is part of my *collective storytelling* process when it comes to the use of social media, it thus further extends both U&G and the Reception theory.

Kuikka et al. (2011) identify the lack of social media awareness within an organisation as a *failure in organisational planning* and that it needs to be addressed by stakeholder training (*education interventions*). My theory explains the importance of providing proactive *education interventions*, to raise the awareness amongst organisational stakeholders of the role social media plays within the organisation in addressing *risk to reputation* and facilitating *online community engagement*. *Education interventions* highlight the relationship between social media use, the co-creation of digital content and the *collective storytelling* process between the online community and the organisation. However, Chung et al. (2017) indicate that poor and inadequate social media training is still taking place. This challenge is complicated by limited financial resources.

### 5.3.5. Social exchange theory

The social exchange theory (SET) was first hypothesised by Homans (1958). The theory has its roots in economics, psychology and sociology and was developed to understand the social behaviour of humans in economic undertakings. The central concept of the theory is actors exchanging resources via a social exchange relationship. Over the years, the theory has evolved from a dyadic<sup>28</sup> model to a network model (Cook, 1977), and to now include market properties as well (Emerson, 1987). The theory is used as a framework to explain the movement of resources between dyads and/or networks via a social process (Emerson, 1987).

The exchanging of resources has a power element to it (Emerson, 1962; Blau, 1964), where power in this context, refers to the attributes associated with the relationship amongst the actors and not

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<sup>28</sup> Dyadic refers to an interaction between a group of two people

the actors. Essentially, the power dynamics “*resides implicitly in the other’s dependency*” (Emerson, 1962, p. 32). Self-interest and interdependence are central themes that underpin social exchange (Lawler & Thye, 1999). These forms of interaction occur amongst actors who have something the other values and through this interaction they decide whether to exchange what they have and at what amounts. These interactions result in both economic and social outcomes (Lawler, 2001; Lambe, Wittman & Spekman, 2001).

In my theory, the *collective storytelling* process between a sender and a receiver can be seen as a social exchange process where both the organisation and their online community exchange digital content as a resource through the use of social media. When the online community is unhappy, there is an increase in their self-interest and need for consumer satisfaction. The flexing of their consumer power muscle fuels the organisational *risk to reputation*. Organisations in turn have their self-interest and need to build their online following and in so doing gain more consumers. The need for interdependence between an organisation and its online community results in building of a strong, mutually supportive relationship where both get value out of this relationship. Both parties share the need to belong and be valued. Through their engagement an organisation stays informed about what their online community wants, what they do not want and how to keep them happy. The online community in turn get their needs met, and also keep the organisation accountable for those actions not done correctly. Thus, there is an increase in community satisfaction when organisations show a willingness to address concerns expressed by the community (Vargo, Maglio & Akaka, 2008).

My theory supports the power dynamic associated with SET, where the exchange relationship is underpinned by the actors’ needs for self-interest and interdependence. The power in SET reflects the level of dependence actors have on one another. Actors that are more dependent have less power, whereas actors that are less dependent have more power. This fits the power relationship in my *collective storytelling* theory, where the online community is less dependent on the organisation, resulting in the online community having more power than the organisation. The result of this power struggle is also not discussed in SET. In my theory, this imbalance of power and the receiving of negative messages from the online community, leads to organisations experiencing high levels of *risk to reputation* which the organisation needs to address through the *collective storytelling* process.

My theory then extends SET by providing the concept *online community and organisation power dynamic*, which suggests how best to deal with a power dynamic when the organisation has less power than the online community, e.g: (1) never posting campaign information about products that customers have outstanding complaints about; first addressing these complaints before posting new campaign information; in this way the organisation is preventing a backlash from the online community, (2) first assessing any negative comments for validity, and then taking a step back to see if more comments follow; if not, then there is no need to respond; if more comments do follow then plan an

appropriate response; there is no need to respond to every single comment, (3) getting senior management to sign-off on posts that have serious implications for the brand, and (4) always being respectful when engaging with the online community.

In SET, the communication medium through which the social exchange takes place is not explicitly stated or adequately discussed. My theory extends SET by focusing on social media as a communication medium through which social exchange can take place. The use of social media places an emphasis on the actors involved in the social exchange process, to be raising awareness of the *social media landscape* and the *characteristics of social media for use*. Of paramount importance to an organisation is *interrelating content and social media within the organisation*. Collectively, these contextual conditions influence the *collective storytelling* process and extends SET.

Organisations are looking at their organisational structures and internal processes with an eye on realigning these organisational components to increase the compatibility between social media use, the organisational structures and internal processes (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015). My theory supports this exercise and refers to it as *interrelating content and social media within an organisation*. It also stresses the complexity of this realignment process with Chung et al. (2017) agreeing that there are persistent problems linked to the integration of social media into an organisational context.

This alignment process is very complex and my theory explains how an organisation could achieve a more successful alignment process: (1) ensuring the proactive interaction between digital natives and business stakeholders, with a focus on driving awareness and changing the perceptions of social media within the organisation, (2) increasing the levels of communication related to the use of social media, moving away from silos to an integrated organisation, (3) integrating all the organisational campaigns linked to social media with the use of a content schedule, (4) having an approval process in place that facilitates the alignment and integration of social media and the organisation, and (5) working together as a united front when things go wrong, sharing what needs to be posted as follow ups which facilitates speaking with one voice.

Social exchange implies that the actors need to interpret what is being shared and to respond accordingly. However, this engagement process is not explicitly discussed in SET. My theory on the other hand, has a co-creation phase that explains the sharing of resources which is subsequently interpreted and then responded to. This co-creation phase in my *collective storytelling* theory extends SET. In addition, SET also implies that the resources being exchanged should be of a high quality so that both actors will be happy with the exchange. My theory supports this need for high quality resources and extends SET by providing suggestions (previously discussed in 5.3.2. Theory of Para-social Interaction) on how to maintain high *content quality* standards.

What happens when the actors experience a failure during the social exchange process? My theory deals with process failures where organisations experience *social media use failures* and then

apply *education interventions*. These concepts are made explicit and are integral to the *collective storytelling* theory, but are not mentioned in SET thus further extending SET within the context of social media use by organisations engaging with their online community. Today, organisations are presenting training programmes on what is good practice when using social media (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015). In my theory, these training programmes are captured as *education interventions*. Furthermore, my theory highlights the benefits of *education interventions* as: (1) the breaking down of departmental barriers, (2) driving awareness of social media within the organisation, (3) managing use expectations, and (4) realising the organisational benefits (goals) of social media use.

SET is about actors finally achieving their goals through a successful social exchange encounter. My theory supports SET in that the purpose of a social media engagement between an organisation and their online community is to reduce the organisation's *risk to reputation* and to improve the *online community engagement*. A successful social media exchange between an organisation and their online community will therefore facilitate achievement of these goals. Organisations thus use the *collective storytelling* process to deal with their *risk to reputation*, which comes in the form of consumer complaints and queries. The *collective storytelling* process also forms the basis for conducting organisational campaign initiatives (Baird & Parasnis, 2011; McCarthy et al., 2014; Trainor, Andzulis, Rapp & Agnihotri, 2014).

#### 5.3.6. Media synchronicity theory

Media synchronicity theory (MST) was developed by Dennis and Valacich (1999) as an extension to Daft and Lengel's media richness theory (1983, 1986) where the levels of synchronicity offered by a communication medium is an indicator of communication performance and communication effectiveness. Synchronicity in this context is defined as "*the ability to support individuals working together at the same time with a shared pattern of coordinated behaviour*" (Dennis, Fuller & Valacich, 2008, p. 576). The focus of MST is on the capability of a communication medium to support synchronicity. The theory suggests that communication is enhanced when the synchronicity levels of a chosen communication medium appropriately supports the levels of synchronicity a given communication process requires. The five characteristics of a communication medium that influences media synchronicity are: (1) the transmission velocity - how fast a message can reach the receiver, (2) parallelism - the number of simultaneous transmissions, (3) symbol sets – the diverse ways in which a message can be encoded<sup>29</sup>, (4) rehearsability – the reviewing and updating of a message before sending it, and (5) reprocessability – to retrieve a message sent previously for reprocessing which results in a better understanding.

MST states that communication can be broken down into two processes called conveyance and convergence. Conveyance typifies the transmission of new information from a sender to a receiver. The

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<sup>29</sup> Encoding occurs when the creator of a message creates a message to be sent to a recipient.

receiver will require time to process this new information, make sense of it, and internalise the learning which leads to an updating of the individual's understanding of a situation. Since more time is required for this activity, a communication medium that is low in synchronicity is best, allowing for more time between messages. During convergence, most of the information has already been shared between the sender and the receiver and both participants have a good understanding of the situation. Participants therefore need less time to study the information being shared to make sense of it. A communication medium that is high in synchronicity is best during this process, allowing for less time between messages and leading participants to quickly reach a mutual understanding (Dennis et al., 2008).

Social media as a medium is real-time. The implication of this is that this medium when used for communication offers higher levels in synchronicity and supports the convergence process. The challenge though is that new information needing more time to study in order to gain an understanding is shared on social media as well. Since social media cannot control whether the engagement will take place through a convergence or conveyance process, it is then up to the users to manage the speed at which engagements take place and whether their engagement will follow a convergence or conveyance process. There is also the possibility of starting with a conveyance process and then moving to a convergence process. This move happens seamlessly as the two engaging parties become more comfortable with the 'topic'. As the conversation evolves the sender and receiver can continue to use social media as their communication medium and not have to move to a new communication medium that allows for more synchronicity.

As stated previously the *collective storytelling* theory explains the organisational use of social media platforms as an engagement tool where the process associated with *collective storytelling* as the core category is the use of social media to co-create digital content. My theory both supports communication performance and facilitates communication effectiveness as theorised by MST. "*In an interactive way, by engaging with the right audience, organisations have the opportunity to further improve their content creation capabilities and sustain those relationships*" (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015, p. 400). This quotation hints at *storytelling*. My theory goes further to discuss the process of *collective storytelling* taking place between the organisation and their online community and refers to the organisation and the online community as the *storytellers*.

MST also states that there is no one best medium for a particular communication situation and a combination of mediums might better facilitate communication performance and effectiveness (Dennis et al., 2008). Using a combination of social media platforms does enhance the communication performance and effectiveness. However, as social media becomes the more preferred medium for engagement, other mediums like voice, telephony and emails are being used less. Engagement through social media favours the convergence process.

As stated previously, social media is real-time and the levels achieved in media synchronicity when using social media need to be controlled more by the users to allow for either a convergence or conveyance process. Communication performance and effectiveness will be negatively impacted when social media are the preferred medium and users are unable to control the speed of engagement even if a combination of mediums is used. The *collective storytelling* theory extends MST by showing how new media technologies like social media that allow for the sharing of text, videos and pictures are providing new capabilities for the communicator. When using social media, the participants need to also be aware of the *social media landscape*, *characteristics of social media for use* and their influence on *collective storytelling*.

MST suggests that the integration and use of multiple platforms can facilitate communication performance and effectiveness. My theory extends MST by explaining that integration between multiple social media channels and the organisation's website is achieved by implementing a *supportive social media strategy* and having *education interventions* to share the organisation's strategic intent when it comes to using social media linked to the organisation's website for engagement. Responsive *social media engagement strategies* are needed to facilitate channel integration and the measurement of the organisation's capacity to engage with multiple stakeholder groups (Argenti, Howell & Beck, 2005). Failures in this integration are picked up by experiencing *social media use failures* which are then subsequently addressed by *education interventions*.

The quality of content being shared during communication affects both communication performance and effectiveness. MST refers to symbol sets, but does not explicitly discuss *content quality* as having an impact on the success of communication. The value for an organisation engaging with its online community through social media is an improvement in the information exchanged between both parties. This improvement is achieved through the co-creation of digital content (Yuan, Cai & Zhou, 2014). My theory extends MST by discussing *content quality* and its influence on *collective storytelling*. What organisations are starting to do is to tailor content to the different channels, and updating content at the right times to facilitate interactions with their audience as well as building stronger online relationships (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015). My theory goes further by grouping these activities under the need for *content quality*. Content that is relevant and offers value to the online community facilitates the building of online relationships, thus forming the basis for all current and future *online community engagements*.

There is no clear feedback loop in MST to address communication failures. Social media use failures often result in an online crisis situation. Effective use of social media for communication during a crisis situation is paramount when managing *risk to reputation* and the cultivating of critical relationships through *online community engagement* (Coombs, 2014; Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008, 2010). My theory extends MST by suggesting *education interventions* on *social media use failures*.

Successful *education interventions* that addresses *social media use failures* and the organisation achieving the goals set out by the *social media strategy* leads to a decrease in *risk to reputation* and an improvement in *online community engagement*. Power dynamics between the sender and receiver can also lead to communication failures. As with MRT, MST does not explicitly discuss power dynamics between the sender and receiver. My theory, in contrast, explains how *power issues* affect the relationship between the sender and receiver (previously discussed in 5.3.5. Social Exchange Theory).

### 5.3.7. Organisational learning theory

Over the years several researchers have engaged with the concept of organisational learning (Cyert & March, 1963; Cangelosi & Dill, 1965; Argyris & Schon, 1978, 1996; Duncan & Weiss, 1979; Weick, 1979; Daft & Weick, 1984; Levitt & March, 1988). Argyris and Schon (1978, 1996) stand out with their work on the organisational learning theory (OLT) in which they explain how organisations learn or fail to learn. They distinguish between three types of organisational learning, namely: (1) single-loop learning – when the detection and the correction of an organisational error allows the organisation to keep its current policies intact and still achieve its current objectives, (2) double-loop learning – when the detection and the correction of an organisational error leads to the modification of the organisational policies in order to achieve its objectives, and (3) deutero-learning – when the organisation examines its learning system use to detect and correct organisational errors.

Increasing the levels of organisational effectiveness is a central theme in OLT. How effective an organisation is, is measured by the degree to which an organisation's expected outcomes, impacted by environmental conditions matches the actual outcomes. OLT refers to a mismatch between the expected outcome and actual outcome as a performance gap and provides a three-step learning process through which organisations can address this performance gap. For organisations to be competitive in a fast-changing business environment they need to make a deliberate decision to change their actions in response to the changing circumstances. Organisational learning occurs when organisations make a conscious link between their actions taken and the resulting outcomes. This link between the actions and outcomes need to be documented for future reference. OLT refers to this documentation of learning as being stored in the organisational memory (Argyris & Schon, 1978, 1996).

My theory supports OLT and the concept of organisational memory with the need for a *supportive social media strategy*. The *social media strategy* is a living document that is updated to accommodate environmental changes impacting the organisation, and it can be accessed at any time to reconfirm the organisational strategic intent when it comes to the organisational use of social media for engagement with their online community. My theory goes further than OLT by explicitly stating that, the *social media strategy* is important in achieving synergy and enforcing standardisation within the organisation when it comes to the use of social media. Additionally, social media is being used as a relatively new technology within the organisation. The reference to a new technology within my theory extends OLT with the important concept of *interrelating content and social media within the*

organisation. This concept is important in helping the organisation to successfully use social media for engagement.

Organisations work on proactively informing social media users of the policies and strategies associated with the appropriate use of social media (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015). In my theory, the social media strategy explains the do's and don'ts of social media use when engaging with the online community. My theory further elucidates the issue of having a flexible social media environment and that a supportive social media strategy introduces a form of standardisation to a very dynamic environment.

Akar and Topcu (2011) found a positive relationship between social media use and the attitude of an online community. They suggest organisations create a supportive social media strategy to improve relationships with their online community. My theory supports this suggestion. It is also important that organisations take a professional approach towards the organisational use of social media, clearly outlining the organisation's strategic intent when it comes to the use of social media and having dedicated teams to manage social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). My theory also supports this recommendation by suggesting a supportive social media strategy and a dedicated social media team.

Initial learning takes place first at the individual level. When this learning is shared within the organisation it then becomes organisational learning (Argyris & Schon, 1978, 1996). The sharing of learning is supported by education interventions in my theory. Digital natives within organisations play a key role in disseminating and sharing their expert knowledge with the rest of the organisation. My theory goes further than OLT in discussing the benefits that are achieved by education interventions. (was also mentioned in 5.3.5. Social Exchange Theory).

In OLT data acquisition is the first step in the learning process. The value of an organisation monitoring social media channels, lies in its consequent ability to track online conversations, both positive and negative conversations related to brand (Culnan, McHugh & Zubillaga, 2010; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Fan & Gordon, 2014). Positive comments offer opportunities for more online community engagement whereas negative comments raise the alarms associated with reputational risk. My theory extends OLT by looking at data acquisition from a social media perspective and emphasises that organisations are scanning social media platforms in search of: (1) what other competitors are doing when it comes to online community engagement, (2) how are they dealing with risk to reputation, (3) the need for providing the online community with an OmniChannel experience, (4) managing content quality, (5) dealing with the online community and organisation power dynamic, and (6) overcoming social media failures.

This scanning provides the organisation with a set of actions and possible outcomes influenced by environmental conditions. OLT offers benchmarking as one of the learning processes organisations

can follow during data acquisition. My theory supports this with *benchmarking* as one of the preferred learning processes to use when scanning competitor sites.

My theory extends OLT by providing details of what constitutes *benchmarking*: (1) a *benchmarking* exercise includes both local and international competitors; (2) an idea of what close competitors are doing; (3) the evaluation criteria by which to assess what competitors are doing better can be leveraged to the benefit of an organisation, and (4) a search for new innovations in the *social media landscape*, and to find ways to incorporate these into the organisation's social media offering.

OLT states that actions and their possible outcomes are influenced by environmental factors. My theory supports and extends OLT from a social media perspective to include the major environmental categories that influence *collective storytelling*. These categories include: (1) *risk to reputation*, (2) *online community engagement*, (3) *social media landscape*, (4) *characteristics of social media for use*, (5) *interrelating content and social media within the organisation*, (6) *online community and organisation power dynamic*, (7) *content quality*, and (8) *OmniChannel*. An *OmniChannel* strategy provides the online community with a seamless online experience that integrates the physical with the information-rich online experience (Rigby, 2011; Brynjolfsson, Hu & Rahman, 2013).

The online community seeks a seamless integration of the physical and digital world, and those organisations that are successful in providing an *OmniChannel* experience for their online community will have a competitive advantage (Rigby, 2011). In the academic literature reviewed, *OmniChannel* as a concept is barely acknowledged by IS researchers (Hansen & Sia, 2015). The introduction of *OmniChannel* as a concept shows its relevance to the IS field from a social media perspective.

The second step in the OLT learning process is interpretation. During this step organisations are comparing the actual results with their expected results. Variations between actual and expected results call for reassessing the action and outcome scenario, and with adjustments to the action and outcome scenario being noted. My theory supports the reassessing phase in OLT where organisations using social media experience *social media use failures*. These social media use failures are subsequently assessed and adjustments noted.

The third step in OLT is for the organisation to adapt and implement the updated action and outcome scenario. Adaptation leads to the updating of the organisation's memory. The three steps in OLT works together as an iterative process to continually adapt to changes in environmental conditions (Argyris & Schon, 1978, 1996). Accordingly, my theory supports the third step in OLT, where adaptations to the organisational use of social media for engaging with the online community is made by, implementing appropriate *educational interventions* within the organisation to address *social media use failures*. My theory extends OLT by explicitly referring to the action taken as *educational interventions*. The *social media strategy* is formally updated to reflect the adaptations made in the organisational use of social media. The process associated with my theory is also iterative with a

feedback loop leading to a reduction in the *risk to reputation* and an improvement in *online community engagement*.

#### 5.4. Summary of chapter

This chapter focused on theoretical integration where I related my theory to seven previously developed theories, namely: (1) media richness theory, (2) theory of para-social interaction, (3) uses and gratification theory, (4) reception theory, (5) social exchange theory, (6) media synchronicity theory, and (7) organisational learning theory. During the discussion, I revisited all the major categories associated with my theory, and provided supporting evidence for each category from an updated extant literature review. My discussion advances the current knowledge by adding and extending the understanding associated with these major themes found in social media research, and integrating these themes into a holistic explanatory framework linked to the use of social media for the co-creation of digital content. Table 10 presents the major categories associated with my theory and its supporting literature.

*Table 10: Major Categories associated with the Collective storytelling theory and supporting literature*

Major categories linked to the <u>Collective storytelling theory</u>	Supporting evidence from an updated extant literature review
<b>Risk to reputation</b>	Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Chen, 2010; Coombs, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Cox et al., 2008; Culnan et al., 2010; Fan & Gordon, 2014; Fuchs-kittowski et al., 2009; Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008, 2010; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011; Kuikka et al., 2011; McCarthy et al., 2014; Trainor et al., 2014; Vargo et al., 2008
<b>Online community engagement</b>	Andriole, 2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Brodie et al., 2013; Coombs, 2014; Culnan et al., 2010; Fan & Gordon, 2014; Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008, 2010; Hoffman & Fodor, 2010; Kietzmann et al., 2011; McCarthy et al., 2014; Mitic & Kapoulas, 2012; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015; Pagani & Mirabello, 2011; Sashi, 2012; Trainor et al., 2014; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014; Zhang et al., 2017
<b>Interrelating content and social media within the organisation</b>	Chung et al., 2017; Fuchs-kittowski et al., 2009; Kuikka et al., 2011; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015
<b>Social media landscape</b>	Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2012; Tang et al., 2012; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014
<b>Characteristics of social media for use</b>	Aladwani, 2014; Jansen et al., 2009; Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011; Zhang et al., 2017

Major categories linked to the <u>Collective storytelling theory</u>	Supporting evidence from an updated extant literature review
<b>Collective storytelling (The theories, models and literature refer to engagement and hint at storytelling but my theory explicitly refers to this engagement as <u>Collective storytelling</u>)</b>	Andreu et al., 2010; Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Desautels, 2011; Fisher & Smith, 2011; Kietzmann et al., 2011; McCarthy et al., 2014; Normann & Ramirez, 1994; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015; Trainor et al., 2014
<b>OmniChannel</b>	Brynjolfsson et al., 2013; Hansen & Sia, 2015; Rigby, 2011
<b>Online community and organisation power dynamic</b>	Fisher & Smith, 2011; Li & Bernoff, 2008; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015; Parameswaran & Whinston, 2007b
<b>Content quality</b>	Ahuja & Medury, 2010; Agarwal & Yiliyasi, 2010; Saji, Chauhan & Pillai, 2013; Mayeh et al., 2012; McKinney Jr et al., 2010; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015; Pike et al., 2013; Saldanha & Krishnan, 2012; Yuan et al., 2014
<b>Experiencing social media use failures</b>	Argenti et al., 2005; Coombs, 2014; Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith, 2008, 2010; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015
<b>Education interventions</b>	Chung et al., 2017; Kuikka et al., 2011; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2015
<b>A supportive social media strategy</b>	Akar & Topçu, 2011; Argenti et al., 2005; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Panagiotopoulos et al., 2012; Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014

# Chapter 6 - Conclusion

## 6.1. Introduction

The final chapter starts off by presenting the reasons why the research study was conducted and discusses the research methods applied during the study. Section 3 goes on to discuss the contributions made by this research study to the field of IS. Sections 4 and 5 respectively elaborate on limitations linked to the research study and opportunities for future research. Section 6 evaluates the theoretical contribution made by the research study, and section 7 closes off this chapter by providing final reflections on the important contributions IS researchers can make when conducting research on the social media phenomenon.

## 6.2. The research focus and research methods applied

To date, the orientation of social media within an organisation has not received sufficient research attention. When looking at the use of social media within an organisation there is a double-edged sword that both benefits and harms an organisation. Research that examines and addresses both the positive and negative effects of the organisational adoption and use of social media is therefore needed. Such research studies will facilitate the healthy organisational growth of social media use in years to come (Ngai et al., 2015). My research question was: “*How do organisations use social media when engaging with their online community?*” My research study answers this question by introducing the *collective storytelling* theory as a theoretical framework for explaining the use of social media within an organisational context when engaging with an online community. The *collective storytelling* theory provides an explanation of how to reduce *risk to reputation* and improve *online community engagement* through a *collective storytelling* process where the organisation and its online community engage through the use of social media to co-create digital content.

The theory was developed using grounded theory methodology, and data was collected from case studies. The case selection for my research study followed the principle of theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Based on this principle, I selected two cases, one being a prominent retailer based in South Africa with expansions into Africa and Australia, and the other being a leading South African university. Data collection, coding and analysis were executed iteratively (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Semi-structured interviews, documentation reviews, observations, organisational videos, field notes, member-checking documents and online media obtained from the organisation’s official social media platforms were used to collect the research data. The duration of interviews was between 45 minutes and an hour. Corroboration was used to relate data across varying data collection methods (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Pettigrew, 1990; Urquhart, 2013; Vaast & Walsham, 2013; Yin, 2014).

Constant comparison played a central role during my analysis with the aim of achieving construct and relationship validity, leading to the internal validity of my research study and ultimately an empirically valid theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lehmann, 2012; Urquhart, 2013; Urquhart et al., 2010). The coding procedures set out by Strauss and Corbin (1998, 2008), focusing on open, axial and selective coding were used. The coding procedures were enhanced by incorporating the guidelines provided by Seidel and Urquhart (2013) on how best to use the Strauss and Corbin coding procedures in the IS discipline. My approach to axial coding was intended to enhance my theoretical sensitivity when it came to documenting causal relationships. As a researcher, I strived towards true emergence and to minimise any ‘forcing’ of the data. Diagrams were used to visually present the emerging relationships between concepts, sub-categories and categories (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Fernandez & Lehmann, 2011; Glaser, 1978; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Urquhart, 2007; Urquhart, 2013). In addition, I used memos to capture my thoughts on my progression through my research study and used theoretical memos to support the theory building process (Birks et al., 2013; Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Urquhart, 2013). During my analysis, theoretical saturation became evident in my 13th and 14th data slice when no new concepts emerged during open coding, with existing concepts and relationships being repeated. *Collective storytelling* was identified as the core category.

### 6.3. Contributions made by the research study to the IS field

The contributions made by a research study could be: (1) theoretical, (2) methodological, or (3) practical. These are discussed below.

#### 6.3.1. Theoretical contributions

The goal of my research study was to develop a holistic theoretical framework, well-grounded in the empirical data that best explains the use of social media within an organisational context when engaging with their online community. The outcome of the research study was the *collective storytelling* theory, which presents an IS theory of explanation and prediction (EP) (Gregor, 2006; Seidel & Urquhart, 2013; Urquhart et al., 2010). The *collective storytelling* theory explains why organisations use social media; what causal and contextual conditions influence social media use; the challenges associated with social media use; how to address these challenges to improve social media use and the importance of a supportive social media strategy. My theory also elucidates the process associated with social media use within an organisational context for engagement with the online community.

The *collective storytelling* theory was compared with the media richness theory, the theory of para-social interaction, uses and gratification theory, reception theory, social exchange theory, media synchronicity theory, and organisational learning theory. What is clear from the comparisons is that although these theories refer to engagement, they merely hint at storytelling. My theory is explicit in referring to this engagement as being *collective storytelling* and goes further to contextualise *collective*

*storytelling*. My theory also provides a process that discusses the use of social media to co-create digital content. These other theories mentioned here do not. As shown in chapter 5, these theories describe only single aspects of social media use, but do not provide a holistic framework on social media use within an organisational context. My theory pulls together these singular aspects of social media use into a holistic framework that presents the use of social media within an organisational context. Apart from the organisational learning theory, the other theories contain no explicit feedback loops to address failures or improve communication. My theory is explicit in explaining how feedback assists in addressing social media use failures, and facilitates the ongoing improvement of the communication process between an organisation and its online community. My theory also introduces *OmniChannel* as a concept that is both important and relevant to social media research.

### 6.3.2. Practical contributions

The *collective storytelling* theory is a holistic explanatory framework from which a number of practical suggestions can be derived on how best to approach the use of social media platforms within an organisational context when engaging with an online community. The practical suggestions discussed below, are also intended to help organisations build a more successful social media presence and improve their online relationship with their online community. These suggestions are as follows:

#### 6.3.2.1. *Choosing the best social media platform for communication*

Organisations should align the type of message they want to communicate with the most appropriate social media platform. The more complex and ambiguous a message is, the richer the medium needed to communicate the message. Information shared on social media is more contextually rich when it contains descriptive text, videos and pictures, as opposed to a post containing only text, a picture or a video. Facebook is seen as being a more contextually-rich communication medium, allowing for posts that contain descriptive text, videos and pictures. Twitter is seen as not being as contextually rich as Facebook because of the limits placed on the amount of information the social media platform allows for sharing. With Instagram and Pinterest, on the other hand, the focus is on sharing photos with minimal text, which makes these social media platforms less contextually rich. Accordingly, organisations are advised to choose the social media platform that will best deliver the desired communication outcome.

#### 6.3.2.2. *Content quality*

When it comes to delivering high content quality, the following suggestions are proffered: (1) it is important to have a dedicated content team that is responsible for creating high quality digital content, that is both engaging and that the online community will respond to, (2) social tactics such as content mixing, where both campaign and non-campaign content is used in an online post, encourages engagement, (3) the sharing of feel good stories is always popular, (4) enrich posts by including text, pictures and videos, (5) formal planning sessions should be held with all stakeholders on a social media

campaign where *content quality* is checked and signed-off, essentially having an approval process in place to approve the content before it is released on social media, (6) use of crowdsourcing to find interesting topics the online community wants to engage on, (7) the close link between the organisation's website and social media makes it important to share well-written content on both communication mediums, and (8) tailoring content to the different channels and regular content updates will facilitate online engagement and the building of online relationships.

#### *6.3.2.3. Power dynamic*

The power dynamic between the organisation and the online community is a reality. Organisations need to understand that the online community controls their online engagement sessions. The online community decides which conversations are relevant and important. Social media also provides a platform for the online community to voice their dissatisfaction with organisations and their products. Voicing dissatisfaction can have a negative impact on the organisation's reputation. Being respectful during online engagement and proactively working at resolving issues will help organisations manage this power dynamic and protect their reputations. Suggestions for organisations on dealing with this power dynamic are: (1) never posting campaign information on products that customers have outstanding complaints about; addressing these complaints first before posting new campaign information; in this way the organisation is preventing a backlash from the online community, (2) first assessing any negative comments for validity, and then take a step back to see if more comments follow; if not, then there is no need to respond; if more comments do follow then plan an appropriate response; there is no need to respond to every single comment, (3) getting senior management to sign-off on posts that have serious implications for the brand, and (4) always be respectful when engaging with the online community.

#### *6.3.2.4. Relating content and social media within an organisation*

The successful organisational use of social media is also dependent on how effectively content and social media are related within an organisation. Organisations can facilitate this alignment process through: (1) the proactive interaction between digital natives and business stakeholders focused on driving awareness and changing perceptions of social media within the organisation, (2) increasing the levels of communication related to the use of social media, thus moving away from silos to an integrated organisation, (3) using a content schedule that integrates all organisational campaigns linked to social media, (4) having an approval process between social media and the organisation which facilitates alignment and integration, and (5) working together as a united front when things go wrong, sharing what needs to be posted as follow ups, which facilitates speaking with one voice.

#### *6.3.2.5. Education interventions*

Educating the organisation about social media use is important and has a number of benefits, namely: (1) the breaking down of departmental barriers, (2) driving awareness of social media within

the organisation, (3) managing social media use expectations, and (4) realising the organisational benefits (goals) of social media use; digital natives within organisations play a key role in disseminating and sharing their expert knowledge with the rest of the organisation.

#### *6.3.2.6. Social media strategy*

Organisations should have a formal social media strategy that outlines the organisational strategic intent when it comes to the use of social media for engagement with their online community. It is a living document that should be updated regularly to accommodate environmental changes impacting the organisation and to address social media use failures. The strategy explains the do's and don'ts of social media use when engaging with one's online community. The strategy helps in achieving synergy and introduces a form of standardisation when using social media in a very dynamic organisational environment.

#### *6.3.2.7. Benchmarking*

Looking at what other organisations are doing with their social media presence is a good practical way of learning what social media tactics work best. To get the best from their benchmarking exercises, organisations should look at their competitors that are both locally and internationally located.

### 6.4. Research limitations

The role of the social media strategy is to act as a framework that supports social media use within the organisation and addresses failures in social media use. The strategy brings structure into a flexible social media environment and standardises the use of social media within the organisation. Within this research study the social media strategy had already been implemented, and was operational within both organisations. This research study therefore did not focus on the creation, approval and acceptance of the social media strategy.

The focus of the research study was on the organisational use of social media and looking at the organisation's perspective when it comes to the challenges linked to the power dynamics in the relationship between the organisation and the online community. Similarly, the research study focused on organisational *content quality* and detailed the organisation's perspective on *content quality* and how to address the organisational failures associated with *content quality*. The limitation identified here is that in both cases, the online community was not focused on explicitly. Future research could further enrich the discussion by including the online community to get their perspective on this relationship and the power dynamics involved, as well as their perspective on *content quality*.

The research study looked at the organisational use of social media when engaging with the online community and not on other business processes such as Supply Chain Management, Human Resources Management or Recruitment, where social media might be used. Also, excluded from the

study were employees who might use social media for information gathering or for internal employee communications.

This research study focused only on those social media platforms identified by organisation A and organisation B, and not on the plethora of social media platforms currently available in the *social media landscape*. The theory discusses the way in which social media platforms are being used collectively within the organisation for community engagement, and does not provide a detailed examination of the way in which each social media platform is being used individually. Furthermore, the theory discusses the characteristics of the social media platforms that organisations use to determine which platforms best suits a particular business campaign.

## 6.5. Future research opportunities

My *collective storytelling* theory details the way organisations use knowledge-sharing sessions to address the lack of knowledge within the organisation when it comes to the use of social media. The social media team also provides ongoing guidance and structured support to social media users within the organisation, who are experiencing challenges when using social media. The social media strategy documents how best to use social media within an organisational setting; how to recognise social media use failures and how to deal with them. Accordingly, a future research opportunity could be a longitudinal study to explore the success rates of *education interventions* within the organisation, looking at what works, and what doesn't work, and suggesting solutions on how to improve on the *education interventions*. Increasing the success rates will facilitate organisations achieving their strategic goals of successfully using social media as an engagement tool when engaging with their online community. This research opportunity could also help identify which types of *education interventions* work best.

The size of organisations might influence the reasons why organisations decide to use social media and how these organisations end up using their social media platforms. A possible future research opportunity is to explore social media use in smaller organisations that might be more agile<sup>30</sup> and how this agility influences social media use.

*OmniChannel* as a concept is relatively new to IS academic research. My research study discusses in detail the importance and relevance of *OmniChannel* to social media research. The research also highlights that being able to provide the online community with a successful *OmniChannel* experience is very difficult. This challenge thus provides an opportunity for future research in exploring and mapping out the entire *OmniChannel* strategy linked to social media use within an organisational context, identifying both the benefits and the challenges, as well as solutions to these challenges.

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<sup>30</sup> An agile organisation is one that responds quickly to changes in its marketplace or business environment

The research study did not explicitly focus on organisational culture and the role it could play in social media use. A possible future research opportunity could be to explore organisational culture and its possible impacts on social media use.

## 6.6. Evaluating theory contribution

I followed a three-pronged approach in evaluating the contribution made by the research study and my *collective storytelling* theory. Firstly, chapter 5 is a detailed discussion of my theory as it relates to other theories in the field that are applicable for social media researchers conducting social media research. This discussion emphasises the way in which my theory confirms, extends and contradicts current theories, showing its theoretical and practical relevance for both academic researchers and practitioners. In the following section, I will use the criteria espoused by Urquhart et al. (2010) to evaluate my approach to the grounded theory method I followed in my research study, in order to assess its methodological correctness. Finally, for completeness, I evaluate the theoretical contribution made by my *collective storytelling* theory against Whetten’s (1989) criteria of what would constitute a theoretical contribution. There is some overlap across the sections, but this is relevant and emphasises the completeness of the research study.

### 6.6.1. Guidelines to evaluate the researcher’s approach to an IS grounded theory study

Urquhart et al. (2010) provide a set of guidelines for IS researchers to follow when conducting grounded theory studies. These guidelines can also be used to evaluate the quality of grounded theory studies conducted in IS. Accordingly, research studies that clearly incorporates these five guidelines represent a quality grounded theory study (Urquhart et al., 2010). In Table 11 I examine and discuss each guideline in relation to my grounded theory study, doing a detailed self-assessment and explaining how I took each guideline into account.

Table 11: The guidelines given by Urquhart et al. (2010) to evaluate my grounded theory study

Guideline	Description	Related steps followed in my grounded theory (GT) study
<b>1.Constant comparison</b>	“Constant comparison is the process of constantly comparing instances of data labelled as a particular category with other instances of data in the same category. Constant comparison contributes to the development of theory by exposing the analytic properties of the codes and categories to rigorous scrutiny. This guideline for data analysis encourages researchers to be both rigorous and theoretical (Charmaz, 2006)” (Urquhart et al., 2010, p. 369).	Constant comparison played a central role during my analysis with the aim of achieving construct and relationship validity, leading to the internal validity of my research and ultimately an empirically valid theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lehmann, 2012; Urquhart, 2013; Urquhart et al., 2010)  With each new data slice, I coded and compared the data collected with those concepts and categories previously coded and stored in Atlas.ti.

Guideline	Description	Related steps followed in my grounded theory (GT) study
		<p>Selected quotations from each data slice played an integral role in underpinning and validating my emerging concepts, categories and relationships.</p> <p>The constant comparison process underpins a close fit between the emerging theory and my case data with the result being an empirically valid theory.</p> <p>In my study, the emerging theory that resulted from the analysis done in organisation A was compared with the emerging results from analysing organisation B to search for cross-case patterns, working towards improving the validity and trustworthiness of my emerging theory (Fernandez &amp; Lehmann, 2011; Lehmann, 2012).</p> <p>Member checking documents were coded to help further elaborate on emerging categories (Charmaz, 2006, 2014), and the quotations have been included to further help illustrate and support the theory building process (Strauss &amp; Corbin, 2008; Charmaz, 2006, 2014).</p>
<p><b>2. Interactive conceptualisation</b></p>	<p><i>“Researchers should increase the level of abstraction and relate categories to each other through a process of iterative conceptualisation”</i> (Urquhart et al., 2010, p. 369). In grounded theory, this is done using various coding procedures. <i>“The relationships between categories can be of many different types, not just causal”</i> (Urquhart et al., 2010, p. 369). Axial coding and the use of a coding paradigm contribute to an understanding of the relationships between the concepts of a theory. Theoretical memos are also important to the development of the theory and the process of iterative conceptualisation (Urquhart et al., 2010, p. 369).</p>	<p>The coding paradigm is not mandatory anymore (Strauss &amp; Corbin, 2008) and its use has been labelled as ‘forcing’ conceptualisations onto research data. To address the ‘forcing’ issue Seidel and Urquhart (2013) advise researchers to rather think of the coding paradigm as an analytic and sensitising device that is not to be dogmatically applied as a rigid coding device.</p> <p>The appropriateness of using the coding paradigm within my research study was because it provided an additional analytic tool to <i>“enrich the analysis”</i> (Strauss &amp; Corbin, 2008, p. 90) and to elucidate the process within the research study linked to my <i>collective storytelling</i> theory. Its use is supported by the guidelines: (1) Theoretical sensitivity</p>

Guideline	Description	Related steps followed in my grounded theory (GT) study
		<p>towards causality, (2) Contextualisation, (3) Flexibly using axial coding, and (4) Awareness of ‘forcing’ during the coding procedures (Seidel &amp; Urquhart, 2013).</p> <p>The coding paradigm was used alongside theoretical memos (Seidel &amp; Urquhart, 2013), with the intention being on enhancing the process of relating categories; working towards my ‘own coding paradigm’ as suggested by Kelle (2007).</p> <p>My flexible approach to axial coding was intended to enhance my theoretical sensitivity when it came to documenting causal relationships, striving towards true emergence and minimising ‘forcing’ of the data (Seidel &amp; Urquhart, 2013).</p> <p>I used theoretical memos to theorise about my categories, with the intention being on understanding and documenting the relationships amongst the categories, working towards building the emerging theory (Urquhart, 2013)</p> <p>Integrative diagrams were also used in my research study to visually present the emerging relationships between concepts, sub-categories and categories (Strauss &amp; Corbin, 2008; Fernandez &amp; Lehmann, 2011; Glaser, 1978; Miles &amp; Huberman, 1994; Urquhart, 2007; Urquhart, 2013)</p>
<p><b>3.Theoretical sampling</b></p>	<p><i>“This guideline stresses the importance of deciding, on analytic grounds, where to sample from next in the study. Theoretical sampling helps to ensure the comprehensive nature of the theory, and ensures that the developing theory is truly grounded in the data”</i> (Urquhart et al., 2010, p. 369).</p>	<p>For case selection in my research study I followed the principle of theoretical sampling (Glaser &amp; Strauss, 1967). Cases were selected based on their theoretical relevance and purpose (Fernandez &amp; Lehmann, 2011; Lehmann, 2012; Urquhart, 2013).</p> <p>Theoretical sampling focused on the same or a similar group, where similar data filled out the categories and dissimilar data helped in understanding the <i>“fundamental differences under which category and hypotheses vary”</i> (Urquhart, 2013, p. 65).</p>

Guideline	Description	Related steps followed in my grounded theory (GT) study
		<p>The selection criteria used to select relevant cases for my research study were those organisations with a dedicated social media team responsible for the use of social media for engagement with their online community.</p> <p>I used purposive sampling (Marshall, 1996) for the first interview to kick start my research study. For subsequent cycles I followed the principle of theoretical sampling where data collection was based on concepts/themes derived from the data (Glaser &amp; Strauss, 1967; Strauss &amp; Corbin, 2008)</p> <p>Supporting information is included in Table 4, presenting the theoretical sampling approach followed during my research study.</p>
<p><b>4. Scaling up</b></p>	<p><i>“A researcher might counter what is said to be a common problem in grounded theory, namely: the production of a low-level theory, which is then hard to relate to the broader literature. Scaling up is the process of grouping higher-level categories into broader themes. Scaling up contributes to the generalisability of the theory”</i> (Urquhart et al., 2010, p. 369).</p>	<p>Within the body of the thesis I explicitly discuss the process of grouping concepts into major categories that are more abstract and then relating these categories (Urquhart et al., 2010).</p> <p><b>Analytical tools used to elucidate the scaling up process:</b> The artefacts listed below started out simple and grew in complexity and abstraction as the research study evolved. They are also supported by excerpts obtained from the empirical data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrative diagrams</li> <li>• Relationships</li> <li>• Propositions</li> <li>• Evolving Storyline</li> </ul> <p><i>Collective storytelling</i> emerged as the major theme (core category) with the most explanatory power in conveying what the research is about. Moreover, all the other major categories are related to it.</p>
<p><b>5. Theoretical integration</b></p>	<p><i>“This guideline helps the researcher deal with what we think is an obligation of the grounded theorist – theoretical integration. Theoretical integration</i></p>	<p>Chapter 5 is a detailed discussion on theoretical integration where I relate my <i>collective storytelling</i> theory to seven</p>

Guideline	Description	Related steps followed in my grounded theory (GT) study
	<p><i>means relating the theory to other theories in the same or similar fields. It is the process of comparing the substantive theory generated with other, previously developed, theories. This principle contributes to theoretical integration in the discipline and could help in the generation of formal theories” (Urquhart et al., 2010, p. 369).</i></p>	<p>previously developed theories, namely: (1) media richness theory, (2) theory of para-social interaction, (3) uses and gratification theory, (4) social exchange theory, (5) media synchronicity theory, (6) organisational learning theory, and (7) reception theory. In addition, an updated literature review was conducted with the focus on providing supporting evidence for each major category linked to the <i>collective storytelling</i> theory.</p> <p>The discussion elucidates how the <i>collective storytelling</i> theory confirms, contradicts and extends the existing theories. The contribution made by the discussion is in extending the understanding of those major themes found in the current discourse related to social media research, and integrating these themes into a holistic explanatory framework for discussing the organisational use of social media for the co-creation of digital content when engaging with an online community.</p> <p>Supporting information in Table 10 presents the major categories related to the <i>collective storytelling</i> theory and the supporting extant literature.</p>

## 6.6.2. Whetten’s (1989) paper titled “What constitutes a theoretical contribution?”

Whetten (1989) discusses what factors are considered when judging conceptual papers. In closing I discuss these factors as it relates to my research study.

### 6.6.2.1. *What’s new? Does the paper make a significant, value-added contribution to current thinking?*

Researchers start on their journey of inquiry when they are perplexed by unanswered questions linked to the what, how and why of a particular phenomenon. This journey of discovery is to answer these questions. The current academic discourse highlights that the organisational use of social media has not received sufficient research attention and more research is needed to further unpack and explain the process followed by organisations when using social media (Ngai et al., 2015). My research was focused on adding to the current discourse using the GTM to develop a new theory that better explains the organisational use of social media (Urquhart et al., 2010). The outcome of the research study was a new theory termed the *collective storytelling* theory, which presents a holistic explanation that weaves

together major themes currently being discussed within social media research linked to the organisational use of social media for *online community engagement*.

This new IS theory of explanation and prediction (EP) provides researchers studying the social media domain with a better explanation on the organisational use of social media for engagement with their online community (Gregor, 2006; Seidel & Urquhart, 2013; Urquhart et al., 2010). This research contribution extends the knowledge on social media use within organisations by providing suggestions on how to reduce *risk to reputation* and improve *online community engagement* through a *collective storytelling* process, where the organisation and its online community engage through the use of social media to co-create digital content. The contributions made by this research study are discussed in section 6.3. (Contributions made by the research study to the IS field).

#### *6.6.2.2. So what? Will the theory likely change the practice of organisational science in this area?*

The value-added contribution made by the *collective storytelling* theory is as a theoretical framework that explains the organisational use of social media for *online community engagement*. Authors that provide compelling and logical justifications for altering our view of existing knowledge assist in pushing back the boundaries of our knowledge (Whetten, 1989). Chapter 5 details the comparison made between the *collective storytelling* theory and seven existing theories in the field applicable to research studies focusing on the organisational use of social media. In the discussion, I elucidate how my theory confirms, contradicts and extends these seven existing theories, where the contradictions with and extensions to existing theories advances the view of current knowledge linked to theory development and the IS phenomenon being studied.

Whetten (1989) goes on to say that authors who critique existing theories in multiple ways add a level of completeness and thoroughness to their research work. Included with the critique is to offer remedies and alternatives. Novel theoretical insights come from proposed conceptualisations that changes our understanding of phenomena (Poincare, 1952). In chapter 5, I discussed in detail the comparisons made between my *collective storytelling* theory and seven current theories relevant to social media research. Several confirmations, contradictions and extensions were identified and subsequently discussed in detail. For the shortcomings identified in existing theories linked to explaining social media use within organisations, I offer extensions that are proposed remedies for these limitations. The *collective storytelling* theory is therefore a re-conceptualisation of existing theories, providing a fresh perspective on the organisational use of social media, addressing the deficiencies in existing theories and extending the understanding of the social media phenomenon.

#### *6.6.2.3. Why so? Are the underlying logic and supporting evidence compelling?*

I employed the Straussian GTM (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008) in my research study. For a holistic approach to my grounded theory study I extensively referenced exemplars in the academic literature from seasoned academics in IS and the GTM (e.g. Eisenhardt, 1989; Fernandez & Lehmann,

2011; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lehmann, 2012; Matavire & Brown, 2013; Orlikowski, 1993; Seidel & Urquhart, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998, 2008; Urquhart, 2001, 2007, 2013; Urquhart & Fernandez, 2006, 2013; Urquhart et al., 2010) to guide my research study.

Whetten (1989) states that it is best to start off including a wide range of factors (concepts, variables and constructs) and over time to reduce these factors to those that logically fit one's explanation of the phenomenon being studied. The selection criteria used to reduce these factors are: (1) to create a comprehensive explanation, and (2) that the resulting explanation should be parsimonious in nature. My grounded theory study followed the guidelines of: (1) constant comparison, (2) iterative conceptualisation, (3) theoretical sampling, (4) scaling up, and (5) theoretical integration (Urquhart et al., 2010). In addition, through the scaling up process, *collective storytelling* emerged as the major theme with all other major categories being related to it.

The factors identified by the researcher need to be related to one another. The process of connecting factors that emerged from this research study, enabled the researcher to add order to the conceptualisation and to demonstrate causality. Visually representing these relationships between factors clarifies the researcher's thinking and helps to increase the reader's comprehension (Whetten, 1989). I used integrative diagrams to visually present the emerging relationships between concepts, sub-categories and categories. These were constructed systematically, growing in complexity and abstraction as the research study evolved. The coding paradigm was also used as an additional analytic and sensitising device to elucidate the process within the research study. To address the 'forcing' issue associated with the coding paradigm (Seidel & Urquhart, 2013), I incorporated theoretical memos as suggested by Seidel and Urquhart (2013), with the intention being on enhancing the process of relating categories; working towards my 'own coding paradigm' (Kelle, 2007). Axial coding was applied flexibly to enhance my theoretical sensitivity when documenting causal relationships (Seidel & Urquhart, 2013). Theoretical memos were used to document the relationships between the categories, working towards building the emerging theory (Urquhart, 2013).

Providing propositions that are researchable are useful, when the purpose of the research study is to present a new theoretical position and/or call into question the fundamental structure of existing theory (Whetten, 1989). In chapter 4, I explicitly detailed the process of selecting *collective storytelling* as the core category within my research study and I systematically related all other major categories to it. The theory building process is systematically documented, reflecting the emerging propositions and the emerging storyline associated with the final theory presented in section 4.4.5. Understanding the context places limits on propositions and sets the boundaries of generalisability. By acknowledging where and when things happen, we understand what is going on (Gergen, 2012; Whetten, 1989). In section 6.4, I highlighted the limitations linked to the research study and the emergent theory. By comparing the emergent theory with other existing theories in literature (chapter 5) the researcher is

highlighting analytic generalisability of the emergent theory. This exercise also helps set the boundaries of generalisability linked to the *collective storytelling* theory (Urquhart, 2013).

#### 6.6.2.4. *Well done? Does the paper reflect seasoned thinking, conveying completeness and thoroughness?*

Grounded theory studies focused on generating theory are only complete when the researcher has compared the emergent theory with existing theories in the field through a process of theoretical integration (Urquhart et al., 2010; Urquhart, 2013). In chapter 5, I compared the *collective storytelling* theory to seven existing theories in the field and explained how my theory confirms, contradicts and extends these existing theories. I also provide the ways in which the limitations identified in these theories associated with the organisational use of social media can be overcome to improve the way in which the phenomenon is explained.

Has the author requested peer input into conducting the research study and developing the answer to the research question “*How do organisations use social media when engaging with their online community?*” (Whetten, 1989). Throughout my research study I was supported by my supervisor, Professor Irwin Brown, a seasoned IS academic with extensive research and supervisory experience and publications in grounded theory studies and the grounded theory method. I am also grateful to have had the opportunity to attend the Australasian Conference on Information Systems (ACIS) 2014 Doctoral Consortium, where I met the well-respected, Professor Cathy Urquhart, a prominent IS academic with a significant number of grounded theory study publications. These publications include academic journal articles aimed at novice IS researchers to help improve the use and application of the GTM in IS research studies. At the consortium, I presented my research study to Professor Urquhart, Professor Robert Kauffman and other PhD students. Throughout the consortium, I also chatted to other attending academics about my research study and asked for advice on improving my research study. The feedback received was invaluable in assisting me to improve my research approach and the overall focus of my research study.

A research-in-progress paper based on my evolving research study titled “*Social media marketing strategy in organisations: A South African case study*” was presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> AIS GlobDev Workshop in 2014. The feedback from the reviewers and other attending academics was very insightful with the learnings being incorporated into my research study. A second research paper from my research study titled “*Effecting social transformation in African societies through the use of social media*” was presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> African Conference on Information Systems & Technology (ACIST) 2017. Additionally, in 2017, I had the privilege of being a reviewer for papers submitted to both ACIST and ICIS. My review included papers with a social media theme.

Professor Ojelanki Ngwenyama is a visiting professor at my university and each year takes PhD students through two programmes: (1) The Philosophy of Science, and (2) Data analysis and Theory

development. These engagement opportunities with Professor Ngwenyama were very helpful to me and other novice PhD students, equipping us with the academic tools we needed to conduct our research studies. Whenever the opportunity arose I had sessions with academics in the IS department at my attending university. These contact sessions included visiting academics as well, in order to obtain a fresh and different perspective on my research study and how I could improve it.

Striving for completeness I used multiple data collection methods in the form of semi-structured interviews, documentation reviews, observations, organisational videos, field notes, member-checking documents and online media obtained from the organisation's official social media platforms. Corroboration was used to relate data across varying data collection methods (Urquhart, 2013; Vaast & Walsham, 2013). For thoroughness and to confirm the accuracy of the research results that formed the basis of my emergent theory I further conducted member-checking exercises with research respondents (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2009). To ensure completeness, I continued with constant comparison and theoretical sampling until theoretical saturation became evident in my 13th and 14th data slice when no new concepts emerged during open coding, and existing concepts and relationships were repeated. To provide a holistic answer to the research question "*How do organisations use social media when engaging with their online community?*" I mapped out the process (chapter 4) associated with the organisational use of social media to co-create digital content with their online community. To address the 'forcing' issue associated with the coding paradigm I used it as an additional analytic and sensitising device that would enrich my analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 2008; Seidel & Urquhart, 2013). Throughout the research study I kept the notion of reflexivity central to my thought processes, being reflexive on how the research study developed and my role as researcher within it (Klein & Myers, 1999; Schwandt, 1997; Urquhart 2013).

#### *6.6.2.5. Done well? Is the paper well written? Does it flow logically?*

The chapters included in this thesis have a logical flow, namely: Abstract, Introduction, Non-committal literature review (proposing a conceptual framework as an initial research guide), Research methodology, Coding (open, axial, coding for process and selective coding – working towards building the final theory), Theoretical integration, Conclusion, References and Appendix. I used the Appendix section to display all the supporting documentation linked to the research study. Throughout the research study, I clearly state the operational procedures followed during the research study, highlighting that these procedures are repeatable as well as my reflections on performing them. In chapter 5, a second round of literature review based on the emergent theory was conducted with the intention of providing supporting evidence for each category and enriching the final theory (Urquhart & Fernandez, 2006, 2013; Urquhart, 2013). Evaluating the emergent theory against the guidelines provided by Urquhart et al., (2010) and Whetten (1989), and comparing my theory with seven existing theories in the field emphasises that the research approach followed was sound and that the thesis flows logically. A thesis that has a logical flow is generally well-written and its readability is improved.

#### *6.6.2.6. Why now? Is this topic of contemporary interest to scholars and likely to advance current discussions, stimulate new discussions or revitalise old discussions?*

Academic studies of social media are a relatively recent phenomenon, with researchers identifying that more research is needed in the organisational use of social media (Ngai et al., 2015). This research study answers the call for more research on the use of social media within an organisational context. With chapter 5 (Theoretical Integration) and sections 6.3 (Contributions made by the research study to the IS field) and 6.5 (Future research opportunities) the researcher is offering opportunities to stimulate new and advancing current academic discussions.

#### *6.6.2.7. Who cares? What percentage of academic readers is interested in this topic?*

Owing to its contemporary nature, social media research studies are increasing in popularity. In section 6.3 (Contributions made by the research study to the IS field), I documented that my theory is relevant both to organisations currently using social media, and to those considering the use of social media for *online community engagement*. For IS academics researching the social media phenomenon, my theory offers a better and more holistic explanation of social media use by organisations than current theories in the field.

### 6.7. Final reflection

Although research study on the social media phenomenon are increasing, there has only been limited research into providing a holistic explanation on the organisational use of social media. Such research will benefit organisations who are struggling with the use of social media within their organisational context. This makes conducting research into the organisational use of social media an important, compelling and interesting proposition for both IS academics and practitioners (Kane et al., 2012a; Ngai et al., 2015). As the number of IS researchers conducting research on the social media phenomenon increases, so too does the challenge to IS researchers to develop relevant and rigorous social media theories (Albert & Salam, 2013; Baskerville & Myers, 2002; Markus & Saunders, 2007; Urquhart & Vaast, 2012; Vaast & Walsham, 2013).

The IS discipline is perfectly situated to research and theorise about the social media phenomenon. IS researchers are unique in understanding the technical and social/ human dimensions of the dynamics related to social media. This uniqueness is underpinned by the many years spent investigating the challenges associated with ICTs and then theorising about these challenges (Orlikowski, 2007; Urquhart & Vaast, 2012; Vaast & Walsham, 2013). The GTM provides IS researchers with a theoretical toolset through which to build IS theories (Seidel & Urquhart, 2013; Urquhart, 2013; Urquhart & Fernandez, 2006, 2013; Urquhart, Lehmann & Myers, 2010). This theorisation by IS researchers about the social media phenomenon will have a positive impact on the relevance of the IS discipline to practitioners, and will facilitate the healthy organisational growth of social media use for years to come (Straub & Ang, 2011, Ngai et al., 2015). In this vein, my grounded

theory study contributes to the current discourse and extends the knowledge on social media use within organisations. My *collective storytelling* theory is a holistic theoretical framework that provides a better explanation than is currently found in the social media literature on the organisational use of social media (Urquhart et al., 2010).

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## Appendix

### A.1. Definitions of the building blocks linked to theory development

Building blocks of theory	Definitions
<b>Concepts</b>	Words that stand for ideas contained in data. Concepts are interpretations, the products of analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 2008)
<b>Categories</b>	Higher-level concepts under which analysts will group lower-level concepts together. Categories, also referred to as <i>themes</i> , present relevant phenomena and enable the analyst to reduce and combine data (Strauss & Corbin, 2008)
<b>Sub-categories</b>	Concepts linked to the category that give it further clarification and specification (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)
<b>Relationships</b>	Suggested statements on how concepts could possibly be related to each other (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Relationships are grounded in the <i>what</i> and <i>how</i> (description) of the theory development process (Whetton, 1989)
<b>Propositions</b>	Denotes the <i>nature</i> of the relationships between concepts. As the research evolves (through constant comparison and theoretical sampling) the suggested relationships are refined and corroborated against empirical data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Propositions are conceptual relationships that are <i>testable</i> and are grounded in the <i>what</i> and <i>how</i> (description) and <i>why</i> (explanation) of the theory development process (Whetton, 1989)

A.2. The interview schedule

## Planned Interview Schedule

### A. Demographic information

1. Please state your job title?
2. Could you please state your hierarchical level within the organisation?
3. How many years have you been working in the Digital Content and Social Media Industry?
4. How many years have you been working for the organisation?
5. Please explain your job responsibilities within the organisation?

### B. Interview questions

Social Media Platforms [Focused on Themes 1 <span style="color: purple;">■</span> and 3 <span style="color: yellow;">■</span> identified in Literature]
(1) How would you define Social Media platforms?
(2) Which Social Media platforms (including Social Media Reporting tools) does the organisation use?
(3) Why has the organisation decided to use Social Media platforms (including Social Media Reporting tools)?
(4) What process do you follow when using the Social Media platforms? Please explain
(5) What are the business outcomes [benefits/challenges] of using Social Media platforms?
(6) How are challenges overcome?

Digital Content and Social Media Relationship [Focused on Theme 2 <span style="color: green;">■</span> identified in Literature]
(7) Can you please explain the relationship between Digital Content and Social Media?
(8) How does this relationship influence the use of Social Media platforms?
(9) Are there any challenges in this relationship? Please explain
(10) How are challenges overcome?

Social Media Strategy [Focused on Theme 4 <span style="color: pink;">■</span> identified in Literature]
(11) Please explain the organisation's Social Media strategy (SMS)?
(12) Is the SMS seen as formalised policies and procedures and having a top-down approach [OR] as dynamic with adaptable policies and procedures to accommodate unpredictable changes in the business operating environment? Please explain
(13) How does the SMS support the use of Social Media platforms?
(14) Discuss any outcomes [benefits/challenges] resulting from having a SMS in support of Social Media platforms?
(15) How are challenges overcome?

A.3. Ethics approval Letter from the university

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN



**Faculty of Commerce**

**Ethics in Research Committee**

Courier: Room 2.26 Leslie Commerce Building Upper Campus University of Cape Town

Post: University of Cape Town • Private Bag • Rondebosch 7701

Email: Harold.Kincaid@uct.ac.za

Telephone: +27 21 650 5041

Fax No.: +27 21 650 4396

UCT/COM/306/2013

11th December 2013

Zane Davids  
University of Cape Town  
[DVDMOE005@myuct.ac.za](mailto:DVDMOE005@myuct.ac.za)

Dear Researcher,

Project title: **Organisational Framework for an Online Social Media Marketing Strategy**

This letter serves to confirm that the project entitled, “**Organisational Framework for an Online Social Media Marketing Strategy**” as described in your final submitted protocol 2013, has been approved contingent on the consent form being revised to inform the participant that participation is voluntary and that he or she can refuse to answer any question. You may proceed with the research.

Please note that if you make any substantial change in your research procedure that could affect the experiences of the participants, you must submit a revised protocol to the Committee for approval.

Best wishes for great success with your research.

Regards,

*Harold Kincaid*

Professor Harold Kincaid  
Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee

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“OUR MISSION is to be outstanding teaching and research university,  
educating for life and addressing the challenges facing our society.”

#### A.4. Letter requesting the organisation's participation in the research study

## **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR COMPANY**

Dear Organisation

I am a doctoral student in Information Systems at the University of Cape Town. The research I wish to conduct for my thesis is entitled: "An Organisational Framework for an Online Social Media Marketing Strategy". The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the role of an online social media marketing strategy in facilitating the organisational use of online social media technologies within marketing. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Irwin Brown (UCT, South Africa).

I am hereby kindly requesting your consent to carry out a case study within your organisation. The methodological approach will be to interview participants who would like to be part of the research study. A few questions regarding the company's social media marketing strategy would be posed to the research participants. The interviews will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes to complete. The nature of this type of research study is that follow up interviews may be required to verify and validate the research results. To improve the validity of the research results I would also like to include possible secondary data sources like observations and official or archival information.

The information obtained through the interviews and secondary data sources will be treated with the strictest confidence and the identity of the organisation and participants will be kept anonymous. The resulting framework will be reported at an aggregated level to further protect the identity of organisation and participants. Participation in this research is also completely voluntary. Participants could choose not to answer any question as well as to withdraw from the research at any time.

It is our hope that this information can be used to maximise the overall organisational effectiveness of an online social media marketing strategy by highlighting both the successes as well as challenges within the strategy. The research results will provide an opportunity to revisit the issues identified and put an action plan in place to address these challenges.

Upon completion of the study, an executive summary of the research findings will be provided to your company which could be added to the company's knowledge library and could add future business value when revisiting the company's strategy linked to the use of social media technologies in marketing. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on [dvdmoe005@myuct.ac.za](mailto:dvdmoe005@myuct.ac.za).

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. Your signature below indicates that you have read the above information, understand the nature of the study being planned and you give permission for the research to be conducted at the site, agreeing to participate in the study titled "An Organisational Framework for an Online Social Media Marketing Strategy".

Yours sincerely, Zane Davids

University of Cape Town

Supervisor Printed Name: Professor Irwin Brown

Company Representative (Print Name):

Date:

#### A.5. Letter requesting the participant's involvement within the research study

### **Participant permission request letter**

Dear research participant

I am a doctoral student in Information Systems at the University of Cape Town. The research I wish to conduct for my thesis is entitled: "An Organisational Framework for an Online Social Media Marketing Strategy". The purpose of this study is to describe and explain the role of an online social media marketing strategy in facilitating the organisational use of online social media technologies within marketing. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Professor Irwin Brown (UCT, South Africa).

I am hereby kindly requesting your participation in the case study currently being conducted within the organisation. Based on your convenience, a subsequent interview session will be arranged on receiving your willingness to participate in the research study. In the interview session, a few questions regarding the company's social media marketing strategy would be posed and the interview will take approximately 30 to 40 minutes to complete.

The information obtained through the interview will be treated with the strictest confidence and the identity of the participant will be kept anonymous. The resulting framework will be reported at an aggregated level to further protect the identity of all the participants. Participation in this research is also completely voluntary. Participants could choose not to answer any question as well as to withdraw from the research at any time. It is our hope that this information can be used to maximise the overall organisational effectiveness of an online social media marketing strategy by highlighting both the successes as well as challenges within the strategy. The research results will provide an opportunity to revisit the issues identified and put an action plan in place to address these challenges.

Upon completion of the study, an executive summary of the research findings will be provided to your company which could be added to the company's knowledge library and could add future business value when revisiting the company's strategy linked to the use of social media technologies in marketing. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on [dvdmoe005@myuct.ac.za](mailto:dvdmoe005@myuct.ac.za).

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. Your name below indicates that you have read the above information, understand the nature of the study being planned and you agree to participate in the study titled "An Organisational Framework for an Online Social Media Marketing Strategy".

Yours sincerely, Zane Davids

University of Cape Town

Participant Printed Name:

Date:

#### A.6. The project plan

<b>Task Number</b>	<b>Task Name</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>	<b>Duration</b>
<b>1</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Interview – collection, coding, analysis (Org A)	04/02/2014	19/02/2014	12 days
<b>2</b>	First conference – collection, coding, analysis (Org A)	20/02/2014	13/03/2014	16 days
<b>3</b>	First official document - collection, coding, analysis (Org A)	14/03/2014	31/03/2014	12 days
<b>4</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Interview – collection, coding, analysis (Org A)	05/05/2014	14/05/2014	8 days
<b>5</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Interview – collection, coding, analysis (Org A)	30/05/2014	11/06/2014	9 days
<b>6</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Interview – collection, coding, analysis (Org A)	19/06/2014	04/07/2014	12 days
<b>7</b>	Organisational video - collection, coding, analysis (Org A)	07/07/2014	11/07/2014	5 days
<b>8</b>	Second conference – collection, coding, analysis (Org A)	14/07/2014	23/07/2014	8 days
<b>9</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> Interview – collection, coding, analysis (Org B)	28/07/2014	08/08/2014	10 days
<b>10</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> Interview – collection, coding, analysis (Org B)	18/08/2014	28/08/2014	9 days
<b>11</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> Interview – collection, coding, analysis (Org B)	02/09/2014	17/09/2014	12 days
<b>12</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> Interview – collection, coding, analysis (Org B)	06/10/2014	16/10/2014	9 days
<b>13</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> interview – collection, coding, analysis (Org B)	05/11/2014	20/11/2014	12 days
<b>14</b>	Observation – benchmarking (Org B)	05/11/2014	05/11/2014	1 day
<b>15</b>	Second official document – collection, coding, analysis (Org B)	21/11/2014	02/12/2014	8 days