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Online reputation management at a HEI: Social media managers' views

A Mini-Dissertation

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Abstract

The role of social media managers in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) managing online reputation management has become a multifaceted and challenging profession in today’s contemporary world; this is due to technological advancements, virtual communities where information is easily created, accessible and shared openly and freely among these communities thus affecting an organisation’s reputation. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the University of Johannesburg’s (UJ’s) social media managers in faculties regarding their role in managing the online reputation of a HEI. The study further intended to explore if social media managers have clearly defined roles that are guided by the UJ social media policy and appropriate training to assist in executing their roles effectively and strategically when a crisis occurs. The literature discusses three key concepts namely online reputation management, social media and strategic communication. The population of this study was specialist staff members at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), appointed with the task of managing the social media of the university and/or faculties. This research made use of a census to investigate their perceptions regarding their role as social media managers. The census consisted of two staff members from the College of Business and Economics, seven marketing executives from UJ Faculties (who manage social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter) and the UJ social media manager. Data was collected by means of an interview schedule using semi-structured open-ended questions during face-to-face interviews. The semi-structured open-ended questions included the use of probes to elicit detailed information. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis by identifying common themes and differences. The research findings showed that although social media managers in faculties and departments are aware of their roles and responsibilities, a crises plan needed to be made available to all social media managers in faculties and departments of a HEI, should a crisis occur. The researcher recommends that social training should be compulsory to all faculty and department social media managers and that the social media policy needs to be simplified and shortened.

Key words

Online reputation management, social media, crises, strategic communication
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Chapter 1 Introduction and orientation

1.1 Background to the study

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in South Africa have been experiencing negative publicity due to various challenges, such as the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall campaigns (Mail & Guardian, 2015). In response to these campaigns, student protesters organised themselves, primarily using Twitter and other social media platforms to raise awareness, coordinate protests and launch petitions which is evidence of a digital revolution (IBM, 2011) confirming that the online reputational threat is highly influenced by the size of the stakeholder (in this case, student) network, social influence and its ability to create content that can go viral by the use of hashtags. According to Nyamnjoh (2016) these campaigns have forcefully asserted the importance of concrete transformation and decolonisation in South African universities.

The #FeesMustFall campaign particularly is an evident shift of power from brands to stakeholders, which has been enabled by the digital era. This power shift has had an enormous effect on how HEIs operate on a daily basis; for example, at UCT entrances to the university were barricaded with rocks, benches and dustbins and all lectures were suspended; staff as well as students were asked to refrain from coming onto campus (Mail & Guardian, 2015).

According to Beukes (2017) hashtag activism as a social practice is perceived as a product of African American culture and language from which the subculture ‘Black Twitter’ emerged. The #FeesMustFall campaign caused disruptions in South African universities’ operations, budgets, exam timetables and internal and external communication strategies, as well as lecture schedules. A Rhodes University student posted a comment
on their SRC Facebook page, saying “These events are unbelievably inconsiderate to so many people trying to study and do what they came to this university for. The fact that some people might now not be able to write exams or perform academically due to protest disruptions is extremely unfair” (Mail & Guardian, 2015).

Wright and Hinson (2009) define social media as text, images, audio or video created and shared online through social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Baruah (2012) and Dolle (2014) add that social media is an interactive online application allowing the creation and dissemination of user-generated content, as well as the creation of personal social networks. User-generated content cannot be controlled but can, however, be managed by employees who are employed to manage social media. Gillin and Gianforte (2012) state that companies need to create a social media policy, with clear rules that should be adhered to. Next to the rules, anyone who manages a branded social account should be trained on how to deal with a crisis situation, which would be a useful addition to Human Resource education programs (Gillin & Gianforte, 2012).

1.2 Statement of the problem

The digital era allows for information to be created easily, to be accessible and shared openly and freely among communities through user-generated content, thus enabling stakeholders to voice their frustrations and opinions online, consequently posing a reputational risk to brands. Consumers are now less passive, more informed, opinionated and responsive as regards their rights. According to Pagach and Warr (2009:5), reputational risk is the potential that negative publicity regarding an organisation’s practices, whether true or not, will cause a decline in the customer base, and could result in costly litigation or revenue reductions. A good or bad reputation results from an organisation’s online and offline interactions with its stakeholders, which emphasises the important role employees play in managing online reputation when crises occur without warning, such as the
FeesMustFall movement. Every employee needs thorough knowledge regarding as to his or her role in managing online reputation, how to communicate strategically, where to go for information and which channels to use in order to mitigate reputational risk and ultimately test the company’s strategy for possible weakness (Gillin & Gianforte, 2012). However, organisations are not always aware of the crucial role employees’ play in building and managing a brand’s online reputation, which indicates a possible gap in research. Organisations are forced to keep abreast and understand what social media entails, the power it has to destroy a brand’s reputation (through protests and negative sentiments) and its influence on public opinion; hence, stakeholders need to be continuously engaged on a more personal level (Overton-De Klerk & Verwey, 2013). What makes the situation more crucial is that social media managers, in the branding efforts of higher educational institutions, need to be more intelligent in their marketing and branding efforts because educational brands are used for long-term consumption purposes, as opposed to that of typical commercial ones (Abbas, 2014).

1.3 Rationale of the study

A crisis affecting a brand’s reputation can occur at any given moment, especially in the digital era where information is easily created and speedily shared with many. The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions of a Higher Education Institution (HEI), the University of Johannesburg’s (UJ’s) social media managers in faculties regarding their role in managing the online reputation of a HEI. The study further intends to explore if these social media managers have clearly defined roles that are guided by the UJ social media policy, and the appropriate training to execute their roles effectively and strategically when a crisis occurs. It is envisaged that the findings of the study can add to the body of strategic communication knowledge by providing information that can be used by the HEIs in South Africa and abroad that utilise social media to communicate with its stakeholders. It may also provide insight into whether social media managers at UJ are equipped to manage online reputation, if they have clearly defined roles, and if they
perceive their roles as imperative and in line with the UJ Social Media policy.

1.4 Research questions

The overarching research question that guides this study is:

What are the perceptions of the UJ social media managers within Faculties regarding their role in managing online reputation at UJ?

Research sub-questions:

1. How do faculty social media managers at UJ define online reputation?

2. How is online reputation managed by social media managers in faculties at UJ?

3. What is the role of a social media manager in an online context, according to faculty social media managers at UJ?

4. Are social media managers that manage social networks trained/equipped to manage online reputational risk in line with the UJ social Media policy?

The overarching research aim of this study is:

To determine what the perceptions of the UJ social media managers within Faculties are regarding their role in managing online reputation at UJ.

Based on the above research questions, the research objectives are:

1. To determine how faculty social media managers at UJ define online reputation.
2. To determine how online reputation is managed by social media managers in faculties at UJ.

3. To determine what the role of a social media manager is in an online context according to faculty social media managers at UJ.

4. To determine if social media managers that manage social networks are trained/equipped to manage online reputational risk in line with the UJ social Media policy.

1.5 Theoretical conceptualization

The worldview from which this study is approached is social constructivism, which explains the creation of meaning as being socially constructed through communication. A theory that forms part of this worldview is cocreational theory. This theory is relevant to this study, as it views stakeholders “as cocreators of meaning and communication as what makes it possible to agree to shared meanings, interpretations, and goals” (Botan, 2017:47). The discipline of strategic communication is the domain within which this study falls. Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Verčič and Sriramesh (2007) hold that “strategic communication is the study of how organisations use communication to fulfill their overall missions” (in Heide, von Platen, Simonsson & Falkheimer, 2018:452). Sense-making theory as a theory of the discipline of strategic communication is strongly supportive of the cocreational view and thus of the basic theory underpinning this study. Sense-making theory focuses on how stakeholders make sense of their environment and is one way by which reality is socially constructed and applicable to studies related to risk and crisis (Botan, 2017) As HEIs find themselves under pressure and at risk from student protests, sense-making theory is appropriate for this study. Furthermore, given this pressure and risk, the reputation of HEIs is also jeopardised and therefore reputation management as a component of strategic communication is a focus area of this study, with the emphasis on online reputation management. For organisations to use communication to fulfill their
overall missions, a ‘multitude of subprocesses is necessary between coworkers, managers, senior management and external stakeholders’ (Heide et al., 2018:463). This forms the theoretical basis of this study. Figure 1.1 outlines the key concepts being explored in this study.

**Figure 1.1: Graphic representation of the key concepts of the study**

Online Reputation management is aligned with strategic communication in a way that they both build, sustain and protect a brand’s image. In the context of this study, this may be central to the role of social media managers at HEI.

1.6 Summary of literature

The role of strategic communication professionals on a national (SA) and global scale has
become a multifaceted and challenging one in the digital era; this is due to technological advancements, the influence of increased complexity, rapid change, and deconstruction of social structures (Ihlen, Van Ruler & Fredrickson, 2009). This evident shift has caused a disruption in the way organisations operate and poses a threat to an organisation’s online reputation.

A few years ago, companies could defend their reputation by controlling the information available about the company, through strategically placed press announcements and good public relations managers. More recently, with the rise of social media, reputation management has been expanded by online reputation management (Dolle, 2014).

Managing online reputation is imperative for building healthy stakeholder relationships as well as building public trust and loyalty. According to Gillin and Gianforte (2012), online reputation management is dealing effectively with content from people on Social Media in order to mitigate reputation damage.

Dolle (2014) defines online reputation management as the way by which companies can deal with customer attacks on social media, hence companies have to organise and execute an effective online reputation management plan. Effective online reputation management requires knowledgeable employees within an organisation who manage social media, who have the necessary skills and crisis plan according to a social media policy to deal with any unforeseen crises in order to mitigate reputational risk (Dolle, 2014).

Pagach and Warr (2009) refer to reputational risk as the potential of negative publicity regarding an organisation’s business practices, whether true or not, resulting in a decline in the customer base, costly litigation or revenue reductions. Reputation risks stem from a series of issues that are not addressed and resolved quickly, which, after a certain
period of time, become a crisis. Thus, reputation risk is a function of all the areas under management control, such as customer interaction, employee treatment, leadership, strategies and compliance (Pagach & Warr, 2009). Organisations need a more proactive approach to managing reputation, as opposed to a reactive approach.

According to Stokes (2013), any social media strategy should account for the risk dynamics and challenges of interacting in a volatile environment, and should incorporate a policy for dealing with these risks; the purpose of the policy being to define, as well as manage, the responsibility and interactions concerning a brand’s reputation to ensure that a brand is properly represented across its public platforms.

It can take a long time to recover from mistakes on the Internet. To detect such, online reputation management and what staff should be trained in consist of constantly monitoring social media, analysing both positive and negative brand sentiment, and if necessary, communicating strategically with stakeholders in order to mitigate possible risks or a series of issues that may become a crisis (Amigó, Artiles & Gonzalo, 2009).

A crisis is a “perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organisation’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (Coombs, 2007:18). In HEIs, these could involve serious injury, the death of students, protests such as #FeesMustFall, damage to campus property, or other events that impact on daily operations (Zdziarski, Dunkel, Rollo & Associates 2007). Hence, staff members who manage social media need to be trained and their online reputation management approach need to be aligned with a social media policy. This is achieved through staff training and development, which would improve staff behaviour and the organisational effectiveness, as well as the direct influence on the organisations’ reputation (Zdziarski, Dunkel, Rollo & Associates 2007).
The role of social media managers and their importance as “ambassadors” or “brand champions” of a brand need to be recognised as that is key to online reputation management, because they are considered to be trusted sources of information about the organisation (Dortok, 2006) when communicating with external stakeholders. Gillin and Gianforte (2012) add that social media training for employees are therefore a useful addition to HR education programs.

New approaches are required that can only evolve if communication professionals challenge existing intellectual assumptions and develop multi-paradigmatic approaches for evaluating and researching strategic communication (Overton-De Klerk & Verwey, 2013). Strategic communication is essentially necessitated by the digital communication revolution (Overton-De Klerk & Verwey, 2013), and is defined as a form of participatory communication that invites dialogue in an organisation (Hallahan, et al., 2007).

Strategic communication introduces the concept of stakeholder dialogue, which has also changed from monologue to dialogue. This shift represents itself in the postmodern era where meaning is not created through control using top-down communication, but rather through dialogue, where the communication process is more important than the result. Consumers as stakeholders expect basic competency, honesty, fair treatment, support, promptness, quality service, security, empathy, preparedness and a willingness to help, and to be heard. Once consumers feel ignored, they use social media platforms to express themselves and voice their bad experiences with a certain brand. According to Vuori (2012), technology can be seen not only as a technological phenomenon, but also as a “paradigm shift, enabling a new culture of participation, based on users’ interaction and collectively sharing and creating knowledge over the Internet”. Peer-to-peer interactions, user-generated content, collaboration and knowledge exchange can be described as common characteristics of Web 2.0-enabled social media (Voitovici, 2013).
1.7 Brief description of the methodology

According to Mouton (2006), it is vital to establish a research design, as this provides a clear plan and structure for the research. For the purposes of this study, a qualitative research approach was used, as the research aimed to explore, describe and interpret the perceptions UJ social media managers have regarding their role in managing online reputation.

The population of this study was those specialist staff members at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) appointed to the task of managing the social media of the University and/or Faculties. As this is a small group of individuals, this study made use of a census to investigate their perceptions regarding their role as social media managers. The census involved two staff members from the College of Business and Economics, seven marketing executives from UJ Faculties (who manage social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter), as well as the UJ social media manager. The Faculties included (1) the Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture (FADA), (2) the Faculty of Education, (3) the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment (FEBE), (4) the Faculty of Health Sciences, (5) the Faculty of Humanities, (6) the Faculty of Law, (7) the Faculty of Science. The sample was selected by using purposive sampling, in order to identify the social media managers from the seven Faculties that manage social media platforms in their respective Faculties. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, data was gathered by means of an interview schedule using semi-structured open-ended questions in face-to-face interviews, to allow the discovery of novel ideas. The semi-structured open-ended questions included the use of probes to elicit detailed information. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis by identifying common themes, as well as comparing and identifying differences.

Good qualitative research applies strategies of trustworthiness such as credibility,
transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba, 1981:80) to ensure rigour in the research design. Each of the pre-mentioned seeks to verify the substance of what participants said, so that interpretations are not subjective iterations of the researcher’s own belief system (Shenton, 2004). All interview results were sent back to participants for their comment and validation.

1.8 Outline of chapters

**Chapter 1:** Introduction, research problem and research questions. The study is introduced by outlining the background and context of the study to the research problem and followed by the research questions and objectives.

**Chapter 2:** Literature review, key concepts of the study will be discussed in detail.

**Chapter 3:** Methodology and analysis of findings will be described in depth.

**Chapter 4:** The data gathered from the interview schedules are interpreted and the findings will be discussed and interrogated against both the research objectives and the research questions which will bring new insight.

**Chapter 5:** Conclusions and recommendations. Conclusions will be made from the study.
Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Higher education worldwide has become more and more competitive with more institutions being established and a strong private higher education sector developing. This resulted in universities and colleges having to become more competitive in their offerings as well as how they present or market themselves (Abbas, 2014). In South Africa, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been experiencing negative publicity due to the student protestors who organise themselves, primarily using Twitter and other social media platforms, to raise awareness, coordinate protests and launch petitions. This indicates a shift of power from universities and colleges as brands to students as consumers, which has been enabled by the digital era, social media in particular. Wright and Hinson (2009) refer to social media as text, images, audio or video created and shared online through social networks such Facebook and Twitter, among others. This power shift has had an enormous effect on how HEIs view their various stakeholders and how they formulate organisational strategies to attempt the management of their online reputation.

This chapter starts off with a description of the context within which this study was conducted followed by a discussion of the theoretical underpinning of the study, social media, online reputation management and social media managers’ role in understanding a university’s social media policy, equipping faculties to engage responsibly on social media.
2.2 Context of the research

The #FeesMustFall campaign caused disruptions to South African universities’ operations, budgets, exam timetables and internal and external communication strategies, as well as stopping lectures from taking place. When riot police moved to forcefully disperse the largely peaceful protests, they turned violent and resulted in students blocking vehicle access, burning buildings and vandalising campus property (Mail & Guardian, 2015). These events made headlines and went viral nationally and internationally, also having an effect on the reputation of many HEIs in South Africa. They also awakened organisations to the power consumers have over brands.

Social media played a significant role in the #Feesmustfall campaign. Student leaders from various universities across South Africa were at the forefront of the protests, and their demands were centred on securing no fee increase (0% increase) for the academic year 2016, as well as free quality education. The students took their views to social media and created a hashtag titled #FeesMustFall in hope that other students, government officials and the general public will hear their concerns regarding fees being too high to afford.

This information became public knowledge on social media and people could follow updates by searching for #FeesMustFall. Apart from social media content being difficult to control, the reputational risk social networking sites pose also contributes to the loss of trust and loyalty to an organisation (Aula, 2010:44).

Managing online reputation is imperative for building healthy stakeholder relationships as well as public trust and loyalty (Aula, 2010:44). Higher Education Institutions no longer have control over what stakeholders, specifically students, say or think about their brand. They can only control what they project and manage how they treat stakeholders.
Reputation, whether good or bad, results from the behaviour of the specific Higher Education Institution, from interactions with its stakeholders online as well as offline. Reputation management is no longer only the responsibility of communicators. Employees such as managers and coworkers play a significant role in strategic communication and thus building reputation. However, employees are not always necessarily aware of the crucial role they play in building a brands’ online reputation, while communicators do not necessarily see it as their role to assist and train employees to do so (Heide, von Platen, Simonsson & Falkheimer, 2018).

Kietzmann, Hermans, McCarthy and Silverstre (2011:241) assert that “brands are including social media into their brand communication plans due to the popular press highlighting the platforms’ diverse merits”. Other benefits of social media include increased brand awareness, brand building, allowing the consumer to become collaboratively involved in the brand narrative, thereby enabling brands to share valuable content directly with their fans (Stokes, 2013). Having students as a stakeholder of Higher Education Institutions to become collaboratively involved in the brand storyline could have negative implications. It is, however, not possible to contain negative commentary about a brand, or a Higher Education Institution, which became evident during the #Feesmustfall campaign.

Despite the various advantages social media has for organisations, social networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have increased the reputational risk to brands because of the freedom of speech exercised through people’s profiles, accessed by and shared with all to view and add their comments about the post’s narrative tone. Twitter has given online communities the opportunity to create #hashtags as a theme to follow certain discussions or topics that trend locally and globally, and tag other people using the @ sign to join in the conversation. This is typically how Ewom (electronic word of mouth) is spread. Tagging is the assigning of key words by consumers to existing content (Chard, 2008). Thus, managing online reputation, especially on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, have become complex and is no longer only part of the role of a
strategic communicator (Heide et al., 2018).

2.2.1 The University of Johannesburg as a brand

The University of Johannesburg was established in 2005 and is one of the biggest comprehensive institutions in the country (South Africa). This institution aims to keep up with global marketing and communication methods as part of its strategy, while continuously striving to develop a brand that is dynamic (University of Johannesburg, 2016). A comprehensive university can be defined as a combination of both a traditional and a technology-focused institution, combining formative and career-focused education; these universities are also called “new generation universities” (University, World News, 2008). It is imperative for a comprehensive university to build a strong and authentic brand. Atakora (2014:28) defines a brand as the balance between the emotional and functional experiences a person has when they constantly interact with a service or products. Increasing competition between universities heightens the need for institutions to understand, manage, and leverage a strong brand position (Celly & Knepper, 2010). “A university brand represents the totality of perceptions and feelings that stakeholders associate with that particular university” (Ali-Choudhury, Bennett, & Savani, 2009).

For any organisation, a brand constitutes an asset when managed in a holistic, integrative manner that builds long-term brand health (Mirzaei, Gray, Baumann, Johnson, & Winzar, 2015). Given that universities often find themselves operating within dynamic and challenging environments especially in the era of digital and social media, a marketing strategy becomes a priority in assuring strong student and faculty recruitment and retention (Asaad, Melewar, Cohen, & Balmer, 2013). Agreement exists that understanding institutional branding (Duesterhaus & Duesterhaus, 2014) and clearly developing and communicating that brand is of great value to universities (Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007). Yet, research on university brand image, identity,
reputation, and meaning remains underdeveloped (Melewar & Akel, 2005).

Prior research has shown that higher education branding creates greater awareness and recognition among multiple constituencies (Chapleo, 2011), including employees (Judson, Aurand, Gorchels, & Gordo, 2009), when implemented successfully with modern communication tools (Chapleo, 2010). According to Watkins and Gonzenbach (2013), applying brand personality to higher education literature enables institutions to create brand distinctiveness and differentiation; this inevitably translates that a brand that is marketed correctly, stands out. Sung and Yang (2008) assess university personality as part of the overall university image and identify a positive influence of university image on students' supportive attitude towards the institution. Prior research has also used the brands-as-person metaphor to describe how, why, and when consumers relate to brands (Fetscherin & Heinrich, 2015).

2.3 Theoretical foundation: Cocreational theory

Cocreational theory summarises the shift in literature in strategic communication that views stakeholders as cocreators of meaning. It also holds that communication is what makes it possible to have shared meanings, interpretations and goals. The focus is thus on stakeholders. The cocreational theory has a long-term orientation and places values on relationships that are not just about achieving goals. This is where stakeholders become partners in creating meaning for all involved. This thus relates to sense-making as an extension of cocreational theory – in order to create meaning, stakeholders have to make sense of their reality, a reality that they have socially constructed based on their experiences (Botan, 2017). In the context of this study the focus is on one stakeholder group in particular, students as protestors. They became partners with universities in making sense of the realities universities and students are facing and started with a meaning-making process. This has placed more emphasis on the reputations of HEIs in South Africa and the role strategic communicators and their coworkers play in creating
this reputation. The focus is on online reputation management as student protestors have gathered and arranged protest via social networking platforms.

### 2.4 Social media

Social media is an umbrella term used for platforms such as Facebook and Twitter where people can collaborate and share content while building and maintaining relationships. Social media has changed the world of marketing and communication. This is evident when looking at the groups of students that organised themselves and communicated with each other using social media. Any Web 2.0 platform that has the ability to transmit mass communications among organisations, consumers, or any combination including company web pages, blogs, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google Plus, YouTube and other emerging sites can be defined as social media (Stokes 2013).

According to Holloman (2012:4), social media is the term used to describe the means of communicating and engaging with various people. Social media is about the ways in which people create, connect and share content online, and may be used as an integral part of an online marketing campaigns (Stokes 2013). For organisations to keep up with their audiences, traditional media had to adapt. This has changed the way in which organisations publish, both online and offline, as well as how they advertise. Instead of former one-way, top-down approach to communication, a conversation which is multidirectional and usually not started or controlled by brands but by consumers has become the norm. Participants send, receive, and process content online, which makes customers less passive, more active, technologically savvy, and more opinionated than ever before. This inevitably has a direct effect on a brand’s reputation. Social media has become a force that cannot be overlooked by organisations; it dictates how organisations view their customers, define their employee roles, communicate and formulate organisational strategies. Stokes (2013) adds that digital media, social media in particular,
is not just a set of marketing channels – it is a different way of thinking about how people engage with media, each other and the world around them. Social media has enabled organisations to segment their audience and customise messages in a valuable and measurable way.

2.4.1 Social networking

According to Pegg, O’Donnell, Lala and Barber (2018:50), social networking is “a form of communication technology that enables social interactions in an online environment”; examples include Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and LinkedIn. Social networking can also be defined as the strategic use of web sites, blogs, and other electronic communications as marketing tools to connect with related audiences, establish roles, increase online presence and promote success.

Social networking also refers to creating and maintaining online social networks for various communities (Stokes, 2013). These communities are people who share real-world connections, interests and activities, or are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. Social networking is all about using the tools of the Internet to connect and build relationships with others (Stokes, 2013). Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn allow users to create a personal profile and then interact with their connections by sharing media, sending messages and blogging. Not only does social networking sites allow members to interact with the likeminded members of their own virtual community, they also allow members to extend beyond their own personal network. In addition, organisations can also create and maintain profiles on many of these networks, thus building and maintaining their identity, image and reputation online. Social networking sites create an opportunity for organisations to engage with its audience. On the other hand, it also allows for reputational risk, as audiences are able to build and create online communities that can comment negatively and voice their frustrations online, thus creating reputational risk. The next section discusses online communities, also known as
2.4.2 Virtual communities

Communities do not only exist where people reside, communities are also created online through the internet. Technological developments have changed the way in which we communicate, interact (particularly online), and share information (Martínez-López, Anaya-Sánchez, Aguilar-Illescas & Molinillo, 2016). In a similar way to off-line communities, participants in virtual communities (VCs) “gather” together, generate and form ties, create online identities with trusted groups (Chiu, Hsu, & Wang, 2006) that develop common projects together (Luo, Zhang, & Zhang, 2019). A typical example is the #FeesMustFall movement, where groups that shared a common goal gathered online and generated ties in order to execute a common plan that served their interests. VCs can be an effective tool for the development of societies that share common goals (Gable, 2015). These online communities are like-minded people who share the same ideologies, values and principles (Gable, 2015). Social media; mainly Facebook and Twitter, help to enable a shift of power towards large numbers of participants (activists) who take collective action, in order for their voices and concerns about what they value most to be heard. These activists are known as online activists. Online activists have an effect on an organisation’s reputation, hence this study aimed to establish what the views and perceptions of social media managers are in managing a social media page.

2.4.3 Online activism and social media

Online activism is defined as “social activism relying on the Internet” (Ghobadi & Clegg, 2015:54). Online activism is often successful when activists engage together and facilitate collective action towards a common goal, forming a cyber-activism campaign that forms a social movement. “Social movements entail prolonged, organized efforts to bring about
or inhibit social, cultural, or political change” (Young, Summers & Coursaris, 2018:1). Social movement involves individuals that use social media to convey their message. The rise of social media has created an age of protests, the processes and outcomes of social activism have been revolutionised by social technologies such as Twitter, Facebook (Young, Summers & Coursaris, 2018). Activist groups do not want to feel ignored and dismissed. Central to engaging in dialogue with activist groups is the act of organisational listening. According to Overton-De Klerk and Verwey (2012), listening to what is on the minds of stakeholders is important in organisational communication in pursuit of building healthy relationships. These relationships are created by social media managers who play a vital role in an organisation.

2.4.4 Role of social media managers

Organisations are increasingly turning to social media as a new frontier for strategic public engagement (Jung & Valero, 2016), with a majority of large organisations now having one or more social media accounts (Nah & Saxton, 2013). It is evident that social media has driven communication to become more digital and this has become the center of many marketing strategies (Graffigna, Ravaglia & Brivio, 2012). A growing body of evidence points to the role of social media managers in helping brands and organisations communicate publicly (Fredette & Bradshaw, 2012) thereby increasing organisational resilience, influence, and reputation (Taylor & Doerfel, 2011). This highlights the imperative role social media managers’ play in an organisation, particularly a HEI. Most managers consider social media as a very highly effective communication and distribution channel (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), and a powerful means of influencing stakeholder perceptions as well as behaviour (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and, lastly, a critical part in brand engagement (Vernuccio, 2014). Most organisations view social media as a positive force (Valentini, 2015) that can enhance communication, marketing, advocacy, stakeholder engagement, awareness building, accountability, and relationship-building activities (Campbell, Lambright & Wells, 2014).
The challenge, however, for social media managers is to accept the lack of control associated with social media; not knowing what people might say or do at any given time (DiStaso, McCorkindale & Wright, 2011). This poses a huge threat to an organisation's reputation. For organisations to succeed in this digital era, their social media needs a clear strategy and guidelines although, as suggested by Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011), many directors and executives are reluctant and at times and unable to develop strategies and allocate resources to engage effectively with social media. This lack of policies or guidelines for a social media strategy will inevitably expose organisations to significant reputational risks such as the release of confidential information, legal actions for defamation and reputation damage. One of the main risks related to social media is that it indeed expands the possibility of reputation risks, because it fuels new expectations or beliefs about organisations to which organisations should respond timeously. As a result, the social media manager who deals with social media networking and marketing on the behalf of the organisation gains an active and important role as employee. According to Vernuccio (2014), although organisations are adopting social media in their communication strategies and this phenomenon has received a great amount of attention in literature, it has, however, remained under-investigated in scholarly research, particularly when having to define what the role of a social media manager is. Wooldridge, Schmid, and Floyd (2008:1203) define social media managers as people who facilitate and encourage organizational actors below and around them to engage in idea generation and other experimental efforts (Vernuccio, 2014). Literature has provided various definitions that attempt to outline what the role of a social media manager is. Below is a summary of four key roles shared by numerous theorists.

### 2.4.5 Key roles of a social media manager

The key roles of a social media manager include:
• **Social Analyst**

It is very imperative for a social media manager to monitor and listen to what people are saying about an organisation’s services, whether they are good or bad (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). The term “social media analytics” is increasing with the aim to help organisations measure, evaluate the performance of their social media strategy and provide useful insights in order to improve such (Castronovo & Huang, 2012).

• **Content Manager**

Managing content involves sharing fresh, dynamic and relevant information with the audience in order to develop a sustainable relationship. It is imperative for social media managers to engage in discussions and not only focus on negative comments (Nadeem, 2012).

• **Social Media Strategist**

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) suggest that it is important for firms to have guidelines that can be applied to social media. They add that the social media manager needs to develop a strategy in order to be able to know what to say to negative comments, as well as how to react in a crisis.

It is crucial for firms to have a set of guidelines that can be applied to any form of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The social media manager should develop a clear strategy in order to know how to react to a question or to a crisis’s situation. Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer (2012) stress that social media and traditional media should both be integrated when strategising as traditional media has a stronger impact on brand awareness and social media has a stronger impact on brand image.

• **Community Manager**

The community manager is the spokesperson for the community, his/her role is to enhance the communities and ensure a good relationship with the community, he/she improves the organisation’s reputation by emphasising the collaboration and participation
of various stakeholders (Garrigos-Simon, Alcamí & Ribera, 2012). Nadeem (2012) adds that a community manager also focuses on what people do online, whether they converse, connect, collaborate and create mutually beneficial relationships. Owyang (2011) states that social media management requires a team in order to deal with all various roles and responsibilities. It is crucial for a community manager to communicate strategically, as strategic communication is essentially necessitated by the digital communication revolution (Overton-De Klerk & Verwey 2013). Due to this; community managers within a HEI need to communicate strategically as digital communication has made communicating strategically imperative.

### 2.4.6 Social media policy

The creation and implementation of social media policies in Higher Education Institutions play a pivotal role in helping universities manage the risks of social media, since protecting institutional reputation has become a priority (McNeill, 2012). Since 2009, several universities have developed social media policies that provide a certain level of staff guidance and are mainly about enhancing the university “brand” and protecting institutional reputation (McNeill, 2012). It has been proven that an organisation’s image can be affected by perceived online reputation (Gregg & Walczak, 2008). In order to protect that reputation, universities often create policies. A social media policy, according to the University of Johannesburg, is a set of uniform rules and guidelines that should inform the conduct of the stakeholders who manage social media (2017). For social media managers to execute their roles effectively these set of rules and guidelines are imperative in guiding their roles and responsibilities (University of Johannesburg, 2017).

The tremendous growth in the use of social media has brought benefits, as well as risks, requiring the establishment of policies regarding the use social platforms in a higher education environment (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The prevalence of social media use
in higher education often precedes the ability of governing bodies to safeguard themselves, their faculty, staff and students (Tess, 2013).

The importance of social media in higher education has expanded over recent years; however, there is still a significant research gap regarding policies and their application to social media (Chan 2013). This is a gap that organisations and institutions need to address.

2.5 Strategic communication

Strategic communication is defined as being an informational resource, building persuasive, discursive, as well as relational communication in order to achieve the organisational mission (Hallahan & Holtzhausen, 2007). It can be said that strategic communication is an emerging approach because it arises from the interaction of others. (Seidl, 2007:201). Strategic communication is said to improve the individual’s experiences and activities by integrating an efficient communications system inside the company’s vision (Voitovici, 2013). This proves that a paradigm shift has occurred in the way organisations communicate today. Below is a detailed list of shifts in organisational communication and how they have affected the way social media managers within HEIs communicate.

2.5.1 Shifts in organisational communication

Behind the organisational trends are imperative driving forces, referred to as shifts in the organisation.

- *Divergence to convergence*
Strategic communication is defined as purposeful communication (Overton-De Klerk & Verwey: 2013:370), meaning that messages must have a purpose and that that purpose must be aligned with the organisation’s mission, vision and values. Tertiary institutions have also started to practice convergence where they work closely with their internal stakeholders (students and staff) as well as their external stakeholders (government, sponsors, etc.).

- **Top-down to bottom-up**

A postmodern approach favours an open system that is transparent, as compared to the modernist approach where messages flow from the top to the bottom. The top-down to bottom-up approach highlights that interaction as opposed to information diffusion takes priority in postmodern communication. Central to the bottom-up approach is the emphasis on organisational listening (Overton-De Klerk & Verwey, 2013).

- **Monologue to dialogue**

A dialogue allows feedback of information as opposed to a one-way communication flow. Dialogue also opens up conversation where people can voice their concerns and opinions.

- **Consensus to conflict**

In a postmodern era there is an evident shift in power and control from management to individual stakeholders, thus allowing the role of social media managers to participate and engage with various audiences and to seek solutions should issues arise. (Overton-de Klerk and Verwey 2013:372).

- **Communication management to communication influence**

Messages have the power to influence and in a positive manner, as opposed to being too prescriptive. Too much control over messages shows no positive results from internal stakeholders.
• **Communication control to self-organising**

Overton-De Klerk and Verwey (2013:374) advise that the flow of communication within organisational structures has progressed from one-way to a more inclusive dialogue between organisational members at all levels. There is no longer control of communication, self-organising is now more effective. Every aspect of our daily lives is affected by our communication with others, as well as by messages from people we do not even know (Littlejohn, 2008).

• **Corporate social responsibility to accountability**

Corporate social responsibility is a generic concept referring to the business organisation’s concern and active two-way involvement with social, economic and political forces which influence the environment with which it exists (Lubbe & Puth 2005:180).

• **Integration to collaboration**

Business should move beyond integration and towards a more collaborative effort with its external stakeholders. Working together with others gives the reassurance that their input and contribution count. Through the new paradigm shift, the social media manager has to ensure that there is collaboration with all stakeholders in the organisation. This is enacted by organisations who are well aware that their brand narrative will always be challenged. Overton-De Klerk and Verwey (2013:376).

### 2.6 Online reputation management

According to Dolle (2014), Online Reputation Management (ORM) is the practice of constantly monitoring and promoting one’s brand while mitigating negative information online. Loosely defined; online reputation is the image (good or bad) that brands have online with their stakeholders. Online reputation management can also be defined as “the process of positioning, monitoring, measuring, talking and listening as an organisation engages a transparent and ethical dialogue with its various online stakeholders” (Floreddu & Cabiddu,
Dialogue plays a crucial role in building reputation as it creates an opportunity for open conversation where people can voice their concerns as well as their opinions. Existing literature on online reputation management states that various people share their opinions about products, people, services and organisations by means of websites such as blogs, social networks and product comparison sites (Amigó, Artiles, Gonzalo, Spina, Liu & Corujo, 2014), therefore online reputation management consists of monitoring media, detecting relevant contents, analysing what people say about an entity and, where necessary, interact with customers (Amigó et al., 2014). Negative comments in online media can seriously affect the reputation of a company, and therefore online reputation management is an increasingly important area of corporate communication (currently known as strategic communication) (Amigó et al., 2014). Traditional methods of reputation management are essentially based on word-of-mouth or surveys, which are not only expensive but also time consuming. The need for online reputation management and monitoring is growing every day, this is due to more and more people being vocal than ever before as mentioned in the study, brands are now soon realising this because of digital media. Due to search engines and social media, every mention of a brand or individual are only a quick search away, whether the information is positive or negative. Social media has given people the opportunity to create a stir or find a way to start up a conversation that serves their own agenda. To form a better understanding of online reputation management, reputation will be defined in the next section followed by a brief discussion of reputation risk and its association with crisis.

2.6.1 Reputation defined

As the world becomes more globalised, reputation management has become increasingly important in organisations for various reasons (Wæraas & Maor, 2015). Carpenter (2010:31) defines reputation as “a set of beliefs about an organisation’s capacities, intentions, history, and mission that are embedded in a network of multiple audiences”. This implies that people managing reputation need to find ways that appeal to their
audience; this, in essence, is called reputation management (Wæraas & Maor, 2015). Barnett, Jermier and Lafferty (2006, 33) define reputation as the observer’s collective judgements of a corporation based on assessments of the social, environmental and financial impacts attributed to the organisation over time. Ouwersloot and Duncan, (2008:323) define brand reputation as a social evaluation that leaves a social imprint on consumers, as well as the esteem in which consumers hold the brand. Everything a brand does effects brand reputation, therefore brand reputation is regarded as a strategic tool that must be constantly monitored and managed both offline and online. Looking at all the above definitions of reputation, it can be deduced that reputation is ensuring and maintaining a positive image and identity for an organisation in the eyes of its public in order to avoid reputational damage.

2.6.2 Reputational risk

In recent years, brand reputation and risk management have become two core functions in almost every organisation in order to achieve the organisation’s goals and stay competitive. Given the fact that digital media is easily accessible and has created platforms where people can share their perceptions about brands (good or bad), brands need to proactively employ defensive strategies. These include identifying potential sources of risk from user-generated content, dangerous influencers and remedial measures. According to Pagach and Warr (2009:5) reputational risk is the potential that negative publicity regarding an institution's business practices, whether true or not, will cause a decline in the customer base, resulting in costly litigation or revenue reductions. Walker (2003) states the following:

It is important to recognize that reputation risk is normally the result of management processes as opposed to a specific event, all firms face the possibility of negative events, but it falls on management to ensure that these events do not damage corporate reputation. Thus, reputation risk is a function of all the areas under management control such as; firm strategy, customer interaction, employee treatment, leadership, compliance and incentive
Reputation has become more than just a company’s good name. It is a composite of those factors affecting how others, particularly those outside of the organisation, view the particular brand. A good strategy asks the question what the worst that could happen was, and how bad would the risk be.

2.6.3 Crisis

According to Coombs and Holladay (2007), crises come from public relations, management, or organisational communications sources. A crisis is a “perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organisation’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (Coombs, 2007:18). Crises vary; some crises involve serious illness, injury, or the death of students or staff members, damage to campus property, or other events that has an impact on the normal day-to-day operations on campus (Zdziarski, Dunkel, Rollo, & Associates, 2007).

It is crucial that organisations have crises communication plans, digital media training, as well as social media policies in order to guide employees in executing their roles. Social media has the potential to turn one constant complaint into a public relations disaster, which also has the potential to go viral. Thus, the social media strategy ought to include a relevant content management strategy with tools such as a social media policy to minimise reputational risk and guide social media managers.

Organisations should be proactive rather than being reactive and have a plan in place that outlines what information should be communicated to their publics during a crisis; such information should be included in the institution’s crisis communications plan. The plan
should be a manageable, easy-to-read document where individuals know their individual assigned roles and the duties they have to execute. Communication help re-establish normality, even in the state of unpredictability that occurs during a crisis. Such a document would involve a pre-crisis plan, indicating the actions that are to be performed before a crisis occurs, like detecting, preventing and preparing for crises (Coombs, 2007). A post-crisis plan, on the other hand, involves all actions an organisation needs to take when it deems the crisis over. Actions would include making sure the organisation is prepared for the next crisis, making sure stakeholders are left with a positive impression of the organisation's actions and ensuring that the crisis is actually over (Coombs, 2007). In the context of this study this means that should a crises occur the social media manager must be a step ahead in planning and executing a crisis plan.

Planning is an essential part of crisis communications. An effective crisis plan should include a list of crises situations that may possibly impact the organisation as a whole (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). During crisis audits, organisations pinpoint what type of crisis would be “most probable and most devastating (Coombs, 2007). What constitutes a crisis will vary from organisation to organisation and suitable response strategies are imperative. Crisis response can have a significant impact on the outcome, choosing the right crisis response strategy could mean the difference between success or failure (Coombs & Holladay, 2007).

Coombs and Holladay (2007) suggest that consistent response strategies add to organisational legitimacy. Transparency is critical to every crisis communications plan and staff members who communicate with various stakeholders during a crisis need to know the truth about what is going on around them and be briefed on what they need to communicate. Positive perceptions become reality when transparency is a priority. Crisis communications plans need to be constantly tested in advance. Crisis simulations provide a safe environment in which to test procedures and strategies, while also testing what improvements should be made (Coombs, 2007). Table top exercises and simulations
allow members of the crisis management team to test various aspects of the crisis plan in advance and all staff members should be informed at all times of various developments during a crisis, as this will facilitate engagement between the social media manager and the various stakeholders they are communicating with (Coombs & Holladay, 2007).

2.7 Conclusion

Looking at the above theoretical discussion, it is evident from the literature review that digital media has taken over and that technology has become a driving tool for organisations to reach their objectives if used effectively. Organisations have no choice but to adapt and find effective ways in leveraging on social media platforms. With the world going digital and social media rewriting the rules of engagement it is safe to say that employees need to understand social media in order to communicate strategically with stakeholders to avoid a bad brand reputation, as a brand’s reputation is dependent on how it is viewed by its stakeholders. It can be concluded that employees play a key role within organisations because they are the contact people between the organisation and the consumer. The importance of online reputation management and how it can be used to achieve an overall positive sentiment from the public has been highlighted in the discussion.

With higher education institutions in South Africa experiencing negative publicity in the media due protests on various issues, it was the aim of this study to determine how HEI social media managers in faculties view their role in managing the online reputation of HEI brands. The research is important as it would be of interest to know if social media managers are clear on what their roles are in managing reputation, and to find out if there are guidelines or social media policies that guide them in executing their roles. It was also the aim of this research to add to the body of knowledge, in that the findings and interpretation of results could be useful not only to HEIs, but also to other organisations.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study as discussed in Chapter 1, was to investigate the perceptions of the University of Johannesburg’s social media managers in Faculties regarding their role in managing the online reputation of a HEI. The study further intended to find out if social media managers have clearly defined roles that are guided by the UJ social media policy, and appropriate training to execute their roles effectively and strategically when a crisis should occur. Chapter 2 discussed key concepts relevant to the study, such as online reputation management, social media policy and strategic communication. This chapter aims to discuss the research design, research approach, research paradigms and the research methods utilised to collect and analyse data in order to answer the research question; in addition, there will be a discussion on trustworthiness as rigour and lastly an overview of research ethics. This part of the research is imperative as it can be described as the master plan of how the research conducted (Gravetter & Forzano 2009). “Research doesn’t exist in isolation; each research is part of an existing body of knowledge and building on the foundation of past research and expanding that foundation for future research” (Gravetter & Forzano 2009).

3.2 Research aim and objectives

The overarching research aim of this study was:
Research objectives that are clearly defined allow the researcher to operationalise the research questions, thus providing a clear indication as to the purpose of the study (Saunders & Lewis 2012). The research objectives were therefore:

1. To determine how faculty social media managers at UJ define online reputation.
2. To determine how online reputation is managed by social media managers in faculties at UJ.
3. To determine what the role of a social media manager is in an online context according to faculty social media managers at UJ?
4. To determine if social media managers that manage social networks are trained/equipped to manage online reputational risk in line with the UJ social Media policy.

3.3 Methodological orientation

According to Tracy (2013:25), choosing which methodology to use depends on the research goals as well as what a researcher is trying to achieve. All research can be subsumed under three categories, namely mixed method, quantitative, and qualitative research approaches.
3.3.1 Mixed-method research

The mixed-method research orientation allows for insight into human perceptions (Du Plooy, 2005). Mixed methods may also be defined as “research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study” (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007:4). Fielding (2012) believes that mixed methods allow for greater “analytic density”; he adds that the goal of data integration can be seen to produce a (more) comprehensible outcome.

3.3.2 Quantitative research

The term quantitative refers to research where a researcher examines variables that typically vary in quantity (size, duration, magnitude or amount), the results or data obtained from these measurements are usually numerical scores that can be summarised, analysed and interpreted using standard statistical procedures (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). This research approach focuses more on numeric measurements, quantitative research collects numerical data from individuals or groups and usually subjects them to statistical analysis to determine whether there are relationships among them (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

3.3.3 Qualitative research

Qualitative research methods attribute meaning to a participant’s experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell (2008) maintains that qualitative research yields detailed information, reported in the voices of participants in the settings in which they provide experiences and the meanings of their experiences. Gravetter and Forzano (2009) hold
that a quantitative study research design (discussed in 3.3.2) can either be experimental or nonexperimental. In experimental research, a researcher introduces one or more dependent variables or treatments, and observes the effect on one or more independent variables or outcomes (Gravetter & Forzano 2009). Furthermore, nonexperimental quantitative research examines relationships between two or more variables as they exist, without trying to manipulate them (Gravetter & Forzano 2009). Qualitative research focuses more on finding out how individuals interpret their experiences, how they build their worldviews, and how they attribute meaning to their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative research also involves the careful observation of participants (often including interaction with participants), usually accomplished by extensive note-taking. The observations and notes are then summarised in a narrative report that attempts to describe and interpret the phenomenon being studied (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Baker (1999) concurs and explains that qualitative research is often carried out to explore important issues located in some segment of the human scene. In addition, Mihas (2019) concludes that qualitative research is an approach where researchers are interested in solving a problem, bringing about change and identifying relevant themes, as opposed to attempting to position their work in an epistemological paradigm.

Although these two approaches to research (qualitative and quantitative) contrast one another, Gravetter and Forzano (2009) point out that the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is not as simple as numbers versus no numbers. In fact, the scores that are obtained in quantitative research occasionally will be qualitative values. Evans and King (2006:107) contend that both approaches have several features in common; “they both aim to explain or understand some aspect of social life and they try to do this by the systematic collection and analysis of empirical data”.
However, since this research did not want to quantify the extent to which the phenomena occurred, but sought a rich description, the quantitative approach was not deemed to be appropriate for this study. For the purposes of this study a qualitative research approach was used, as the research aimed to determine the perceptions, opinions, thoughts and experiences UJ social media managers in Faculties and Departments have regarding their role in managing online reputation at UJ. Furthermore, qualitative research helped to gain an in-depth understanding of the above-mentioned.

Qualitative methods are used in the interpretive paradigm because the main concern are the views, experiences and understanding of the individuals that are involved in the study (Creswell, 2008). The interpretive paradigm also tries to understand the world as it is from subjective experiences of people (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Below is a discussion of the various research paradigms with focus on the interpretive paradigm, as it is relevant to the study and looks at the full multifaceted nature of comprehending human encounters. Thanh (2015) asserts that the interpretivist specialists find reality through participants’ perspectives, their own backgrounds, as well as experiences.

3.3.4 Research paradigms

Society acquires knowledge in various ways; from either personal experiences or believes. Science, on the other hand, looks at knowledge in a more structured manner. Babbie (1992:14) defines science as a method of inquiry, a way of learning and knowing things about us and the world around us. Gerring (2012:27) also supports Babbie by broadly stating that the goal of science is to discover things about the world and to appraise the truth. Various traditions have different views regarding social enquiry. Littlejohn (1983) refers to these different views as metatheories, which can be defined as a body of speculation on the nature of inquiry.
• The critical tradition

The critical tradition believe that science should be a force that emancipates and transforms society. Karl Marx and other critical theorists such as Jürgen Habermas took what the Phenomenological/ Interpretative tradition believed in further by saying that the aim is not only to explain or understand society, but to change it for the better (Babbie & Mouton 2001).

• Positivist tradition

The positivist tradition believes that social science is comparable to the natural sciences, but would only make progress once it pursues the same goals as the natural sciences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The positivist theory claims that the methodology used for social science can be applied to understand human nature or social reality. August Comte (father of the Positivist theory) and other positivist theorists such as Herbert Spenser reject the view that other deeper essences or underlying forces that cause things to happen, exist (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

• The Phenomenological/ Interpretative tradition

The positivist theory was challenged and soon criticised by the Phenomenological/ interpretive tradition, which pointed out the difference between the objects of the natural and human sciences. This tradition argued that it is inconceivable that the social sciences would wish to imitate the natural sciences (Babbie & Mouton, 2001), as it focuses more on the consciousness of people. The phenomenologists emphasise that all human beings are in the process of making sense of their worlds (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). It is therefore safe to say that the phenomenological tradition considers human behaviour and reasoning, which is relevant to the objective of the study outlined in chapter one.
3.4 Research design

A research design is a plan that outlines the method and process in which data will be collected and analysed (Mouton, 2006). Using the appropriate research design and data collection instrument is more important than analysing the data Mouton (2006). In order to answer the research questions, it was crucial to choose the correct research design. Elements of research design are discussed in the next section.

3.5 Population and sample

The population of this study is those specialist staff members at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) appointed with the task to manage the social media of the university and/or faculties. The research was carried out in natural settings, utilising a small population where the research questions and population are dependent on the utilisation of a qualitative study (Zikmund, 2003) and smaller sample sizes that afforded the researcher to be intimately involved (Zikmund, 2003). As this was a small group of individuals, this study made use of a census to find out what their perceptions were regarding their role as social media managers. According to Sahai (1988), a census is a process of collecting and publishing socioeconomic, demographic, and other relevant data for all the persons in a given country or a region. The census involved two staff members from the College of Business and Economics, seven marketing executives from UJ faculties (who manage social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter) as well as the UJ social media manager. The faculties included (1) the Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture (FADA), (2) the Faculty of Education, (3) the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment (FEBE), (4) the Faculty of Health Sciences, (5) the Faculty of Humanities, (6) the Faculty of Law and (7) the Faculty of Science.
Table 3.1 Population and sampling

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</table>

3.6 Data collection method

Due to the exploratory nature of the study, data was gathered by means of an interview schedule using semi-structured open-ended questions during face-to-face interviews to allow the discovery of novel ideas. The semi-structured open-ended questions included the use of probes to elicit detailed information. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis by identifying common themes as well as comparing and identifying differences of the social media managers’ perceptions. Although the qualitative research approach required time to record interviews and transcribe them, the advantage was that this approach provided the possibility to probe in order to gain more insight, understanding
and clarity where necessary.

Table 3.2: A Summary of the Data Collection Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview Type</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
<th>Duration of interview and location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>6 Nov 2018</td>
<td>11 mins/ Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>6 Nov 2018</td>
<td>26 mins/ Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>6 Nov 2018</td>
<td>30 mins/ Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>6 Nov 2018</td>
<td>9 mins/ Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>6 Nov 2018</td>
<td>16 mins/ Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>6 Nov 2018</td>
<td>17 mins/ Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>6 Nov 2018</td>
<td>28 mins/ Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>13 Nov 2018</td>
<td>11 mins/ Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>6 Nov 2018</td>
<td>15 mins/ Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>9 Nov 2018</td>
<td>21 mins/ Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The research data was collected in just over a week and transcribed (please see table 3.2). Transcribing was a lengthy and challenging process, taking a month to finish. All participants were sent a formal email to set up the interviews and all feedback was positive as no challenges were encountered. All participants were accessible as they work at the same organisation, only in various departments and faculties.
3.7 Measuring instrument

Data was gathered by means of an interview schedule, using semi-structured open-ended questions during face-to-face interviews. Using interviews in a qualitative study helps the researcher reach various reality areas that are not easy to access, such as people's attitudes, body language and experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The semi-structured open-ended questions allow for the use of probes to elicit detailed information; a further reason for using semi-structured interviews is that they assist the interviewer in staying focused on getting answers that are needed, as well as asking the very same questions to all participants (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). All interviews were recorded, and transcribed, and thematic analysis was used to analyse data in order to find common themes from the data collected. The interview guide had three Sections (Section A, B and C): Section A being the information sheet outlining the research overview, Section B was the Informed Consent Form which all participants were asked to sign once they have agreed to the interview; the last section, Section C, comprised of ten semi-structured open-ended questions. Please refer to appendix A for this information.

3.8 Data analysis

As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), six phases of thematic analysis were used in analysing the data, namely familiarisation with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing up. All six themes will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Good qualitative research applies strategies of trustworthiness such as credibility,
transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba, 1981) to ensure rigour in the research design. Each of the pre-mentioned seeks to verify the substance of what participants said so that interpretations are not subjective iterations of the researcher’s own belief system (Shenton, 2004). Below is a brief discussion on the four strategies of trustworthiness and how they apply to this study:

3.9.1 Credibility

Research is credible when there is a detailed and a clear explanation of the methods that were used in the research process, which ensures transparency. Creswell (2008) adds that data can only be regarded as credible if it is reliable, trustworthy and authentic. All participants in the study were given a brief and consent form to ensure transparency and trust.

3.9.2 Transferability

Trochim (2011) specifies that transferability is the ability of a study to be transferred to another context. An example of transferability in the context of this study would be if social media marketers of another institution would like to know if they shared similar experiences with other marketers from another institution or if the findings apply to them or not.

3.9.3 Dependability

Dependability is achieved when there are sufficient details with reference to the research design, which gives another researcher the opportunity to use the research findings as a
benchmark for other studies within a similar context (Shenton, 2004). All raw data of this research will be safely archived, should another researcher with a similar topic be interested in using it.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) indicate that a research approach providing verifiable inquiry results relates it to the confirmability of the study. In other words, the research should mirror the exact views of the participants. One way of ensuring this was to show the participants of the study what was transcribed and for them to confirm that indeed those were their exact words and views. The next section looks at ethical considerations involved in the study.

3.10 Ethical requirements

All the interviewed participants were briefed on the background and the purpose of the study. No interviewee was coerced into participating. Sullivan (2012) states that much care is taken in securing informed consent in qualitative research. All ethical guidelines for conducting social research, such as voluntary participation, anonymity of responses, and protecting research participants from vulnerability and harm were followed. An ethical clearance was obtained from the Faculty of Humanities Ethics Committee. To ensure anonymity; no personal details of participants were recorded, or any faculty-specific questions asked.
3.11 Conclusion

Reflecting on Chapter 3, the chapter sought out to outline the research process. A qualitative research design was used in order to find out what the perceptions are of the UJ social media managers within faculties and departments regarding their role in managing online reputation at UJ were. Furthermore, this chapter discussed various aspects of the methodology such as the research paradigms, population and sample, as well as the method of data collection. The chapter also touched on the trustworthiness of the study and lastly addressed issues of ethical disquiet. The next chapter will evaluate the findings of the research.
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 aims to discuss the findings of the research from the data that was collected mainly for the purpose of addressing the research problem and to also meet the research objectives. Data was collected from social media managers within faculties and departments by conducting interviews which were transcribed and coded. This data was analysed using thematic analysis and applying Braun and Clarke’s six phases of the thematic analysis model.

4.2 Data analysis techniques

4.2.1 Content analysis and thematic analysis

Qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis are both commonly used approaches in analysing data. Both approaches aim to analyse and examine real life stories by looking closely at text, as well as examining narrative material from life stories and material, breaking the text into smaller units of content and submitting them to descriptive treatment (Sparker, 2005). Both content and thematic analysis approaches are appropriate for answering questions such as: What are the concerns of people about a topic? What reasons do people have for using or not using a service or procedure? (Ayres, 2007). Both approaches are largely based on the “fascist” perspective; a fascist perspective assumes data to be more or less accurate and truthful (Sandelowski, 2010). This means that the researcher wants to explore and find out about the behaviour motives as well as the attitudes of the people being interviewed. Sandelowski and Leeman (2012) suggest that
the difference between thematic and qualitative analysis has not been clearly specified; they are often used interchangeably and to some extent there has been some confusion about their similarities and differences.

For the sake of clarity it is necessary to differentiate between content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis is applied when analysing multifaceted and sensitive phenomena (Vaismoradi, Salsali & Mark, 2011). Powers and Knapp (2006) add that “Content analysis is a general term for a number of different strategies used to analyse text”. Thematic analysis, on the other hand, is regarded as a poorly branded method by some researchers, meaning that it does not appear to be recognised as a named method of analysis in the same way that content analysis is; it is a more flexible and useful research tool that provides richer and more detailed data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Some authors define thematic analysis as a phenomenological method (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). For the purposes of this study, thematic analysis will be used to analyse data in order to find common themes from the data collected. (Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012) define themes as “a coherent integration of the disparate pieces of data that constitute the findings”. In order to achieve this, the six phases of thematic analysis process as determined by Braun & Clarke (2006) were used for analysis.

4.2.2 Six phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

- **Familiarisation with the data**

This first step involves the researcher reading through all the data collected in order to get the gist of it or familiarise themselves with the data. This includes listening to all the recorded interviews once or twice while transcribing and highlighting important information. Please refer to Appendix B (Interviews).
• Coding

Coding is a common element of several approaches to qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It involves generating concise labels for important features of the data that are relevant and going back to the research question guiding the analysis. Coding is not simply a method of data reduction, it is also an analytic process. The researcher carefully and thoroughly codes all the data items and ends this phase by collating all their codes and pertinent data extracts.

The tables below summarise the codes from the data collected during the interviews:

**Question 1: What is online reputation management, to your own understanding?**

**Table 4.1: A Summary of the responses to Question 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Avoiding risk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Perception that people have about you as a brand or as an individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Proper management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Reputation management is reputation management, it’s just a tool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>When there’s brand damage particularly where there must be a crisis management in a way that it must be managed very well in order for the image and reputation of the institution to be viewed and protected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I guess its building the brand and looking at your <em>ehm</em>... keeping the image that goes outside to the rest of the world as positive as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7.          | • It’s the same way you would manage reputation offline; it just happens to be online which is a bit more sensitive and goes viral quickly.  
• The same applies; the same customer service you’d give offline should be the same online. |
| 8.          | It is monitoring and evaluating *ehm*... what the public says about UJ and its reputation, it is also influencing that reputation, so it’s got a lot to do with research, what people think and seeing where we need to sway people. |
| 9.          | It would be literally managing our reputation, we’ve got Facebook, we’ve got Twitter, Instagram and a website, so it’s to ensure I’m posting something in the UJ domain and also ensuring that the followers don’t say anything negative on my page, like bashing students and staff. |
| 10.         | Managing the perceptions surrounding your brand or organisation or company online. Perceptions of your target audience to be specific as well as secondary audiences, their experience of you, how people view you, what they say, how they engage with you – it all boils down to perception. |
| Codes identified | Managing, perceptions, image, risk, reputation. |
Question 2: How do you manage online reputation in your line of work?

Table 4.2: A Summary of the responses to Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Taking responsibility for posts and not messing it up.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2.          | Monitoring of our social media pages  
             | Ensuring the content is correct  
             | Ensuring that whatever that is posted is in what is within the legal frameworks of the institution  
             | Dealing with any query  
             | Ensure that information is corrected |
| 3.          | Engaging offline  
             | Being honest |
| 4.          | We make sure that the comments that come from to our pages are clean and above board  
<pre><code>         | And we addressed the comments; should we get negative comments we’ll address it but then also just remove it and block the person |
</code></pre>
<p>| 5.          | So basically ehm with our social media following for instance we do have the editor, the admins and someone who just looks at the page if maybe there’s a post that might cause damage it can be removed or edited or or something or action any action that can be taken as soon as possible before it reach many people |
| 6.          | Whether it’s good or bad I have to manage and say yay or nay and |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>make sure that the brand outside is positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Always answer what’s asked, don’t be robotic and keep things inboxed because it’s a bit more controlled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>So all that we do is try to ensure that a reputation is managed online and the way that we do that is we have a strategy that is combined with what the university wants to achieve in the next 10 years along with audience research and then we make a strategy out of that to connect with various audiences and shift perceptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>• Basically making sure that my settings are correct, meaning my settings don’t allow people to just post directly on my page or rather my timeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Secondly it’s just to ensure everything is aligned to the UJ policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>• I have a marketing assistant but what we ensure we do is; number one we ensure that <em>ehm</em> we have content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• So the content we post is with reference to who we are speaking to, number two we are responsive as well, we respond to queries timeously.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes identified</th>
<th>Content, response, policy, monitoring, strategy, information, query</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
**Question 3:** How do you respond to negative comments? Please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment.

**Table 4.3: A Summary of the responses to Question 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I take it offline completely yes, either email or telephone call.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The best thing you do is you take it offline and apologise where you need to apologise, and you take accountability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I honestly like to deal with them offline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>If it’s really bad or you can see it has a potential to take a left turn on you, I think try deal with it offline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>We deal with it offline as things may go south if we try dealing with it online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>To respond as quickly as possible and depending on the nature of the comment. Sometimes I would refer them to contact the faculty directly not initially handle it online.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>It depends. There are different levels of negative comment. If a comment is not directed towards the page, say its negative, like I had one about where is the money so that is something that I feel if you respond you are poking something that started out small where people just rant and we all know of trolls, so things like that I tend to avoid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 8.          | • If it’s something against the policy or against the constitution of the country, defamatory, sexist, racist *ehm* and if it’s causing harm or slander then we don’t tolerate it we just shut it down immediately.  
• We refer a lot of negative comments to the relevant place, whether its finance or the enrolment, we just try to keep things calm so that
Participant | Responses
--- | ---
 | they don’t escalate and get ugly. If they are starting to get ugly and it's not something that we can shut down immediately then we look bigger and go to management and ask them for a response.
9. | It's important to apologise it doesn’t hurt anybody and avoids a whole fight.
10. | We’ve learned to answer carefully to avoid other negative comments coming on.
Codes identified | Offline, avoid negative comments, policy, accountability,

**Question 4:** What is your role as a social media manager in an online context?

**Table 4.4: A Summary of the responses to Question 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Generate content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. | • Brag about the good work that the faculty and the institution is doing.  
• Creating dialog about health issues and taking health sciences to the community. |
<p>| 3. | Managing the faculty website and Facebook page. |
| 4. | To get the faculty out there so that people know about us. |
| 5. | Develop the content is to upload the content and also to post the content as well as to show the university’s look and feel, the |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>campuses, to create consistency and to ensure we’re speaking with the same voice and language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6.          | • Update the pages, I also use the platforms for filling vacancies, I use social media for recruitment.  
              • Events, a marketing tool, to publish and promote all of our events *ehm* and brand building. |
| 7.          | My role is to inform, to make sure that people are always abreast of what's happening, sending info to the right medium or answering queries that are pertaining to their studies. |
| 8.          | So, I'm a social media manager and now managed [sic] people that are social media managers actually because I have to have a bird’s eye view of what's going on.  
              I’m more of a content manager. |
| 9.          | To share events and to share achievements and awards and lastly to answer administrative queries and if the questions are too specific or deep you take it offline and to the correct person via email. |
| 10.         | • It’s to ensure that you are social.  
              • Ensure that you are continually involved in the conversation you are continually engaging with your audience as you are continually observing them and their needs. |
| Codes identified | Awareness, events, content, answering quires, update pages, publish, content manager |
**Question 5:** Are you familiar with the UJ Social Media policy?

**Table 4.5: A Summary of the responses to Question 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes - think its comprehensive, and you can look at it as a benchmark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Yes - I wouldn’t say I purely understand everything because unfortunately the social media policy is written for legal heads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Yes - Yes - I’m very familiar with the UJ social media policy because it forms a guideline on how to go about engaging in social media and it’s very easy to understand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4.          | • Yes - I think it it's very detailed and it's really needed.  
• It could be more understandable, not everyone knows the social media terminologies.  
• I think it could be like more layman because nobody is going to sit and read the document, it needs to be explained. |
| 5.          | • Yes - I think it it's very detailed.  
• Well look, it could be more understandable, I think it could be like more layman because nobody is going to sit and read the document, it needs to be explained. |
| 6.          | Yes, I am very familiar with it, it’s understandable and its user friendly.  
• I mean you need to comply to [sic] the rules otherwise you [sic] going to get into trouble and social media was not something that was thought out by UJ; this is a global thing and nationally. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|             | • But it's long  
|             | • I think face-to-face training could make it better because I don’t think people will go through those pages. |
| 7.          | I am, I remember when it was updated, I had to just read it just to be one the safe side and I’ve learned not to link my personal page to my professional page. |
| 8.          | Very familiar with it, in fact too familiar. I think when people understand the repercussions of the policy and what it means to them on a personal level and how careful you have to be, I think they become scared and the people who’ve stepped over the line are the people who may have not attended training. |
| 9.          | • Yes I am and I have to admit though I haven’t sat down with a pen to highlight the do’s and the don’ts and that’s because we were involved in the development of this policy so I’m not foreign to it.  
|             | • It’s a policy so it must be written in a certain way but what I would suggest is to have a summary, a summarised page that just explains it in layman’s terms like in a nutshell this is what we are saying. |
| 10.         | Yes -I think it's good to have a point of governance because it could get out of hand. I believe that you cannot discipline where you haven’t laid down the ground rules so it's good to have a governing tool and it speaks to reputation as well. I’ve skimmed through it and feel it’s |
Participant | Responses
---|---
 | sufficient and as a marketer I can easily understand it but for someone who’s not in the space may need someone to further explain it and what it’s saying, like bring it to their level.

Codes identified | Understandable, laymen terms, legal, governing tool, training

**Question 6:** Have you attended a Social Media training session at UJ?

**Table 4.6: A Summary of the responses to Question 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>No, my position hasn’t allowed me to, I often asked someone to go on my behalf.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Yes - it’s a repetition of the same content. It's a blanket approach, top-down approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Yes - The training was insightful and adequate but we can look at going with the trends, technology changes every day so we need to keep up with the times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Yes - it was very interesting and enlightening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Yah, it’s quite good and very relevant. Training is expecting you to be on another level; it gives you some fundamentals of managing a page, so I’d say it’s very good. And if someone wants an even more advanced knowledge I’d refer them to another institution to study it for say six months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6. | • Yes and it was good. But it would be great to learn about Facebook marketing, like Facebook for business and ads that would be great.  
• I feel like it's missing a whole lot, I've got more questions, it's simple but it could be more specific and tailored for social media managers and not the general staff, I feel like it can be more. |
| 7. | No - it was just a brief overview of what Dale was saying but I haven't honestly attended one. |
| 8. | Yes Michelle, Gugu, Obed, myself along with Monique have run the social media training. |
| 9. | • Yes I have, I've attended quite a few.  
• It was informative and insightful but I do find that is repetitive. |
| 10. | Yes - it's not in depth enough; to be honest, they just touch the surface and not go deeper. Look I feel there's more to social media than what they teach, every time I go there I'm hoping to learn something new – I feel like they saying the same obvious thing – and move on to the next level. |

**Codes identified**

- Insightful
- Repetitive
- Top down
- Informative
- Content
**Question 7:** Where you affected by the #FeesMustFall crises and how did it affect your daily operations?

**Table 4.7: A Summary of the responses to Question 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Yes, because I was scared on campus and I feel it was a great violation of my safety and personal space.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2.          | • It was as if you were put in war zone without the resources for you to be able to survive.  
• You did not know whether your car's going to get petrol-bombed while you're at work.  
• You did not know what to communicate, when to communicate; the communication from top down as well was such that it was late.  
• Reactive and not proactive. |
| 3.          | It didn't really have an impact there was good communication between the students and the University and personally also I feel that *ehm* UJ is doing a lot for the welfare of the students. |
| 4.          | Not at all, not a comment, not a question, nothing. |
| 5.          | • I was not affected that much compared to my seniors, because I was just receiving messages from my line managers and I didn't really interact or debate on social about it.  
• I do believe they were active in that regard on managing and especially the students and replying to the questions, but at faculty level we didn't really engage with students and we didn't |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>post anything that indeed related to that because at that might also arise and political issues and other stuff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>No, we weren't affected, the only time that we were affected was at the beginning of the year when we couldn't have our extended first year orientation programme and so we had to shorten and that was 2 or 3 years back already.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>No, I wasn't here at the time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 8.          | • Yes, very, very badly affected by it, it was a crash course in crises management and...and if anything, it taught us how to handle crises comms on social media and what to believe and what not to believe.  
• It was just not business as usual the way we ran social media was, *ehm* if there were little problems we'd deal with them; it just took us by storm and it just absolutely floored us *ehm* *ja*, it was a nightmare. |
| 9.          | Well not really, no wait I’m lying...at one point we had students throughout the building, so we were informed to stay calm and push the doors closed. My Dean did say do not be a hero, go back to your space and let the students do what they need to do, if you see someone lighting something then call security, do not want to jump in front of the flame. |
| 10.         | Yes, I was in a different faculty hey, yoooh we had to cancel shows hey, it was hectic, they even broke the glass door and we had to cancel and refund people who came to the arts centre, so it was |
Question 8: Is there a crisis plan that guides you on what steps to take, should a crisis occur?

Table 4.8: A Summary of the responses to Question 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>No, there isn’t one and I feel there needs to be one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>No, not at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I am not sure, there was a point where different faculties were sending different messages to students, you know, and that in itself showed that there was no crisis plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>No, you only know when [sic] you need one when you actually need one. Luckily we hadn’t needed one but it’s one of those things when the time comes for you to do it, you’ll be learning how to do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>Ehm</em> I don’t think we had a crisis plan because we were relying more on advancement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>No, but if there’s an immediate crisis I will pick up the phone and get help from the relevant people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>No, but I recall that there was a document that was sent out by the Dean to me regarding if students say this regarding the fees must fall saga, this is how it should be handled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Yes, as part of the policy we have standard operating procedures document which outlines the crisis plan, so there’s levels we call defcons, so like defcon five is big big problems, then defcon one is sort of like bubbling issues that’s happening and then per defcon we have actions that need to be taken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>No there isn’t a crisis plan but I do know protocol and what procedure to take since I’ve been here for ten years now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>No, and it’s a concern, like even when I have to hand over to someone who’ll take over my role, they would need to know what to do, so for that reason I’d say yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Codes identified | No, crisis plan, policy, protocol, role |

**Question 9:** What, in your opinion, can be done in Higher Education Institutions to manage online reputation better?

**Table 4.9: A Summary of the responses to Question 9**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Transparency is key.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2. | • Open communication approach.  
• Ensure that I’ve got enough resources and tools to represent the University when I need to.  
• Internal communication can also be bombarding, there needs to be a balance between bombarding me with unnecessary information and equipping me with the resources that I need to represent the university. |
| 3. | • Reputation management is tricky, especially because you are dealing with people’s perceptions, but I think what can be improved is if people do what they are supposed to be doing.  
• It’s also nice to sensitise people internally and externally, but especially internally, of brand management and brand reputation so that they understand that they are brand ambassadors. |
| 4. | I think they need a dedicated group of people because it’s like a wild beast that was kept in cages years and now the gates are open. |
| 5. | • For instance in future [when] crises occur they need to have a bigger budget in order to have some sponsored posts.  
• It’s not about what do you say but rather how do you say it, and secondly, it’s about checking the posts regularly especially controversial, have clear communication. |
<p>| 6. | Training, training, training! And to get people from industry that actually work on…on these types of things; it’s one thing we work in an academic environment and I think our approach even to social |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>media is very academic and there’s institutions and agencies that specialise in this type of thing <em>ehm</em> get a specialist in the industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I think we can engage more in terms of, for instance, ask; it's scary because you know you opening up yourself up to criticism if you do something like ask us a question, so yes, engaging more with the people find out what they'd like to know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I think that higher education institutions need to start taking social media more seriously and also understand that their target market and their demographics that's where they operate, so your marketing personnel, your comms person, wherever social media may lie within your institution, they need to start hiring people that play in that world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Think we as UJ are doing a pretty great job but y'all need to be a bit stricter and like have a road show so that people know what social media is and what it entails.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>They need to present content with their audiences in mind, who you’re speaking to is important and how they are most likely to respond, you know, that would help you to manage your brand perceptions better. Don't speak at them, speak with them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Codes identified**

Communication, brand perceptions, understand target market, engage more, training, specialist in industry, clear communication, reputation management
**Question 10:** Any other comments?

**Table 4.10: A Summary of the responses to Question 10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Social media people could have a longer conversation, more proactive approach letting everybody know what’s going on before it happens.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2.          | • Top-down approaches is not gonna work  
• The goal posts keep on shifting and we need to keep up. |
| 3.          | I think, so far their… their reputation management has been good, there’s not been a time where we’ve had to really put out fires. |
| 4.          | A lot of people and organisations will realise that they need a dedicated person for specifically that, specifically social media, a whole professional for that. |
| 5.          | At this moment no, can’t think of more, hey… |
| 6.          | We have just too many channels where you try to communicate, you have newsletters and social media and the website, it’s just information overload, we should get one message through one channel. |
| 7.          | • I think it could be easier, smoother, I kind of feel alone and more guidance would be great, as marketers we should see things the same way then speak the same language. I also feel that there isn't enough communication vertically and horizontally the communication is not smooth enough.  
• The top-down isn’t working, but hey, we [we’re] marketers, so we
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>adjust and add our own flavour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I wish that we could have a faster response from management. I think that the way that social media works it's so fast and so quick, by the time there's been a war room meeting with all of the management players then it's escalated like crazy and gone viral and then it's too late to release something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I think everything can always be better, we can do better than what we are already doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Learners in rural areas tend to ask questions in vernac, so we need to be more empathic towards that and be more accommodative [sic].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Codes identified | Top-down approach, proactive approach, reputation management, communicate, communicate vertically, social media faster response, newsletters |
• **Searching for themes**

A theme is a clear and meaningful pattern in the data that is relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, if codes are the bricks, cement and tiles when building a house, then themes are the walls and roof panels. Searching for codes and themes is a dynamic process; the researcher constructs themes and ends this phase by organising all the coded data relevant to each theme. Below is a summary of codes and themes that were derived from the identified codes.

### Table 4.11 Codes and themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Managing perceptions, image, risk, reputation</td>
<td>Reputation Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Content, response, policy, monitoring, strategy, information, query</td>
<td>Content Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Offline, avoid negative comments, policy, accountability,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Awareness, events, content, answering queries, update pages, publish,</td>
<td>Content management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>content manager</td>
<td>Social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Understandable, laymen terms, legal, governing tool, training</td>
<td>Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Insightful, repetitive, top-down, informative, content</td>
<td>Content management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Top-down, proactive, crises management,</td>
<td>Strategic communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Codes</td>
<td>Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scared, nightmare</td>
<td>Crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>No, crisis plan, policy, protocol, role</td>
<td>Crisis Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Communication, brand perceptions, understand target market, engage more, training, specialist in industry, clear communication, reputation management</td>
<td>Reputation management Strategic communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Top-down approach, proactive approach, reputation management, communicate, communicate vertically and horizontally, social media faster response, newsletters</td>
<td>Strategic communication Social media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researchers own construct
• **Reviewing themes**

This step involves checking that all the themes work in relation to both the coded extracts and the full dataset. The researcher now checks whether the themes tell a convincing and captivating story about the data, and then start to define the nature of each individual theme, as well as the relationship between the themes. It may be necessary to breakdown themes or group themes together or even split a theme into two or more themes. Below is a simplified diagram showing a summary of the themes and how they fall under the online reputation management umbrella.

![Figure 4.1 Reviewing themes](source: Researchers own construct)

- **Defining and naming themes**

This step is where the researcher writes a detailed analysis of each theme, while constantly asking “What story does this theme tell, how is this theme relevant and does it actually fit
into the overall picture/story?” Lastly the researcher asks what the basis of each theme is and accordingly gives each theme a brief, effective and informative name. In the case of this study, the themes were as stated below:

**Theme 1** - Reputation management

**Theme 2** - Strategic communication

**Theme 3** - Social Media

It is interesting to note that the main themes from the data collected were similar to the key concepts of the study. (Please refer to Chapter 1 Figure 1.1) as well as the literature in Chapter 2.

**Writing up**

Writing is an imperative step of the analytic process in thematic analysis (and most qualitative research). Writing up involves weaving together the narrative in order to tell the reader a coherent and convincing story about the data and contextualising it in relation to the literature (see Chapter 2). The next section will discuss the research findings in detail.

**4.3 Findings**

The purpose of this section is to discuss the research findings from the collected data in attempt to address the research problem of this study and to try meet the research objectives stated in Chapter 1. To recapitulate: data was collected through interviews, which were transcribed and coded, after which themes were identified, the themes being reputation management, strategic communication and social media. The main purpose of this chapter is to focus on the results of the research and to also link them back to the research questions in Chapter 1, the literature, as well as the interview questions.
4.3.1. Theme 1 – Reputation Management

Research sub-questions pertaining to theme 1

- How does faculty social media managers at UJ define online reputation?
- How is online reputation managed by social media managers in faculties at UJ?

Research objectives pertaining to theme 1

- To find out how faculty social media managers at UJ define online reputation.
- To determine how online reputation is managed by social media managers in faculties at UJ.

Interview questions pertaining to theme 1

Question 1: What is online reputation management in your own understanding?

Question 2: How do you manage online reputation in your line of work?

Question 7: Where you affected by the #FeesMustFall crises and how did it affect your daily operations?

Question 8: Is there a crisis plan that guides you on what steps to take should a crisis occur?
### Table 4.12 Similarities and differences pertaining to Research Objective 1 & 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key similarities in the participant’s answers</th>
<th>Key differences in the participant’s answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 1:</strong> Most participants said that managing online reputation in their own understanding is to manage perceptions, avoiding risk and building the brand image.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 2:</strong> Majority of the participants said that monitoring, ensuring that content is correct and aligned with the UJ social media policy as well as answering queries is how they manage online reputation in their line of work.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 7:</strong> Majority was not really affected by the fees must fall protests.</td>
<td><strong>Question 7:</strong> Minority said that they were affected by the protests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 8:</strong> All participants said no, except for one.</td>
<td><strong>Question 8:</strong> Only one participant said that she has a crisis plan in place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary of findings:** The participants’ responses were similar and showed that the majority had understood what online reputation management is. Most participants mentioned that this was mainly about managing perceptions and one participant spoke about monitoring as well.
The research objective of the research has been met, as this theme answered the questions below:

- To find out how faculty social media managers at UJ define online reputation.
- To determine how online reputation is managed by social media managers in faculties at UJ

P1. “Perception that people have about you as a brand or as an individual”

P10. “Managing the perceptions surrounding your brand or organisation or company online. Perceptions of your target audience to be specific as well as secondary audiences, their experience of you, how people view you, what they say, how they engage with you it all boils down to perception.”

P3 “Proper management”

P4. “Reputation management is reputation management, it’s just a tool”.

P7. “It’s the same way you would manage reputation offline, it just happens to be online which is a bit more sensitive and goes viral quickly”.

P9. “It would be literally managing our reputation, we’ve got Facebook, we’ve got Twitter, Instagram and a website so it’s to ensure I’m posting something in the UJ domain and also ensuring that the followers don’t say anything negative on my page, like bashing students and staff”.

P10. “Managing the perceptions surrounding your brand or organisation or company online. Perceptions of your target audience to be specific as well as secondary audiences, their experience of you, how people view you, what they say, how they engage with you it all boils down to perception.”

The participants perceptions of their roles are also aligned with UJ’s Social Media standard operating procedures section of roles and responsibilities point 6.1 (Please refer to Appendix F):
- Monitoring the University's brand and reputation across corporate, faculty and department.

Page 78: “It is monitoring and evaluating ehm what the public says about UJ and its reputation, it is also influencing that reputation, so it’s got a lot to do with research, what people think and seeing where we need to sway people”.

4.3.2 Theme 2 – Strategic Communication

Research-sub questions pertaining to theme 2

- What is the role of a social media manager in an online context according to faculty social media managers at UJ?

Research objectives pertaining to theme 2

- To determine what the role of a social media manager is in an online context according to faculty social media managers at UJ.

Interview questions pertaining to theme 2

Question 4: What is your role as a social media manager in an online context?

Question 9: What, in your opinion, can be done in Higher Education Institutions to manage online reputation better?

Question 10: Any other comments?
Table 4.13 Similarities and differences pertaining to Research Objective 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key similarities in the participant’s answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 4:</strong> Social media managers have various roles; similar roles that came out of their responses were to generate, manage and upload content, furthermore, to answer queries, create dialogue and post events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key differences in the participant’s answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 9:</strong> Majority of the social media managers felt that higher education institutions need to have more open and clearer communication where trained people do what they are tasked to do. Some said they need bigger budgets and an increase in engagement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Question 10:** Most participants felt that the top-to-bottom communication needs to change to a bottom-up approach, as it’s the people on the ground that have a broader understanding of what is happening everywhere; this form of communication will also improve turnaround time in responding to |
### Key similarities in the participant’s answers

- Situations such as a crisis.

### Key differences in the participant’s answers

**Summary of findings:** Majority of the participants agreed that the role of the social media manager is that of content curatorship to create dialogue. Higher education institutions need clearer and open communication about the role of the social media manager, while financial constraints need to be addressed. Bottom-up communication facilitation is necessary to assist in improving response time in crisis situations. The research showed that “content management” was one of the key roles of a social media manager according to the participants’ responses.

**P1** “Generate content”.

**P5** “Develop the content is to upload the content and also to post the content as well as to show the university’s look and feel, the campuses, to create consistency and to ensure we’re speaking with the same voice and language”.

**P8** “I’m more of a content manager”.

What is interesting from the research is that the participants’ understanding of what their roles are, “content managers” was indicated, which is reflected both in the literature (chapter 2) as well as the **UJ’s Social Media standard operating procedures** section of roles and responsibilities point 6.1.4 (please refer to Appendix F).

### 4.3.3 Theme 3 – Social Media

*Research sub-questions pertaining to theme 3*

Are social media managers that manage social networks trained/equipped to manage online reputational risk in line with the UJ social Media policy?
Research objectives pertaining to theme 3

- To determine if social media managers that manage social networks are trained/equipped to manage online reputational risk in line with the UJ social Media policy.

Interview questions pertaining to theme 3

Question 3: How do you respond to negative comments, please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment.

Question 5: Are you familiar with the UJ Social Media policy?

Question 6: Have you attended a Social Media training at UJ

Table 4.14 Similarities and differences pertaining to Research Objective 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key similarities in the participant's answers</th>
<th>Key differences in the participant's answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 3: Majority said that they deal with all negative comments offline. Participant two said “the best thing you do is you take it offline and apologise where you need to apologise, and you take accountability.”</td>
<td>Question 3: One participant mentioned that at times they look at the level of the negativity and work from that to see whether they should take action or not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5: All participants said yes, and majority felt that the policy needs to be shorter and presented in layman’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key similarities in the participant’s answers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Key differences in the participant’s answers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>terms for easier understanding.</td>
<td>Question 6: Two participants said that they haven’t attended a social media training session.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 6:** Majority said yes, that they have attended social media training before; however the trainings needed to be more in depth.

Summary of findings: The findings in relation to theme three (3) are quite positive, as the majority know how to handle negative comments, like taking them offline and apologising accordingly. The findings further revealed that the majority of social media managers have attended training, but most felt that training should no longer be repetitive:

- **P2** “Yes - it’s a repetition of the same content.
It's a blanket approach, top-down approach”

- **P6** “I feel like its missing a whole lot, I’ve got more questions, it’s simple but it could be more specific and tailored for social media managers and not the…the general stuff, I feel like it can be more”.

- **P9** “but I do find that is repetitive”.

- **P10** “it’s not in depth enough; to be honest, they just touch the surface and not go deeper, look I feel there’s more to social media than what they teach, every time I go there I’m hoping to learn something new I feel like they saying the same obvious thing and move on to the next level”.

This shows that the social media managers are well trained and feel ready to now move to the next level instead of going through the same old training format and being trained
the same way as every training session before – the managers want something new. The majority also felt that the social media policy should be shorter and in layman’s terms for majority to understand:

P4 “It could be more understandable, not everyone knows the social media terminologies.

I think it could be like more layman because nobody is going to sit and read the document, it needs to be explained”.

P2 “I wouldn’t say I purely understand everything because unfortunately the social media policy is written for legal heads”.

P5 “Well look, it could be more understandable”.

The research has shown that in terms of training and policy-writing a lot more needs to be done. The policy needs to be easier to understand and a lot shorter, as people do not often read long documents. The training needs to improve in terms of bringing new elements to the training so that it is not repetitive.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter aimed to discuss the findings of the research. The chapter began by discussing both content and thematic analysis, thereafter data collected from interviewing social media managers within faculties and departments was analysed using thematic analysis and the data was processed by applying Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six phases of thematic analysis to identify key themes. Three main themes were identified, namely reputation management, strategic communication and social media. The findings were compared to both the literature, social media policy, as well as the UJ’s Social Media
standard operating procedures. Chapter 5 will provide the conclusions and recommendations for the research study.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to conclude the research findings which are related to the research objectives outlined in Chapter 1. This chapter will first outline a concise overview of the research, thereafter the recommendations as well as the conclusions will be presented for each research objective and the theme that was identified in the research, followed by the recommendations as well as the conclusion. This chapter will be concluded by discussing the research limitations as well as recommendations for future research.

5.2 Overview of the study

The purpose of this research was to investigate the perceptions of a Higher Education Institution (HEI), the University of Johannesburg’s (UJ’s) social media managers in Faculties regarding their role in managing the online reputation of a HEI. The study further intended to explore whether social media managers have clearly defined roles that are guided by the UJ social media policy, and appropriate training to execute their roles effectively and strategically when a crisis occurs. Chapter 1 outlined the background of the study, the problem statement, rationale of the study, the research questions and objectives. Chapter 2 focused on the literature underpinning the research and discussed imperative theory relevant to the study. Chapter 3 covered the research methodology used to collect and analyse data that was needed to meet the research objectives, with Chapter 4 presenting the research findings of the study, using Braun and Clarke’s phases of thematic analysis. In Chapter 5 a brief summary of the themes is given, with a conclusion as well as recommendations. This chapter will conclude by listing the limitations of the
5.3 Summary of findings

5.3.1 Research objectives 1 & 2

Theme 1 assisted in answering two of the research questions and meeting two objectives of the study. The first question was “How does faculty social media managers at UJ define online reputation?” Participants were in agreement that online reputation management meant managing perceptions, positively upholding the image of their faculty and their organisation and minimising risk. This is in line with the literature where Dolle (2014) defines online reputation management as the way by which companies can deal with customer attacks on social media, hence companies have to organise and execute an effective online reputation management plan.

The second question was “How is online reputation managed by social media managers in Faculties at UJ?” The majority of the participants shared that part of their roles was to create, maintain and upload content on their respective social media pages. Other participants indicated that they also monitored their pages and answered queries; they also ensured that their roles were aligned with the UJ social media policy. This is again line with literature. Dolle (2014) states that effective online reputation management requires knowledgeable employees within an organisation that manage social media and who have the necessary skills and a crisis plan according to a social media policy to deal with any unforeseen crises in order to mitigate reputational risk.

Participants were further asked if they were affected by the #FeesMustFast protests. The majority said no, which was quite interesting. This could mean that the overall UJ social
media crises plan is effective. It is, however, a great concern that apart from only one participant, all other participants did not have a crisis plan to use or apply, should a crisis occur in their Faculties.

5.3.2 Research objective 3

Theme 2 asked the question “What is the role of a social media manager in an online context according to faculty social media managers at UJ?” The research showed that the social media managers have various roles, with their main role being to manage content, answer queries, and create dialogue with external stakeholders. This met the research objective, which was to determine what the role of a social media manager was in an online context, according to faculty social media managers at UJ. Theme two is also relevant to some of the interview questions. The majority of participants felt that HEIs should be more open and have clearer communication, where the trained social media managers within Faculties actually do what they have been tasked to do. Some participants said that they needed bigger budgets in order to execute their roles more effectively. Another interesting point, also supported by the literature, is the “top down approach” to communication; most participants felt that this approach to communication needed to change to bottom-up, because the turnaround time in getting an answer from management took forever, even when something was needed urgently: it first had go through executive leadership, then to the managers, next to the people on the ground. The majority of participants felt that this process took too much time and that the people on the ground picked up issues quicker – therefore they could immediately take action.

Similarly, in literature Fredette and Brandshaw (2012) argue that the role of social media managers is to help brands and organisations communicate publicly, as well as to increase organisational resilience, influence, and reputation (Taylor & Doerfel, 2011). This highlights the imperative role social media managers’ play in an organisation, particularly at a HEI. Most managers consider social media as a powerful means of influencing
stakeholder perceptions, behavior and being a positive force (Valentini, 2015) that can enhance communication, marketing, advocacy, stakeholder engagement, awareness building, accountability, and relationship-building activities (Campbell, Lambright, & Wells, 2014).

5.3.3 Research objective 4

Theme 3 revealed quite interesting results, as majority of the participants shared that they dealt with negative comments offline instead on online. As this was away from the public's attention, it meant that they could tackle the negativity in a more constructive manner. One participant shared that he usually first assesses the level of negativity of the post or comment and then deals with it accordingly. This means that if the negative comment gets a lot of attraction he deals with it immediately; if it is something small that is not attracting a lot people, he overlooks it. Theme 3 answers the last research question: Are social media managers that manage social networks trained/equipped to manage online reputational risk in line with the UJ social Media policy? The research showed that the majority of the social media managers are trained and have attended social media training, with only one responded stating that he/she has never attended a training session before. With regard to the UJ social media policy, the participants felt that the policy was too long and that it should be short and written in layman’s terms.

5.4 Recommendations for practice

Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations are made:

- A crisis plan document should be made available to all social media managers managing social media pages in Faculties and Departments.
- Social media training should be compulsory to all social media managers.
• A uniform set of roles and responsibilities for all social media managers within Faculties and Departments should apply.

• The social media policy should be simplified and made shorter (perhaps both a summarised and detailed social media policy should be made available to all, for everyone’s convenience).

• Communication within HEIs needs to be more open, transparent and a bottom-up approach to communicating.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The following limitations apply to this study:

• The study was limited to social media managers within a Higher Education Institution. This is quite a small sample size and can be further expanded to government and corporate employees that manage social media pages.

• Social media and online reputation management are two key aspects that have extensive and new information every year as change occurs constantly; therefore the research was limited to the present situation.

5.6 Recommendation for future research

It is recommended that the research be expanded to include more HEIs in South Africa.
5.7 Conclusion

This final chapter began with an overview of the research study, thereafter discussing each theme and how the research questions, objective and interview questions were relevant to each theme. The chapter then concluded with recommendations, its limitations, as well as suggestions for further research. The study achieved to reach its research objectives as outlined in Chapter 1 and reviewed the literature that was relevant to the study. The researcher can conclude that although social media managers in Faculties and Departments at a HEI have clearly defined roles, there still is room for improvement, particularly having a crises plan should a crisis occur. The findings managed to show that the social media policy needed to be reviewed and shortened for the convenience of the social media managers within a HEI.
Reference list


https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.crr.1550012


Bruhn M., Schoenmueller V. Schäfer D.B. (2012), Are social media replacing traditional media in terms of brand equity creation?, *Management Research Review*, 35(9), 770 – 790


https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2006.04.001


Dolle, R. (2014). *Online Reputation Management. Conference proceedings of the 4th IBA Bachelor Thesis Conference held in The Netherlands*, University of Twente, Faculty of Management and Governance.


Peg, K.J, O’Donnell, A.W, Lala, G. & Barber, B.L. (2018). The role of online social


Holloway, I. Berkshire: Open University Press.


APPENDIX A: INFORMATION LETTER

Higher Education Institutions in South Africa have been experiencing negative publicity due to protests such as the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall campaigns, both campaigns have caused disruptions in South African universities’ operations as well as their internal and external communication strategies. The purpose of this research is to investigate how online reputation is managed by social media managers within faculties at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in line with the university’s social media policy.

This research aims to investigate the perceptions of UJ’s social media managers in faculties regarding their role in managing the online reputation of an HEI. The study further intends to find out if social media managers have clearly defined roles that are guided by the UJ social media policy and appropriate training to execute their roles effectively and strategically when a crisis occurs. The findings of the study will add to the body of knowledge in strategic communication by providing information that can be used at HEIs in South Africa including UJ and abroad that utilise social media to communicate with its stakeholders.

Your voluntary participation in this study is important to ensure reliable and valid findings about how online reputation is managed at UJ. Please note that all ethical guidelines for conducting social research such as voluntary participation, anonymity of responses, and protecting research participants from vulnerability and harm will be followed. To ensure anonymity no personal details of participants will be recorded or any faculty specific questions asked.

It is expected that the interview will last between 15 to 20 minutes.
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

I, the undersigned, confirm that:

I have read and understood the information about the research, as provided in the information sheet.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and my participation.

I voluntarily agree to participate in the research.

I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.

The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.

If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and will be sent back to me for validation purposes that these were indeed my own words.

The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.

I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.

Please select only one of the following with a cross:

☐ I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this research will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this research can be recognised.
☐ I do not want my name used in this research.

☐ I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.

**Participant:**

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**Researcher:**

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Interview Questions

1. What is online reputation management in your own understanding?
2. How do you manage online reputation in your line of work?
3. How do you respond to negative comments, please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment.
4. What is your role as a social media manager in an online context?
5. Are you familiar with the UJ Social Media policy?
6. Have you attended a Social Media training at UJ?
7. Where you effected by the #FeesMustFall crises and how did it affect your daily operations?
8. Is there a crises plan that guides you on what steps to take should a crises occur?
9. What in your opinion can be done in Higher Education Institutions to manage online reputation better?
10. Any other comments?
APPENDIX D: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

University of Johannesburg
Doornfontein Campus

Corner of Siemert and Beit Street
Doornfontein

Johannesburg

2028

Re: Permission to conduct research

Dear Dr Meintjes

I am writing to formally indicate our awareness of the research proposed by Michelle Radikariki, a student at The University of Johannesburg (UJ). We are aware that Michelle intends to conduct her research by interviewing UJ employees.

As the Social Media Manager at the University Relations Division, I grant Michelle permission to conduct her research at our organization. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office on 011 559 6352

Sincerely,

Ms Dale Kitchin
Social Media Manager
APPENDIX E: UJ SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY
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<th>RELATED DOCUMENTS</th>
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<td><strong>UJ Documents</strong></td>
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<td>(e.g. Policies, Regulations, Guidelines, Contracts)</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>• UJ Conditions of Service;</td>
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<td>• UJ Employee Code of Conduct;</td>
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<td>• UJ Student Regulations;</td>
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<td>• Code of Conduct for Members of Council;</td>
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<td>• UJ Risk Management Model;</td>
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<td>• UJ Risk Management Policy;</td>
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<td>• UJ Vision, Mission and Values;</td>
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<td>• UJ Strategic Plan;</td>
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<td>• UJ Policy on Brand and Corporate Visual Identity;</td>
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<td>• UJ Electronic Communications Policy;</td>
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<td>• UJ ICS Policy.</td>
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Stakeholders affected by this document (units and divisions who should be familiar with it):

- Council Members;
- All University Employees;
- Student Representative Council;
- Students;
- All stakeholders;
- All persons (internal or external) who make use of UJ and other social media platforms.

Website Address: www.uj.ac.za
1. **PREAMBLE**

1.1 In pursuit of its vision of being an international university of choice, anchored in Africa, dynamically shaping the future, Stakeholders of the University of Johannesburg (“the University”/ “UJ”) use various forms of communication with others, including Social Media Platforms (“SMPs”). The University recognises that the conduct of Stakeholders when using such forms of communication is measured against existing norms and standards which, having regard to the unique features of social media platforms, include:
   - the South African Constitution, especially the Bill of Rights contained in Chapter 2, and other relevant law;
   - the University’s vision, mission, values and strategic objectives;
   - the University’s prescriptions for brand use on any platform, that fall under the control and supervision of the Social Media Management Section of the University;
   - codes of conduct and all other applicable rules, regulations, policies, practices and procedures of the University that govern the relations between the University and its employees, students and other Stakeholders, for example the University’s Conditions of Service, the UJ Student Regulations and the Code of Conduct for Members of Council;
   - various policies of the University that deal with the principles, procedures, and practices of conflict resolution, for example the policy on whistle-blowing;
   - the freedom of academic speech, i.e. forms of speech that are defended by lawful reasons and based in facts.

1.2 The University provides a uniform framework for the use of SMPs by Stakeholders, whether or not the SMPs are used for and on behalf of the University or are UJ SMPs, which framework must be viewed against the broader background of the use of all forms of communication by Stakeholders.
2 PURPOSE AND STATUS OF THE POLICY

2.1 The right to freedom of expression coupled with the corollary right to receive and impart information is constitutionally-entrenched,¹ and has been recognised as a cornerstone of democracy and deserving of the utmost protection. The right includes the protection of robust or critical speech, within the Law. This is particularly important in the context of academic freedom, which the University desires in all instances both to respect and encourage.

2.2 The purpose of this Policy is not to unduly limit the right to freedom of expression, or to chill the exercise and enjoyment of this right. Rather, the purpose of this Policy is to record and publish to Stakeholders the policy of the University for the use of SMPs by Stakeholders whether or not the SMPs are used for and on behalf of the University or are UJ SMPs, viewed against the broader background of the use of all forms of communication by Stakeholders.

2.3 The Policy provides a set of guidelines that should inform the conduct of the Stakeholders. In seeking to describe permissible conduct when using SMPs, the Policy upholds the Constitution, other Law, and international best practice applicable to the Policy and the use of SMPs.

2.4 Except as provided for below the Policy does not constitute a binding set of rules, and the Policy does not create new transgressions.

2.4.1 The Policy is binding and creates transgressions as well as rights and remedies for the University against Stakeholders to the extent that the Policy is not inconsistent with the

¹ Section 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 provides as follows:

"Freedom of expression
(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes –
   (a) freedom of the press and other media;
   (b) freedom to receive or impart information or ideas;
   (c) freedom of artistic creativity; and
   (d) academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.
(2) The right in subsection (1) does not extend to –
   (a) propaganda for war;
   (b) incitement of imminent violence; or
   (c) advocacy of hatred that is based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion, and that constitutes incitement to cause harm."
Law and applicable disciplinary codes set out in, for example, the UJ Conditions of Service, the UJ Student Regulations and the Code of Conduct for Members of Council.

2.4.2 Employees of the University who use UJ SMPs in the course and scope of their employment under the control and supervision of the Social Media Management Section to promote and protect the brand and reputation of the University and to market the University, are bound by the Policy.

3. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Policy are to create:

3.1 uniform guidelines for the responsible and appropriate use of SMPs with a view –

3.1.1 to recognise that SMPs provide an important medium of expression, the freedom of which is guaranteed by the Constitution, as is academic freedom;

3.1.2 to seek to uphold the right to freedom of expression to the greatest extent possible, and to strike the appropriate balance, where necessary, between the enjoyment of the freedom with, amongst others, the rights and freedoms of others, bearing in mind that academic freedom receives special mention in the Constitution, which means that it lies at the core of the right to freedom of expression, and should be limited only when reasonable and justifiable in terms of the Constitution;

3.1.3 to provide transparency in connection with the principles adopted by the University to guide decisions of decision-makers relating to the issues it covers with the aim of reaching consistent, reasonable and rational decisions;

3.1.4 to inform the University’s Stakeholders of the principles adopted thereby providing them with a measure of certainty regarding their required behaviour when using SMPs;

3.1.5 to avoid case by case and fresh enquiry into every identical or comparable instance of use of SMPs which requires decisions to be made;
3.1.6 to prevent or reduce the risk of the University –

(a) suffering reputational damage or damage to its own brand, or

(b) incurring vicarious liability for damages arising from the conduct of Stakeholders in respect of SMPs, whether or not SMPs are used for and on behalf of the University or are UJ SMPs, in line with the test for vicarious liability described in clause 5 below.

3.2 a framework to manage the interactions, functionality and responsibilities of Stakeholders using UJ SMPs;

3.3 assurance that the University, the Stakeholders and the University’s brand are appropriately represented across SMPs, that this representation is maintained, that the content of the UJ SMPs are regulated, and that the University’s corporate identity, overall reputation and brand is protected and properly managed on the UJ SMPs.

4. SCOPE

4.1 This Policy applies to all Stakeholders who communicate with others for and on behalf of the University and in the context of the Policy, particularly those who use the UJ SMPs. Any SMP making use of the University’s official branding or logo falls within the scope of the Policy.

4.2 This Policy does not seek to regulate or interfere with the communication of Stakeholders with others which do not take place for and on behalf of the University, for example in general, non-official, public pages on SMPs that use “UJ” or “University of Johannesburg” in their title unless reputational or brand damage can arise from such usage, and the authors can be associated with UJ. The Policy also alerts Stakeholders to the fact that the University may have a sufficient and legitimate interest in their communications with others which do not take place for and on behalf of the University and the legal rights and remedies that the University may have according to the Law in this regard, and where the authors can be associated with UJ by a reasonable observer.
5. **ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS**

For the purpose of this Policy, unless it is stated otherwise or the context indicates otherwise, the following abbreviations and terms will bear the following meaning and other grammatical forms of the terms have corresponding meanings:

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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Content Calendar</td>
<td>A calendar, compiled weekly, monthly or annually, that includes information or content that serves as a guideline for the postings to be placed on social media by a division or department of the University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Content Loader</td>
<td>The person responsible for posting content or scheduling content on SMPs who can also be the Content Provider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Content Provider</td>
<td>The person responsible for posting content or scheduling content on SMPs who can also be the Content Loader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>HEA</td>
<td>Higher Education Act 101 of 1997</td>
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<td>5.5</td>
<td>Law</td>
<td>Any law of general application and includes the Constitution, common law and any statute, decree, treaty, regulation, directive, ordinance, by-law, order or any other enactment of legislative measure of government (including national, provincial and local government), statutory or regulatory body which has the force of law</td>
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<td>5.6</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>The test to be applied when determining whether any expression is likely to lead to a consequence (for example, harm), is an objective one. In accordance with this objective test the criterion is what meaning the reasonable observer would attribute to the expression. In applying this test of a reasonable observer it is accepted that the reasonable observer would understand the expression in its context and that he or she would have had regard not only to what is expressed but also to what is implied.</td>
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<td>5.7</td>
<td>MEC</td>
<td>Management Executive Committee of the University</td>
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<td>5.8</td>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>The Social Media Policy</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
<td>Public interest</td>
<td>Includes any action, decision or policy that affects the public at large or that is of legitimate interest or importance to people as it affects the common good. Examples of the public interest include the public conduct of a public official or someone occupying a position of public influence whether in the public or private sectors, or civil society; political, religion and/or state matters; the administration of justice; the management of public institutions; the administration of local affairs by local politicians; anything which may fairly be said to invite comment or challenge public attention because it affects the common good.</td>
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<td>5.10</td>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>The Republic of South Africa</td>
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<td>5.11</td>
<td>Responsible Person</td>
<td>Content Loaders and Content Providers.</td>
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<td>5.12</td>
<td>Social media content</td>
<td>Copy or text, images, videos and audio</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.13</td>
<td>Social Media Management Section</td>
<td>The Central Management Section regarding the management of the UJ Brand on SMPs and online platforms. The University’s marketing is decentralised; however, this Section within the Corporate Marketing and Brand Department co-ordinates efforts in this sphere and has the authority and responsibility to manage and control the University’s social media presence. The Social Management Section thus includes employees of the University who are employed within the Advancement Division and employees in other structures of the University in respect of whom there is a dotted reporting line between them and the Advancement Division.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.14</td>
<td>SMPs</td>
<td>All forms of social media platforms, websites and pages, including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Blogs and the UJ website</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>All University employees, officials, persons who hold special UJ appointments, students (including students in residences or belonging to societies), alumni and associates who use social media for and on behalf of the University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>Transgressions</td>
<td>Includes offences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>UJ SMPs</td>
<td>SMPs that are owned, operated and officially branded by the University with the official authorization and approval of the University's Social Media Management Section</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>University/ UJ</td>
<td>University of Johannesburg</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>Wrongfulness</td>
<td>Without limiting the meaning of the term in common law, an enquiry into wrongfulness is determined by weighing competing norms and interests (including public interest and academic freedom). The criterion of wrongfulness ultimately depends on a judicial determination of whether, assuming all the other elements of liability are present, it would be reasonable to hold a Stakeholder liability for specific conduct. Whether conduct is wrongful is tested against the legal convictions of the community which are, ‘by necessity underpinned and informed by the norms and values of our society, embodied in the Constitution’, Oppelt v Head: Health, Department of Health Provincial Administration: Western Cape (CCT185/14) [2015] ZACC 33; 2016 (1) SA 325 (CC); 2015 (12) BCLR 1471 (CC) (14 October 2015) § 51. The onus to prove a Stakeholder’s wrongfulness may be on the University or the onus to prove the absence of wrongfulness (a ground of justification) may be on a Stakeholder as determined by law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>Vicarious liability</td>
<td>Reference to vicarious liability that the University may incur for the conduct of its employees is derived from the existing legal principles, including in terms of labour law and the common law. The University can be held liable for the wrongful conduct of its employees performed in the course and scope of their employment or whilst they are engaged with the affairs of the University. In the case of deviant conduct on the part of its employees, two questions are to be asked for the University to escape vicarious liability. The first is whether the wrongful acts were done solely for the purposes of the employee.² This</td>
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² This is correct (and should not be “employer” as was queried). Where, for example, an employee stole money from a student, such an act was solely carried out for the purpose of the employee,
question requires a subjective consideration of the employee’s state of mind and is a purely factual question. Even if it is answered in the affirmative, however, the University may nevertheless be liable vicariously if the second question, an objective one, is answered affirmatively. That question is whether, even though the acts carried out have been done solely for the purpose of the employee, there is nevertheless a sufficiently close link between the employee’s acts for his own interests and the purposes and the business of the University.

6 PRINCIPLES

The Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

6.1 The University is a public higher education institution under the HEA in terms of which it is desirable to restructure and transform programmes and institutions to respond better to the human resource, economic and development needs of the Republic; redress past discrimination and ensure representativity and equal access; provide optimal opportunities for learning and the creation of knowledge; promote the values which underlie an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom; respect freedom of religion, belief and opinion; respect and encourage democracy, academic freedom, freedom of speech and expression (which includes freedom to receive or impart information or ideas), creativity, scholarship and research; pursue excellence, promote the full realisation of the potential of every student and employee, tolerance of ideas and appreciation of diversity; respond to the needs of the Republic and of the communities served by the institutions; contribute to the advancement of all forms of knowledge and scholarship, in keeping with international standards of academic quality; and for higher education institutions to enjoy freedom and autonomy in their relationship with the State yet the University may be held vicariously liable for such conduct if there was a sufficiently close link between the employee’s act for his own interest and the purposes and business of the University. It will be difficult, for example, to deny that the University is liable where the employee in question was employed in the Student Finance Division.

Ibid.
within the context of public accountability and the national need for advanced skills and scientific knowledge.

6.2 The University and its policies are subject to the Constitution of the Republic as the supreme law of the land and the other Laws of the Republic and in the case of the Policy these include the Copyright Act 98 of 1978, the Trade Marks Act 194 of 1993, the Competition Act 89 of 1998, the Electronic Communications Act 36 of 2005 and the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013.

6.3 Social media plays an important role in the institutional activities of the University including its:

6.3.1 teaching and learning;

6.3.2 research;

6.3.3 community engagement;

6.3.4 marketing and brand development.

6.4 Whilst social media platforms create new tools of communication, the norms applicable to traditional ways of communication are applicable to them. So the provisions of the Policy are informed by the norms applicable to traditional ways of communication and the provisions of the Policy in turn also record the conduct expected from Stakeholders in respect of all forms of expressions to the extent that they are is consistent with the Law and applicable disciplinary codes.

6.5 The University uses social media platforms to pursue its vision, mission and strategic objectives. The contents uploaded to the UJ SMPs must at all times be consistent with the University’s values.

6.6 The University is the registered proprietor of various trademarks including the University’s logo. It jealously guards the way in which its trademarks (including its logo) and its name is used. The University has spent considerable time, money and effort in building its
reputation and in marketing and promoting its products and services, including under its registered trademarks and www.uj.ac.za domain name.

6.7 Since the University is the owner of the UJ SMPs, its trademarks (including its logo) and its domain name, the management and the administration thereof vest in the Vice-Chancellor and the Management of the University, who are accountable to Council in respect thereof.

6.8 Stakeholders have the freedom to express themselves in various forms of communication (including SMPs) outside the course and scope of their employment by the University and without them doing so for and on behalf of the University. Nevertheless the University may have a sufficient and legitimate interest in the contents of these expressions which may result in the University acquiring legal rights and remedies against them in terms of the Law.

6.9 Content uploaded to social media platforms are public, can be accessed globally, can be downloaded and further distributed, and is usually permanent, even if deleted.

7. DUTIES OF EMPLOYEES IN RESPECT OF SMPS

7.1 The contents of UJ SMPs must at all times comply with the University’s rules, regulations, policies, procedures and practices.

7.2 All employees are bound by the UJ Conditions of Service and the rules, regulations, policies, practices and Standard Operating Procedures that govern their conduct, including in respect of SMPs. All employment contracts also include express and tacit terms, and terms implied by law. Without limiting the generality of the aforesaid these require that:

7.2.1 all employees must act in, promote, and protect the interests of the University;

7.2.2 all employees must retain a relationship of trust and confidence with the University (i.e. employees stand in a fiduciary relationship to the University);
7.2.3 all employees owe the University a duty of utmost good faith;

7.2.4 all employees must act with care and skill;

7.2.5 employees’ conduct may not cause disharmony in the workplace (i.e. the University is entitled to insist on reasonably harmonious interpersonal relationships in the workplace). Within the University’s context it is recognised that robust academic debate and intellectual engagement by themselves are acceptable and encouraged and are considered to be in line with the ethos of the University.

7.3 Arising from the aforesaid considerations expressions by employees, even in what may be considered by them to have been made in a personal or private capacity, may result in the University acquiring legal rights and remedies against them in terms of the Law. The more likely it is for members of the public to associate an employee of the University with the University, the more such employee must be alert to this issue. Employees must be mindful that it is nowadays relatively easy to use publicly available information (for example on websites) to establish that a person is employed by or associated with the University.

7.4 Instances where the University may acquire legal rights and remedies in terms of the Law against employees arising from their expressions, include when expressions wrongfully infringe upon the rights of the University, its Stakeholders, or others, or when inappropriate wrongful expressions are associated with the University. Examples of these include expressions which:

7.4.1 are or are likely to be harmful, detrimental or injurious to the University, its image, brand, and reputation\(^4\) or the University’s relationships\(^5\) with others or groups;

7.4.2 are intended or are likely to have the effect of inciting violence or advocate hatred;

\(^4\) § 3.3.3 CoCS; § 3.3.4 CoCS.

\(^5\) § 5.1(r) CoCE.
7.4.3 are or are likely to be interpreted as being threatening, obscene, abusive, oppressive, grossly offensive, vulgar, profane, defamatory, discriminatory, racist, pornographic, intimidating, indecent, harassing or otherwise wrongful;

7.4.4 infringes upon intellectual property rights or privacy laws;

7.4.5 bring or are likely to bring the University or any person employed by or attending the University into disrepute;

7.4.6 fall in the above categories and are further distributed or associated with (for example retweeted, shared, or linked on a SMP, or to which an employee is tagged without doing anything about it if possible).

7.5 Disclaimers such as “these are my personal views” or “these comments should not be imputed to my employer” may, where appropriate, be considered to be mitigating factors, but do not necessarily put an expression beyond the sufficient and legitimate interest of the University in terms of the Law.

7.6 Employees should be aware that the lines between a “professional” social media persona and “private” or “personal” social media persona have become blurred. There is a growing body of legal precedent that acknowledges that employers may take disciplinary measures against employees and even dismiss them arising from expressions on supposedly

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6 § 5.1(h) CoCE; § 4.3.1 CoCS; § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
7 § 5.1(g) CoCE § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
8 § 5.1(g) CoCE.
9 § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
10 § 5.1(k) CoCE; § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
11 § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
12 § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
13 § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
14 § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
15 § 4.3.5 CoCS; § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
16 § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
17 § 5.1(k) CoCE § 4.3.1 CoCS.
18 § 5.1(p) CoCE; § 2.1.3 CoCS; § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
19 § 5.1(o) CoCE.
20 § 4.3.1 CoCS; § 13.4.3 of approved Electronic Communications Policy.
21 § 2.1.3 CoCS; § 3.3.3 CoCS; § 3.3.4 CoCS.
22 This is subject to "wrongfulness" and alerts Stakeholders to Isparta v Richter and Another (22452/12) [2013] ZAGPPHC 243; 2013 (6) SA 529 (GNP) (4 September 2013).
“private” or “personal” SMPs in instances where they can be associated with their employer.

7.7 As long as employees act in the utmost of good faith towards the University, observe the University’s values when expressing themselves including on “private” or “personal” SMPs and do not breach the express, tacit or implied terms of their employment contracts, the University is unlikely to involve itself with expressions not made in the course and scope of their employment. The University does not necessarily have an interest in expressions which do not fully meet this standard, but employees are urged to consider the matter carefully before making them.

7.8 All members of staff, in particular academic and research staff, may, and should, use their UJ designation when publishing the results of their research and scholarly work on SMPs, and when doing so they neither need, nor are they presumed to have, institutional endorsement for their views, arguments and results.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS

Students must be alert to the fact that the contents they post on SMPs may not contravene the regulations to which they subscribe when they register as students of the University, including the UJ Student Regulations.

9. IDENTIFICATION

9.1 Responsible Persons dealing with UJ SMPs must identify themselves clearly to the Social Media Management Section.

9.2 All Responsible Persons must give access to the UJ SMPs they use to the Social Media Management Section either as administrators or by giving email address passwords to the Social Media Management Section for safe storage.

10. UNAUTHORISED USE OF UJ PROPERTY
No person may use the UJ Brand, which includes, but is not limited to, its logos, slogans, corporate colours, trademarks, banners, wedge on SMPs or online platforms, unless prior written consent has been obtained from the Marketing and Brand Office of the University or is consistent with the templates provided by this Office.

11. CANCELLATION OF THE RIGHT TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA

UJ reserves the right to cancel and/or delete any content on UJ SMPs at its sole discretion.

12. REPORTING OF BREACHES

Employees must report any breach of this Policy to the Social Media Management Section.

13. ALLOCATION OF DUTIES TO THE SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT SECTION, FACULTY MARKETING REPRESENTATIVES AND REPORTING LINES

13.1 The Social Media Management Section co-ordinates institution-wide efforts in the use of UJ SMPs and has the authority to manage and control UJ SMPs in respect of the University’s reputation.

13.2 The Social Media Management Section’s first point of contact with regard to SMPs is the faculty marketing representatives and Responsible Persons within other support divisions.

13.3 Faculty marketing representatives or persons tasked to perform the relevant function, co-ordinate, monitor and track the faculty’s or division’s presence on SMPs.

13.4 The reporting line for issues occurring or arising from SMPs follows normal reporting lines, which usually (but not always) amount to the following: units/centres report to departments/sections; departments/ sections to faculties/divisions; faculties/divisions to the University Social Media Management Section, which then reports to the Advancement Executive Director and then the Vice-Chancellor and MEC. The reverse is the case with regard to disseminating messages on SMPs from the top down.
14. RESPONSIBLE PERSONS AND THEIR DUTIES

14.1 Responsible Persons for UJ SMPs include Content Loaders and Content Providers and may function as such within a division, department, faculty or support unit within the University.

14.2 A person can approach the Social Media Marketing Management Section to be appointed as a Responsible Person and for permission to have a UJ SMP presence on behalf of the University.

14.2 Responsible Persons are appointed according to their capabilities and experience with regard to SMPs, marketing and communications.

14.3 Responsible Persons must have permission from their direct line manager to post information on behalf of the division, department faculty or support unit.

14.4 By posting content on any UJ SMP, Responsible Persons warrant and represent that the University either owns or otherwise has the rights to publish that content, including, without limitation, all the rights necessary for such provision, posting, uploading, input or submission of the content, or that the use of the content amounts to fair use.

14.5 Responsible Persons must follow the crisis management protocol as outlined in the Social Media Standard Operating Procedures document when necessary.

14.6 Responsible Persons must uphold the corporate identity of the University.

14.7 Responsible Persons must have regard to the University’s duty to respect and encourage academic freedom and freedom of expression.

14.8 Responsible Persons must read, understand and follow the University’s Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) document. Having read and understood the aforementioned SOP, Responsible Persons may be called upon to show written proof of social media strategy.
14.9 All Responsible Persons must add the UJ online Terms and Conditions to the UJ SMPs for which they are responsible.

14.10 Responsible persons must impart strategic, clear, concise and accurate information on behalf of the University.

14.11 Responsible Persons may not take a direct stance on contentious issues and portray their presence on UJ SMPs in an objective and tolerant manner.

14.12 Responsible Persons may not impart confidential or sensitive information regarding the University or its Stakeholders.

14.13 Responsible Persons must adhere to the feedback given by the University Social Media Management Section regarding the annual audit conducted on all UJ SMPs associated with the University’s name for which they are responsible.

14.14 Responsible Persons must protect the good name and reputation of UJ.

14.15 Responsible Persons must ensure that their personal reputation and online presence would not bring the UJ Brand into disrepute.

14.16 Conduct which bring the University’s reputation into disrepute include behaviour that may incite violence; is slanderous or defamatory; and includes the posting of content bordering on or of a pornographic nature.

14.17 No person will be allowed to post information that is private, confidential or wrongfully infringes upon another person’s rights and that may amount to or promote hate speech or incite hatred.

14.18 Responsible persons must refrain from spamming.

14.19 The safe and secure usage of UJ SMPs is dependent on the discipline of Responsible Persons by keeping the relevant passwords safe, by terminating open sessions, by using
password protected screensavers which activate after a period of inactivity, and logging out of the electronic communications facilities when any such systems are left unattended.

14.21 Should a Responsible Person refuse to place a particular post on social media based on the principles outlined above, the person who wishes the post to be loaded may appeal to the Head of UJ Social Media Management Section for a decision in the case of non-academic content, or the Head of UJ Social Media Management Section and an Executive Dean in the case of academic content. The Head of the UJ Social Media Management Section and the Executive Dean, if applicable, must ensure that the views of the person wishing to post the contents and the Responsible Person are taken into account. Should the Head of the UJ Social Media Management Section and the Executive Dean, if applicable, not agree on the outcome of the appeal, the matter is referred to the MEC for decision. Should the outcome of the appeal be in favour of the Responsible Person, the person who wishes the post to be loaded can make a final appeal to the MEC.

15. POLICY INFRINGEMENT

15.1 The University’s response, if any, to breaches of the Policy are dealt with on a case-by-case basis and according to the severity of the breach. Any action taken by the University arising from breaches of the Policy must be sustainable in law and no employee or student will be guilty of misconduct in circumstances where she/he is able to justify in law her/his conduct inconsistent with the Policy (§ 6.2).

15.2 The Responsible Person’s line manager is consulted depending on the breach of Policy.

15.3 Under appropriate circumstances breaches of the Policy may be referred to the University’s Human Resource Management Division, the Student Ethics and Judicial Services or the relevant Committee of Council for disciplinary action. Depending on the severity of the breach of the Policy, disciplinary action may result in any permissible sanction being imposed including dismissal in the case of employees or expulsion in the case of students.

15.4 It is the right of the parties to a disciplinary enquiry to call witnesses whose testimony is relevant to reach a verdict or sanction in a matter, which witnesses may include members
16. EVALUATION

Reports on the implementation of the Social Media Policy are monitored by the Division of Institutional Advancement.

17. REVIEW

The Policy is reviewed at least every three years.

18. ENQUIRIES

Enquiries should be sent to the Social Media Manager or the Senior Manager of Marketing and Brand within the Division of Institutional Advancement. In the event that neither of these parties is available, the query should be submitted to one of the Social Media Coordinators and, in the case of a crisis, in the absence of the aforementioned Social Media Manager and Senior Manager, the Executive Director of Institutional Advancement should be contacted.

19. APPENDIX

This Policy must be read with the Social Media Standard Operating Procedures.

20. INTERPRETATION AND COMMENCEMENT

20.1 Any reference to the singular includes the plural and vice versa. A reference to gender includes all genders.

20.2 Should any statute or statutory provision to which the Policy refers be amended or replaced by another statute, any reference in the Policy to that statute or statutory provision will be interpreted to refer to the amended statute or statutory provision, or to the
statute or statutory provision which replaces the statute or statutory provision to which the Policy refers.

20.3 If any provision of the Policy is or becomes invalid or unenforceable by virtue of law, such provision shall be divisible and be regarded as *pro non scripto* and the remainder of the Policy shall be regarded as valid and enforceable.

20.4 If any definition contains a substantive provision, notwithstanding that it is only in the definition (or such other clause) effect shall be given to it as if it were a substantive provision in the body of the Policy.

20.5 The use of the word "including" or other grammatical forms thereof followed by specific examples shall not be construed as limiting the meaning of the general wording preceding it and the *eiusdem generis* rule shall not be applied in the interpretation of such general wording or such specific examples.

20.6 No provision of the Policy referring to wrongfulness or other grammatical form thereof shall be interpreted to determine the onus of proof in respect of wrongfulness. Whether the University carries the onus to prove wrongfulness, or someone who is alleged to have breached the Policy is required to disprove wrongfulness (for example, exclude wrongfulness by proving a ground of justification where appropriate, for example, by relying on the defence that the publication was true and in the public interest, or that the publication constituted fair comment in the case of defamation) is determined by law.

20.7 The Policy does not seek to fully codify the issues to which it refers and shall not be interpreted to (in any way) amount to a waiver, or prejudice or limit the University’s rights and remedies against Stakeholders in terms of the Law and the codes of conduct applicable to Stakeholders.

20.8 The Policy or any amendment thereof will come into operation when approved by the appropriate structures of the University.
# SOCIAL MEDIA STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

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<td>Marketing and Brand</td>
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<td>Status</td>
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## RELATED DOCUMENTS

<table>
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<th>Other</th>
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<tr>
<td>(e.g. Policies, Regulations, Guidelines)</td>
<td>(e.g. Legislation, DoE and HEQC directives and)</td>
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<td>Contracts)</td>
<td>guidelines)</td>
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| • UJ Statute;  
• UJ Risk Management Model;  
• UJ Risk Management Policy;  
• UJ Vision, Mission and Values;  
• UJ Policy on Brand and Corporate Visual Identity.  
• UJ ICS Policy | • Competition Act 89 of 1998;  
• Copyright Act 98 of 1978  
• Electronic Communications Act 36 of 2005;  
• Electronic Communications and Transactions Act 25 of 2002 (ECTA);  
• Higher Education Act 101 of 1997  
• Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (POPI);  
• The Consumer Protection Act;  
• Trade Marks Act 194 of 1993  
• The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 |

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<th>Stakeholders affected by this document (units and divisions who should be familiar with it):</th>
<th>Stakeholders affected by this document (units and divisions who should be familiar with it):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Council Members;  
• All University Employees;  
• Student Representative Council;  
• Students;  
• All stakeholders;  
• All persons (internal or external) who make use of UJ social media platforms. | |

| Website Address: | www.uj.ac.za |
## Contents

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1  PREAMBLE

Social media has changed the way in which we communicate – both as an institution and as individuals. Anyone with an Internet connection now has the ability to create a dynamic web presence, update it from wherever they are, whenever they want, and share their content instantly with friends and followers around the world. Social media has given UJ the opportunity to engage in on-going “conversations” with our Stakeholders, colleagues, fans and friends about what is most important to them – extending the community found on UJ's campuses to the world. This document aims to guide, direct and define the responsibilities of those people operating or participating in social media platforms on behalf of the University of Johannesburg and should be read in conjunction with the University’s Social Media Policy.

1.1 Why would brands get involved in social media?

To listen to what is being said about them, and act on it (directly and indirectly)
To build close, two-way relationships with customers and prospects, building loyalty and keeping their brand top of mind.

1.2 How UJ is using social media

1.2.1 UJ currently runs its own official Facebook Fan page, Twitter page, Instagram and LinkedIn account.

1.2.2 UJ is on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Instagram to deliver information about various institutional matters.

1.2.3 The aforementioned platforms are a meeting ground for a number of market segments for the potential UJ client base from 16–18 year olds to current students, alumni and potential postgraduates.

1.2.4 The key aim of UJ’s presence on these platforms is to drive people to the UJ website to explore the University offerings and to portray UJ as a marketable and viable option for the aforementioned target markets.
1.2.5 The Social Media Management Section within the Division of Institutional Advancement is responsible for how social media at UJ is hosted, monitored and maintained.

1.2.6 In order to secure a presence on behalf of your faculty, division or section, the Social Media Management Section must be consulted. Further requirements are listed further down in this document.

2 PURPOSE

Social media usage at the University is governed by the Social Media Policy, which must be read in conjunction with this procedural document before engaging on social media as part of your official duties at UJ, or even if you use social media for personal purposes. This document on operational procedures provides a framework to effectively and safely use social media, both individually and on behalf of the University. The list of social media is not exhaustive and includes any public representation of the brand online.

3. SCOPE

3.1 The Policy and SOP apply to all Stakeholders who communicate with others for and on behalf of the University by way of s UJ SMPs. Any SMP making use of the University’s official branding or logo falls within the scope of the Policy and SOP.

3.2 The Policy and SOP do not cover general, non-official, public pages on SMPs that use “UJ” or “University of Johannesburg” in their title unless reputational or brand damage can arise from such usage, or the authors can be associated with UJ. The lines between a “personal” or “private” social media persona and a “professional social” media persona have become blurred. A “personal” or “private” social media platform does not exist. There are many legal precedents for employees against whom disciplinary steps have been taken, and who have even been dismissed, for posts appearing on “personal” or “private” SMPs. As long as employees at all times act with the utmost of good faith towards the University and observe the UJ values when posting messages on “personal” social media platforms, the University is unlikely to involve itself in “personal” social media platforms.

4. ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS
For the purpose of the SOP, unless stated otherwise or it appears otherwise from the context, the following abbreviations and terms will bear the following meanings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content Calendar</td>
<td>A calendar, compiled weekly, monthly or annually, that includes information or content that serves as a guideline for the postings to be placed on social media by a division or department of the University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Loader</td>
<td>The person responsible for posting content or scheduling content on SMPs who can also be the Content Provider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Provider</td>
<td>The person responsible for posting content or scheduling content on SMPs who can also be the Content Loader.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Consumer Protection Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>The Social Media Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible Person</td>
<td>Content Loaders and Content Providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media content</td>
<td>Copy or text, images, videos and audio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media Management</td>
<td>The Central Management Section regarding the management of the UJ Brand on SMPs and online platforms. The University's marketing is decentralised; however, this Section within the Corporate Marketing and Brand Department co-ordinates efforts in this sphere and has the authority to manage and control the University's social media presence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMPs</td>
<td>All forms of social media platforms, websites and pages, including but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Blogs and the UJ website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOP</td>
<td>Standard Operating Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td>All University employees, persons who hold special UJ appointments, students (including students in residences or belonging to societies), alumni and associates that use social media for and on behalf of the University.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UJ SMPs</td>
<td>SMPs that are owned, operated and officially branded by the University with the official authorization and approval of the University's Social Media Management Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University/ UJ</td>
<td>University of Johannesburg</td>
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</table>
5. DESCRIPTIONS OF COMMON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

5.1 Facebook – An online social utility that connects people and organisations with friends and others who work, study, live, and engage around them. People use Facebook to keep up with friends, to share links, to share photos and videos of themselves and their friends, and to learn more about people and organisations.

5.2 LinkedIn – A business-oriented online social utility that allows users to strengthen and extend their existing network of trusted contacts. People use LinkedIn to stay informed about contacts and their industry of interest.

5.3 Twitter – A micro-blogging and social utility service that allows its users to send and read messages known as tweets, text-based posts of no more than 140 characters. People use Twitter to share and view links, pictures, videos, opinions, news, professional information, personal status and more.

5.4 Google+ – An integrated social platform that dovetails with YouTube, Gmail and other Google services. Users can network with each other via Circles and engage in conversations via comments or +1s.

5.5 Blog – An online site that allows an individual or group to share a running log of personal insights, writings, events, news, and more.

5.6 YouTube – A video-sharing website on which users can view, upload, and share videos and comment on other users’ videos.

5.7 Flickr – A photo-sharing website on which users can view, upload, and share photos. Popular place for storing photos that are linked to blogs and other social media utilities.

5.8 Instagram – A photo-sharing network that allows users to upload photos taken with a phone or tablet and to apply special image filters through the app. The photos can be shared within the Instagram network or throughout other popular social networks.

5.9 Foursquare – A mobile app that lets your friends know where you are and for you to know where they are. You can also collect points, prizes and "badges."
5.10 Pinterest – Favoured by women in the south central US, this platform allows users to “pin” images from any web page to boards on their profiles. Common topics of boards are crafts, recipes and home decor.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Standard Operating Procedures for Content Providers and/or Content Loaders (Responsible Persons) at the University

6.1.1 Secure permission from line manager to host a social media profile on behalf of the department, division or section.

6.1.2 Apply at the University’s Social Media Management Section via the Social Media portal www.social.ujbrand.co.za along with your line manager’s consent to start a social media profile.

6.1.3 Follow the instructions and permissions granted by the Social Media Management Section in terms of the type of presence allowed to be undertaken on social media, i.e. fan page, group, private group or no presence at all.

6.1.4 Supply the Social Media Management Section with the list of administrators (Content Providers and Content Loaders) on your profile or make the section an administrator on your platforms.

6.1.5 Alert the Social Media Management Section of the departure or change of administrator. Be sure that if an account or profile is terminated, it is properly erased from the platform.

6.1.6 Create a social media strategy aimed at different target markets and platforms based on overall faculty, department or division objectives and goals.

6.1.7 Determine how you will measure the success, or lack of success for the page, so that you are able to measure the success of the page and ensure that goals are met.

6.1.8 Put in place a communications and marketing strategy to promote the new profile.
6.1.9 Create a content calendar for 3 to 6 months with messaging that underpins the strategy and its goals.

6.1.10 Upload content (ad hoc or planned in the calendar) that ensures that the social media best practice promoted in this document is followed and the Social Media Policy is adhered to.

6.1.11 Ensure that should you require information posted to the University's main/corporate branding social media pages, that the social media content template is filled in and images are supplied in JPEG.

6.1.12 Update profiles and platforms with relevant, engaging and accurate content that is not considered spam, inappropriate, defamatory, profane, or that might violate brand policies.

6.1.13 Ensure that the right to academic freedom and freedom of speech is not impinged upon but that the sharing of knowledge and collegiality is encouraged.

6.1.14 Post content with no spelling and grammatical errors.

6.1.15 Post only content that is in the best interest and tailored to the target audience. The Consumer Protection Act 68 of 2008 ("CPA") impacts on higher education institutions since students are consumers. It sets out the minimum requirements to ensure adequate consumer protection and regulates the marketing of goods or services to consumers (students). UJ is obligated to comply with the CPA and the guidelines.

6.1.16 Respond to all enquiries from fans, member and followers on your profiles timeously.

6.1.17 Respond to crisis situations according to the Crisis Management section within this document.

6.1.18 Use the services of the University's Language Unit to check for spelling and grammatical errors, if uncertain of spelling and grammar.

6.1.19 Acquire the relevant training and knowledge regarding the strategic use of social media in the best interest of the University.
6.1.20 Adhere to Search Engine Optimisation principles and tag content when posted.

6.1.21 Ensure that links on pages submitted by content providers are functioning.

6.1.22 Always supply back links to the University’s website.

6.1.23 Be accountable for the use of any and all imagery and do not impinge upon copyright.

6.1.24 Disclose any sources fully through credits, links and trackbacks, unless the source has requested anonymity.

6.1.25 Protect people’s privacy by ensuring consent is obtained on behalf of individuals before posting content regarding them. The Protection of Personal Information Act must be followed.

6.1.26 Adhere to the UJ Corporate Identity so that all communications retain the same ‘look and feel’. This is essential to the development and maintenance of the UJ brand in the public domain.

6.1.27 Measure account activities – report and analyse qualitative and quantitative account results monthly.

6.1.28 Any additional campaign developments or page enhancement requests must be submitted to the Social Media Management Section in writing. The Section will then evaluate the submitted request and assist, where necessary. Should any enhancements or campaign developments extend outside of the realm of the Social Media Management Section an external supplier or consultant may be brought on board; the additional cost will however be for the faculty or department. Should the faculty/department decide to work with this service provider, the implementations would have to be approved by the UJ Corporate Brand/Marketing Department and Social Media Management Section in writing. Any requested improvements or developments on Social Media platforms that do not match the previously mentioned criteria must be accompanied by a motivation and submitted in writing to the Social Media Management Section and the MEC. Each case will be considered individually.
6.1.29 Should a faculty or department wish to use an external source or company to manage their social media that party would have to adhere to the Policy and the Social Media Best Practice. Entering an agreement with another party, means that the University’s Social Media Management Section and the Corporate Governance Division/ Office of the General Counsel will need to be advised and consulted with to ensure third parties comply not only with the social media policy, but also with all relevant legislation, applicable University policies and governance.

6.1.30 Promotional competitions must be run in accordance with the CPA ensuring absolute transparency and accessibility with regards to information about the competition prize; the competition rules which should be specific and comprehensive; as the competition entry and the . The rights of the winner are protected with regards to the POPI Act.

6.1 Rights and Responsibilities of the Social Media Management Section

6.1.1 Conducting an open and honest dialogue with all of its communities – online and within UJ.

6.1.2 Monitoring the University’s brand and reputation across corporate, faculty and departmental and related pages in the form of a Social Media audit, which tests best practice and page engagement criteria as well as the University’s overall brand positioning.

6.1.3 Requesting that inaccurate or misleading posts be corrected in a timely manner.

6.1.4 Ensuring that the social media content posted is relevant, engaging and targeted at the correct target market on the relevant right platform.

6.1.5 Granting permissions and access according to faculty or department objectives.

6.1.6 Offering brand-specific social media training.

6.1.7 Assisting and supporting departments or faculties that have applied for relevant permissions.
6.1.8 Shutting down and reporting pages that contravene UJ brand and reputation positioning.

6.1.9 Sharing information with content loaders as well as providing advice on page and campaign developments and enhancements.

6.1.10 Following up technical calls and assistance.

6.1.11 Ensuring that social media content from faculties and departments adheres to the requirements of the Policy and SOP.

6.1.12 Ensuring Social Media best practice is followed and available to staff.

6.1.13 Posting submitted content from the Content Providers timeously within the overall University Social Media Brand Strategy.

6.1.14 Accessing and reviewing a division’s SMP from time to time and removing content or issue instructions to remove content which, in the Section's sole discretion and opinion, could harm UJ’s brand or good name.

7 BEST PRACTICES FOR A SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

7.1 Be respectful

Anything you post in your role as a UJ employee reflects on the institution. Be professional and respectful at all times on both your personal and corporate social media site. Do not engage in arguments or debates with negative people on your site.

7.2 Be transparent

Make it clear that you are blogging/tweeting/Facebooking, etc. in your role as a staff member of UJ. Social media allow individuals who maintain social media sites to personalise large institutions like UJ. Use your own “voice.” Do not ghost write posts for supervisors.

7.3 Separate personal from professional
Balancing your professional and personal social media presences can be tricky, particularly if you are an avid user in both arenas. Content that is appropriate and of interest to your personal friends is most likely not appropriate or of interest to your department’s “friends.” Keep these two presences as separate as possible by keeping content about your non-work life on your personal page.

7.4 Be careful because everything you do online is forever

Think before you post, whether in your personal capacity or on behalf of UJ, remembering that anything you share within social media, even within a closed network, is not private. It can and will be shared, stored and spread globally. Don’t post anything online you would not feel comfortable having your boss or in-laws see or you wouldn’t mind seeing on the front page of the newspaper, or on the CNN website.

7.5 Be present, interactive, informative and active

Having a social media presence means that you must constantly be present. Diligent care and feeding the media need to take place; therefore, social media requires time. It does not require a huge amount of time — probably 15 minutes in the morning and 15 minutes in the afternoon every day or 30 minutes every second day unless you are running a specific campaign, then more time will be required. If you do not have this time, then social media may not be for you; after all, your site is only as interesting as your last post.

7.6 Be timely and responsive, even pre-emptive

One of the great benefits of social media is the ability to share information almost instantly with a global audience and even before news hits the press.

One needs to use one’s common sense when interacting on social media and especially when it comes to timing. Why start a fire on your page by reporting on something contentious about your institution when the discussion may not even extend to social media and may stay in the print press?
One needs to balance the need to share relevant news with the expectations of that audience. Nowadays the audience expects timeous reports or statements so be prepared to move quickly in response to new developments, announcements, or emergencies with relevant information on your site, while ensuring that you are not adding to a potential storm. A short amount of accurate information delivered at the time of need can sometimes be more valuable than a full report delivered well after the issue has passed.

7.7 Listen

Being a consumer of social media is essential to your ability to be a successful producer of social media content. “Listen” to online conversations on your preferred tools – be they blogs, Twitter, Facebook or anything else – to maintain a clear and current understanding of what is relevant and of interest to the community.

7.8 Comment as well as accept and monitor comments

As a consumer as well as a producer of social media, offer comments on interesting posts and share the good work of others using your sites. Social media is not (only) about sharing your news and success, it is about sharing information that is of interest to your readers and viewers. A social media site without comments is not very social. Be prepared to accept and respond to comments. To protect your site, moderate all comments before posting. Understand that not all comments will be positive, and respond to negative comments professionally and by providing any additional information that may help resolve the issue. Again listen and wait to see how to respond; often it is not necessary for an institution to get involved as this may not placate negative comments but rather spur such commentators on as they are getting a reaction – why add wood to the fire? As mentioned, if you are going to host a page that represents UJ, then a disclaimer must be put on your site stating you reserve the right to remove inappropriate comments. Remove those comments containing vulgar language, those that attack any one group or individual and those that are obviously spam.

7.9 Be a valued community member

Don’t just talk about your programme or department – share the best information you find from trusted sources outside of UJ. This will increase the value of your site and
will also ensure you are a valued member of the community and are not just tooting your own horn.

7.10 Don’t cyber slack

Endless amounts of time can be spent, and wasted, on social media sites. Limit the amount of time you spend attending to your department’s social media presence to what is needed to post content, evaluate traffic data, review related sites, and monitor comments. Limit your personal use of these sites while at work as directed by your department’s guidelines.

7.11 Disclose

Your honesty – or dishonesty – will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. Please represent UJ ethically and with integrity. Always be truthful or rather don’t engage.

7.12 Market responsibly

Consumers have the right to fair and responsible marketing and fair and honest dealing. All marketing practices must be conducted in compliance with the general standards and restrictions set out in the CPA. This applies to universities and any third parties or agents conducting marketing activities on behalf of universities. As a rule, all claims and statements made must be capable of objective justification. Do not tell consumers anything you do not believe or that you cannot back up. Do not make any false or misleading claims about services or goods, including in relation to the nature, properties, advantages or uses of goods or services. Exaggeration or ambiguity which may deceive consumers.

8. CRISIS MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Bad news spreads very quickly so the first 24 hours are pivotal should there be a crisis. For these reasons the following steps must be followed should the University potentially have a reputation risk brewing on digital and social media platforms:
8.1 **Classify the problem**

Classification is determined by possible impact on UJ brand and its reputation.

These questions will assist in determining the classification of the issue at hand:

8.1.1 What happened? Where and when?
8.1.2 What is the impact on lives?
8.1.3 What is the impact on operations?
8.1.4 What is the impact on property?
8.1.5 What is the impact on community?
8.1.6 How did it happen?
8.1.7 What is the general consensus or understanding of the issue? Is this the same as your understanding?
8.1.8 What immediate actions can be taken to solve the issue?
8.1.9 What has been told of the issue? How much do people know?
8.1.10 What were people told?
8.1.11 Is there a bigger and more fundamental problem? Is there a bigger issue hiding?
8.1.12 Could this get worse?
8.1.13 How could this get worse? Look at all the possible outcomes and take action accordingly.

8.2 **Course of action due to problem classification**

Once the above questions are answered one can classify the issues accordingly and take action. Based on the impact or status of the issue it is escalated according to the chain of command and principles laid out in this document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Classification</th>
<th>Defcon</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easily handled issue</td>
<td>0 – no threat</td>
<td>Directly and simply handled by the Responsible Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smouldering issue</td>
<td>1 - cautious</td>
<td>Potential that the issue could ignite and a viral response may occur means this type of issue must be closely monitored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Defcon</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignited issue</td>
<td>2 – on guard</td>
<td>Report immediately via the chain of command to ensure that there is accountability to your line manager and if they feel it is necessary they will escalate to the Faculty Marketer or directly to the Social Media Management Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiery issue</td>
<td>3 – on standby, ready to deploy</td>
<td>The University’s upper management are preparing for the worst in order to protect the brand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viral Runaway fire issue</td>
<td>5 – actively at war</td>
<td>A full communications strategy and statement from the university is being strategically rolled out to ward off further brand damage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8.3 Handling low defcon problems

8.3.1 If you do not need to escalate the issue higher then please ensure in handling the problem that you do the following:

8.3.1.1 Monitor all other platforms under your guise to ensure the news doesn’t spread wider

8.3.1.2 Watch and listen to how your community reacts carefully before you jump in. If your community is invested and loyal they will often shut the issue down before you have to intercept it.

8.3.1.3 Step in when you feel an official presence or statement needs to be heard.

8.3.1.4 Responding to an issue means you need to uphold the UJ brand and keep the response transparent, objective, unemotional, fair, and communication is based on facts.

8.3.1.5 If this approach is met with negativity please escalate it to a Ignited issue (Defcon 2 ) and escalate to your line manager or ask for assistance from the Social Media Management Section to handle the issue swiftly.
Participant 1 – Interview Questions

Interviewer: Thank you so much for making the time to see me today, the first question is what is online reputation management in your own understanding?

Participant 1: I think online reputation management is avoiding risk, so ehm you’ll obviously use it for various reasons but I think when it comes to any kind of management its avoiding risk, we represent UJ, you represent your division, school or department so I think it’s your responsibility to avoid any kind of risk or reputation damage.

Interviewer: Ok great, question two is how do you manage online reputation in your line of work?

Participant 1: It is difficult because we have clear guidelines but I don’t think the people are familiar enough with it not for a lack of trying but it’s a space everyone is trying to navigate at the moment. I think just because you take responsibility for those posts you should still make sure that you don’t make obvious mistakes, just try to not mess it up completely and I think we all know that without even having to look at the policy is that you will get into trouble, its general knowledge.

Interviewer: Question three, how do you respond to negative comments, please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment.

Participant 1: So we did have a negative comment from a lady on LinkedIn recently because she didn’t get a response back for something she signed up for, ehm we responded back directly by email rather than going into conversation online, it’s easier to reply immediately rather than reply back there because it now looks reactive.

Interviewer: So you take negative comments offline?

Participant 1: I take it offline completely yes, either email or telephone call.
Interviewer: Question four, what is your role as a social media manager in an online context?

Participant 1: I think at the moment is to generate content so we not in a position where we can manage it on a day to day basis we are at the moment just pushing content, we’ll have to have a policy in place going forward but at the moment we are contained enough. We can afford for me to manage it daily.

Interviewer: Question five, are you familiar with the UJ Social Media policy?

Participant 1: I am, I think its comprehensive, and you can look at it as a benchmark on what a social media policy looks like.

Interviewer: So you feel that it’s not complicated, it’s simple and straight to the point?

Participant 1: All policies are complicated, because they need to protect a lot of people and it’s a legal document, but where there’s room for improvement is where you can translate the policy into a big infographic so that people can follow what’s being said in there.

Interviewer: Question six, have you attended a Social Media training at UJ?

Participant 1: No I have not.

Interviewer: May I ask why?

Respondent 1: ehm… my position hasn’t allowed me to, I often asked someone to go on my behalf, so I’m more involved in what the strategy is.

Interviewer: Question seven, where you effected by the #FeesMustFall crises and how did it affect your daily operations?

Participant 1: Yes, because I was scared on campus and I feel it was a great violation of my safety and personal space to be scared in a place of work and I did not like it. I was never attacked but I didn’t like that fact that you heard of stuff like that because some of the stuff was violent, it was unnecessary for the cause.

Interviewer: Question eight, is there a crises plan that guides you on what steps to take should a crises occur?

Participant 1: No, there isn’t one and I feel there needs to be one.

Interviewer: Question nine, what in your opinion can be done in Higher Education Institutions to manage online reputation better?

Participant 1: Hmmm ehm that’s a very broad one hmm I think what would be important is to make sure that people are aware of ehm UJ’s story, and by that I mean that they know exactly what’s going on at the university so that there’s complete so
that you don’t have to feel that there hiding something. The moment you hide something it will get out. Everything online is, so if you if you are also transparent I think the system then works in your favour, transparency is key.

Interviewer: Question ten, any other comments?
Participant 1: Ehmm I think if the social media people could have a longer conversation, a full week where we guys dealing with social media can discuss it in an open platform that would be valuable for us.

Interviewer: Just to add on what you’ve said I have a follow up question about UJ’s communication process, what do you think about it? For example during the #Fees must fall period did you get adequate information on what to do?

Participant 1: I think we are well informed, I just think there’s room for a different platform, it feels like we need something more practical and on the moment, a different setup where you know what’s going on so that you don’t have to wait for an email from somebody, like a more proactive approach letting everybody know what’s going on before it happens.

Participant 2 – Interview

Interviewer: Thank you so much for putting some time aside to do this interview, first question is what is online reputation management in your own understanding?

Participant 2: Online reputation management in my own understanding would be the perceptions, the perception that people have about you as a brand or as an individual.

Interview: Ok question two, do you manage online reputation in your line of work?
Participant 2: Ehmm so online reputation right? I do a lot of monitoring of our social media pages constantly ensuring that whatever that is posted is in what is within the legal frameworks of the institution the faculty and my job ensuring that whatever that gets posted on any online platform ehm is a true reflection of content, the content is correct and any parties involved are aware of the content that gets published online to also ensure that you deal with any query that comes as quickly as you possibly can so for example during the fees must fall protest students would post on our wall saying
classes are cancelled or whatever the case is, ehm I would need to ensure that information is corrected, I'm working together with the faculty management team to ensure that the information that the students have that the staff members have or and the general public have if correct and it's a true flexion of what the faculty wants to communicate so basically it's a monitoring, dealing with any quick anger or weary or whatever the case as amicable as possible and ensuring that you take it off line and your request the people to just send you a whatsapp but I had cases where I said here’s my cell phone number so that I can call you and we solve this matter quickly so it's dealing with it at a human nature level.

**Interviewer:** Next question, how do you respond to negative comments, please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment.

**Participant 2:** Ok so you take it off line, we had one of our professors in one of our research centres, ehm an article was written in the Beeld and it was factually incorrect and we had to try and negotiate with Beeld to remove it online and it had already been shared, the best thing you do is you take it offline and apologize where you need to apologize and you take accountability and ensure that the people you’re dealing with know that you’re sincere, for example you explain that this is not how the faculty works here’s my number here’s my email address please send me your and let me see how we can assist you so its working with the human element.

**Interviewer:** Question four is what is your role as a social media manager in an online context?

**Participant 2:** so my role is to ensure that we obviously brag for lack of a better word we brag about the good work that the faculty and the institution is doing to ensure that we take our faculty to the public so it's to communicate whatever research that is being done within our domains to the public and in a simple way so it's to take the research that our scientists are doing and put it out there to ensure that the normal citizens and the normal audience understands the work that we doing and it is also to engage on health issues that are general that we might not be dealing with as a faculty or as an institution by trying to create dialogue of health issues around the country around the
system so it's basically just creating dialog about health issues and taking health sciences to the community.

Interviewer: Question five, are you familiar with the UJ Social Media policy?
Participant 2: Yes I am, I’ve read it, I wouldn’t say I purely understand everything because unfortunately the social media policy is written for legal heads and is not written for normal Joe and Joanne ehm but I understand the fundamental principle and issues of the policies so the basic issues that the policy is trying to cover but the rest of the document is written for the legal heads but the basics I understand.

Interviewer: Question six, have you attended a Social Media training at UJ?
Participant 2: Yes I have

Interviewer: Ok and did you find it worthwhile
Participant 2: Nope, no I didn’t.

Interviewer: Why?
Participant 2: I feel like it's a repetition of the same content at that we first started talking about 6 years ago when we started to get into the social media space as an institution and I feel like most of the training is not based on understanding the trends it's only based on what people think is gonna work out so it's a top down approach so you get told what people think is gonna work and you should do it and it should work but there’s a failure to understand that the institution and its faculties and its schools work differently; we are mandated and we are guided by the HPCSA for example we have certain things that I cannot put on social media there certain things that you the social media trainee would say but you need to put it up on social media but HP CSA does not allow me to put it up on social media so that training is basically not tailor made for faculties and for the schools involved so that this strengths of those domains are used so it's a blanket approach top down approach and regardless of how you try to raise certain ideas you understand the domain that you are in, it hardly gets implemented or taken to heart.

Interviewer: May I ask what HPCSA stands for?
Participant2: HP CSA is the professional body that governs I'll tell you the full name now, It's the Health Professions Council of South Africans of so it's a professional body specifically for health sciences.

Interviewer: Question seven where you effected by the #FeesMustFall crises and how did it affect your daily operations?

Participant 2: Yoh! It was hard, the fees must fall movement was a difficult time for an employee because it was as if you were put in war zone without the resources for you to be able to survive so you would drive to work and not know if your car was going to get smashed on that day or not or if while you sitting in the office the students I mean on campus unlike other campuses ehm does not have adequate security response so you would get scared that you walk to the bathroom and a group of students would come and attack you because you're working and you're not supporting their struggle ehm and it would take forever for security to get to where you are. It was a nerve wrecking experience and you were anxious you anxious because you did not know whether your car's going to get petrol bombed while you're at work ehm and there were instances where the students were throwing petrol bombs on campus out of fear I had to drive out of campus and go sit at a McDonald's for like 30 minutes, so in essence it was a nerve wrecking experience it made it hard you did not know what to communicate when to communicate the communication from top down as well was such that it was late and we were reactive and not proactive and you do not want to have a situation where campuses are burning and you want to be reacted with your communication and you want to be active with your emergency exits, I mean you had to wait for a go ahead from APK for us to leave campus even though campus was burning, you have to wait for this red tape while your life is in danger, during their fees must fall protests of the the faculty social media page was mum because you did not know what the strategy was, because it was not well communicated to say do we go business as usual or do we acknowledge the students, do we acknowledge the struggle and ask for peace and ask for calm and ensure the students that are not protesting that it's still business as usual so we did not have a strategy where we said every morning all university social media pages will post and say we acknowledged that the students are protesting we understand why they are protesting but kindly note that it's business as usual, classes continue should we have any incident where classes get cancelled we will alert you, if you feel like your life is in danger contact
protection service there was no human element, why was it that the deans did not get sim cards and have a cellphone for emergencies so when we post something we would say if you get attacked send an SMS to this number and the Dean will respond to you it's much more quicker than saying contact control Room that will never get answered while your life is in danger so I feel as though during fees must fall the that the University was disjointed in communication, it was not strategic it was not acknowledging the realness of what was going on outside the walls, I do understand that strategy was that we will not want to create panic in public but by doing that you made certain staff members and certain students feel as though they life is worthless because you're not saying anything and you don't have the best interests at heart so that wasn't communicated clearly.

**Interviewer:** Question eight is there a crisis plan that guides you on what you need to do should a crises occur?

**Participant 2:** No not at all not. So with the previous Dean we had a watsapp group, if there is a crises the first one needs to do is to acknowledge that there's a crisis ensure that you dealing with it and deal with it so for example if one of our labs is burning you'd obviously go onto Facebook and say we are aware that that there's a fire on the 4th floor is burning please refrain from getting into the lifts trust and be assured that the faculties dealing with it. So you work on whatever comes, deal with it so there is no crises plan or business continuity plan should this building burn down today.

**Interviewer:** Question nine what in your opinion can be done in Higher Education Institutions to manage online reputation better?

**Participant 2:** Well obviously I don't have all the answers but I think a more open approach and more open communication approach ehm I understand and I respect that there are different strategies for different things that are happening in place and probably the strategy that the institution has employed is to keep the people below top management ehm uninformed if that's a strategy to say let's not create panic let's keep them uninformed and keep certain information from them ehm I understand if that's the strategy, probably it works for a certain number of people but it doesn't work for such a certain number of people that are involved and of certain understanding about how things and how the business should work you see, I understand that the institution
has been governed as a business and so it should to be but so if you going to keep information away from me and I'm supposed to be a representative of the institution and I'm supposed to be able to answer a parent who calls and say what's going on I just saw this post on Facebook and I don't have answers it does not only make it seem like I'm stupid but it makes the institution seem disjointed like the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. So if you going to appoint me and trust me with your social presence the least you can do is ensure that I've got enough resources and tools to represent the University when I need to, so I should not be in a position where I hear about something thats happening in the University on 702 , internal communication can also be bombarding, there needs to be a balance between bombarding me with unnecessary information and equipping me with the resources that I need to represent the university, I need to know what’s going on all four campuses as a social media manager.

**Interviewer:** Interesting, very interesting, do you have other comments?

**Participant 2:** The institution needs to have some level of integrity when it deals with these things and marketing communication is seen as as as as as a group of people that don't know what they are doing, there's a lot of skill that lies within the the marketing division in faculty level, 5 faculty marketing execs have master's degree out of 7, so we might not know everything about everything but we know something about something and we should then be taken into into consideration when certain decisions and certain things need to be done and top down approaches is not gonna work because you need buy in from the people and if you don't get buy in from the people you will deal with things and you keep on repeating the workshops that you have because you not getting buy in from the people and then it comes as though people have been sabotaged or the strategy objectives of the institution are being sabotaged, I want to also just found out if the people that are conducting the social media training are aware of our 2025 objective how many of them know the thrusts that we are driving, truth is the goal posts keep on shifting and we need to keep up. The policy is also there on the intranet where everybody can access it but are they reading it and we need the social team to push our content more to reach a bigger audience.
Participant 3 – Interview

Interviewer: Thank you for making time to do the interview it’s a very quick interview just 10 questions around online reputation and how it's managed at a higher education institution so the 1st question is what is online reputation management in your own understanding?

Participant 3: In my own understanding since we live in a digital world it means that ehm you know just like in any other PR you need to ensure that whatever you put online is managed properly because it's not easy for you as the brand to control what people on your of you know either your profile or whatever they may discuss so at some point the issue is do you respond to everything?

Interviewer: How do you then handle negative representation online?

Participant 3: ehm sometimes you find that something happened which could have easily been resolved internally and without somebody having to go outside and put stuff online, it’s usually frustrations, frustrations that people encounter and they would go out in use your brand in a negative way how do you come back and manage, how do you deal with negative publicity. Also it can either be negative or positive if it’s positive how do you then decide to grow your brand from that positive feedback you are receiving online so basically it says either positive or negative something needs to be done.

Interviewer: Ok great, second question how do you manage online reputation in your line of work?
Participant 3: In my line of work I actually engage offline because if somebody takes it online like really you know it's it's a bit frustrating because you can’t do anything they least ehm deal with it offline and ensure that you know that never happens especially to the same people or to the same person because then it will come back and if you don’t manage it the first time it gives other people a perception in that perception will be even more difficult to manage so if you take it offline and truly handle it in the best possible way that’s the only way I do it. If it's positive feedback then I also climb on the ladder by showing them other aspects that are positive about our brand about our faculty and from that positive feedback you can build your content from there or enhance your content so that it makes more sense and it’s interesting to the users because most of them what you do online is not for you it’s for the user and we forget that sometimes we just want to do what we think is best forgetting the user.

Interviewer - OK great, the third question how do you respond to negative comments please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment.

Respondent 3 - Like I said before with negative comments I honestly like to deal with them offline because the first thing is you’d go online and say we really do take note of either the complaint or or the criticism you do take note of it then you go offline and address it, it can become very ugly very quickly

Interviewer – oh yeah so true

Participant 3 - so it's better to be honest don’t try to cover up you know just to be honest if if somebody didn’t get ehm their notification or what was promised at least try and show that you get it you know quickly resolved in the last 24/48 hours liaise with them until you can win them back that’s more important it’s very important to ensure that you don't lose your audience it’s very difficult to get them back.

Interviewer – Sheew, forth question is what is your role as a social media manager in an online context Participant 3 - My role is only limited, and ehm its limited to the faculty website in the faculty Facebook page, ehm look we try, you cannot satisfy everybody we have a target market of education stakeholders not necessarily teachers but educators and try to ensure that our social media or online platform encompasses and other kinds of stakeholders from NGO’s from civil society from a you know student teachers from current teachers from whoever that’s interested in education we also have our government departments so at least be try to bring together and create space
for debate for or information for many other elements that are involved in education
we normally like to engage with current topics that are happening either here in South
Africa abroad in our university in our classrooms in schools so we just want it to be a
platform where you people can feel free to share.

**Interviewer:** Are you familiar with the UJ social media policy?

**Participant 3** - Yes I'm very familiar with the UJ social media policy because it forms
a guideline on how to go about engaging in social media and the thing for me ehm it's
ehm it's a very good way to protect the UJ brand as a whole ah I mean I can imagine
if you didn't have a social media policy so it would be digging its own grave and I think
it's a good policy it's it's not rigid it's it's flexible but within limits it guides you as one
you know what to post I mean for me anybody who is involved with social media for
any brand whatsoever needs to be an ambassador so if you cannot be an ambassador
for that brand I don't think you belong anywhere near social media, you need to be an
ambassador for the brand.

**Interviewer** – Going back to the policy do you think it is user friendly like if you go
through it do think it's easy to understand or is there a lot of law jargon?

**Participant 3** - It's very easy to understand if you know what you're doing OK and that
is why I say you need to first be an ambassador for UJ before you can climb on the
band wagon and try to do social media, I mean it's it's basic PR you know it's it's just
basic PR you cannot go and try navigate the UJ social media platforms if you don't go
via the guidelines, the guidelines area compass, imagine as a sailor going to sea
without a compass, so if you don't have a guideline or compass you can sink easily
and it will be difficult to come back like I said reputation management if you mess it up
and word-of-mouth is so powerful, if people don't believe in your brand and if you don't
do any risk management and stuff like that what is the point of your brand to even
exist. So going back to the policy I'd say it's very clear, you don't need a lawyer to
interpret for you before you understand it

**Interviewer** – So true, 6th question is; have you ever attended a social media training
at UJ?

**Participant 3** – I actually attended two, and ehm the 1st time I attended was when the
social media policy was still being ehm not established was still being drafted and all
that and the second time I attended was when it was launched so for me the fact that it was not a once off you know it keeps on going, its ongoing, they keep on updating you know they keep on informing whoever even those who are not using social media policy that it exists, for me that is important and I think that's one thing that they really good at.

Interviewer - Would you say the training was insight or fruitful could it be better?

Respondent 3 - The training was insightful and look it also brought in like benchmarks with other institution, platforms that UJ social media is engaging in and it I think it is insightful and the fact that I attended while it was still being drafted and the launch for me it showed that the feedback that was received was used in the next training and that for me was important because they didn’t come with that idea of use it don’t use it, the consultations were key and what was also important for me that I liked was that there’s the policy and there’s also the monitoring afterwards which is key because that also talks to brand reputation.

Interviewer – How can we make the training better?

Respondent - Eh ... I think as it is is it is good because it's not just a training and the guidelines are good in a way that it's not prescriptive and I think it's because people understand the different spaces we are in like departments and faculties, look we all in a funnel we might be different at the top but we are going through the same funnel, the output needs to be the same, the training is adequate but we can look at going with the trends, technology changes every day so we need to keep up with the times.

Interviewer - So the 7th question were you affected by their fees must fall crisis and how did that affect your daily operations

Participant 3 - I cannot say that I ehm it disturbed my daily operations but ehm how it affected me personally was that ehm In terms of ehm I mean for this institution basically it only happened I think in one year the other years it was properly managed and there was not much of a disturbance or much of crisis that happened like how I personally managed it was that I honestly sympathised with the students, it was not something that could have been anticipated it just fell off and you know ehm it caught everybody like unaware. But I think how the university UJ handled it at the time ehm it
was successful because in the next 2 years that there was fees must fall it didn't really have an impact there was good communication between the students and the University and personally also I feel that ehm UJ is doing a lot for the welfare of the students if we honest UJ is doing a lot for the welfare for the students a lot and you just need to tap in and use the services and resources that are provided I don't know of many universities that are giving students two meals a day I don't know of many universities that you know offer students services like psyCad in those are something that you take for granted that this is an institution of higher learning you come here you get a degree and you go in and you know make a mark in industry ehm there was a missing middle that was an initiative to try and assist so I think I think yah for me that communication and management that they had and the resources that they were providing for students made it a lot easier though I mean there was just one major incident; the burning of the auditorium other than that everything was managed.

Interviewer: Question eight; is there a crisis plan that guides you on what steps to take should there be a crisis?

Participant 3: OK yes, well personally there is a crisis plan for the faculty, where it ehm came from the fees must fall because then academics would do lessons online and communication we have our watsapp in education where all registered students in the faculty get information whether eh eh eh ehm an academic is not available or the classes are suspended due to something else we have had communication with the students.

Interviewer: OK so just to understand, you have a solid crises plan should anything happen in the university, is it a university crises plan or just your own crises plan, what I'm asking is are you aware of a crises plan for the university should anything happen to UJ's reputation.

Participant 3: I am not sure if that... if the University has one and I will tell you something it's because that in itself showed that and you find that we are siblings in different faculties and my faculty sending this message your faculty sending the other ended the messages were coming from the faculties so my take is if there is a university and not a faculty or a departmental crisis then the university needs to
communicate not the faculties, that way the messages are centralised and everybody gets the same message, the faculties just reinforce the message.

**Interviewer:** Interesting, this brings us to my next question; what in your opinion can be done in higher education institutions to manage online reputation better?

**Participant 3** – Look ehm... reputation management is tricky especially because you are dealing with people’s perceptions it’s very difficult to change somebody else’s perception but I think what can be improved is if people do what they are supposed to be doing if the campus is clean nobody can fault you on that, if lecturers come to class on time, nobody can fault you on that, if the content that they are producing offline is of you know high quality no one can fault you on that, if exams are written on time, admin staff do whatever they are supposed to be doing no one can fault you on that it’s the service you provide to your client and that is how you build and manage reputation. It’s also nice to sensitize people internally and externally but especially internally of brand management and brand reputation so that they understand that they are brand ambassadors and create a day perhaps called “UJ pride” where staff members are just proud of being part of their institution

**Interviewer** – I see, so are there any other comments around online reputation management?

**Participant 3** - I think so far their their reputation management has been good, there’s not been a time where we had to really put out fires, there were instances for example when everybody was talking about the 25 million and the executives and stuff like that, it might have had a truly and honestly negative impact but the way in which the university was communicating the way in which the university took measures, it shows we care and we’ve put measures in place and we are open about it, it’s not a secret. They could have kept it a secret but were diplomatic about it and told us what the next step is and so forth so in that they put out the fires. The most serious incident was that lady who died at the gates during applications and now there’s a gate named after her which shows that we also sympathise.

**Interviewer** - Indeed, well thank you so much for your time this was indeed insightful, enjoy the rest of this day.
Participant 4 – Interview

Interviewer: Thank you so much for being able to see me this morning it's a really short interview about online reputation management and I've already briefed you prior to the interview so the first question, what is online reputation management in your own understanding?

Participant 4: In my own understanding online reputation management is just the same as any reputation management that happens it's just a different platform and maybe how you would structure it or how you would address it differs slightly but reputation management is reputation management, it's just a tool.

Interviewer: Ok second question, how do you manage online reputation in your line of work?

Participant 4: Well we make sure that the comments that come from to our pages are clean and above board, that they are not derogatory, do not create ...ehm I don’t want to say chaos but do not create conflict, you’ve got to keep it clean keep it neat keep it professional and we addressed the comments should we get negative comments we’ll address it but then also just remove it and block the person.

Interviewer: So you deal with negative comments online if gets really bad?

Participant 4: If it’s really bad or you can see it has a potential to take a left turn on you I think try deal with it offline but if something that needs to be ...ehm as the organisation you can’t just keep quiet, some stuff its best to keep quiet and some stuff not, but rather put out a statement and sort it out.

Interviewer: Third question how do you respond to...oh you’ve actually answered this question but how do you respond to negative comments, please provide an example

Participant 4: We haven’t had like big issues it’s just been...like you know one haven’t gotten back to someone in time or the website has issues so we say sorry for the inconvenience caused and we apologize please speak to this one or please go to that one.
Interviewer: Forth question, what is your role as a social media manager in an online context?

Participant 4: Well it’s to get the faculty out there so that people know about us, we dealing with a generation that live on the internet they are very savvy so you gotta go to where your audience is and just being there because these days when you are not there is more detrimental than when you are there.

Interviewer: Ok fifth question, are you familiar with the UJ social media policy

Participant 4: yes, I think it it's very detailed it's really it's needed ehm I don't know if it's like all staff are fully aware of it and the consequences in there because it really puts things into perspective because people don't understand that ok you have your profile and all you work for the university so you can’t go around saying random things because ehm its defamation.

Interviewer: Ok so you think the policy is understandable?

Participant 4: well look, it could be more understandable, not everyone knows the social media terminologies, at times people post something yet they don’t know what they are posting and the consequences, I think it could be like more layman because nobody is going to sit and read the document, it needs to be explained.

Interviewer: So have you attended a social media training at UJ?

Participant 4: I have, it was very interesting and enlightening I did learn about things that I didn’t know it also gave guidance on what we needed to do.

Interviewer: Question number seven, where you affected by the fees must fall crisis and how did it affect your daily operations?

Participant 4: Not at all…

Interviewer: Wow really?

Participant 4: not at all, not a comment not a question nothing!

Interviewer - alright eighth question is they a crisis plan that guides you on what steps to take a crisis should occur?

Participant 4: No.
**Interviewer:** is that a concern?

**Participant 4:** Eh, yes it is but we have a one way communication, people very seldom comment, eh, I suppose you only know when you need one when you actually need one, luckily we hadn’t needed one but it’s one of those things when the time comes for you to do it, you’ll be learning how to do it.

**Interviewer:** Alright ninth question, wow we’re moving right along… what in your opinion can be done in higher education institutions to manage online reputation better?

**Participant 4:** I think they need a dedicated group of people because it’s like a wild beast that was kept in cages years and now the gates are open so so it’s it’s hard I think if you don’t if you don’t have your finger on every pulse to really keep track of it and it’s not something that can be done by the way or every second day you need to be prepared to do it, you need to have the team you need to have the system, the processes every social media person on social should only be working on social media.

**Interviewer:** alright last question is… any other comments around online reputation management?

**Participant 4:** I think it’s almost the next thing with social media ahh because I think everybody is just nasty on social media, its crazy things, I think a lot of a lot of a lot of people and organisations will realise that they need a dedicated person for specifically that specifically social media, a whole professional for that.
Participant 5 – Interview

Interviewer: Right, thank you for seeing me for the interview today as I explained the interview is around online reputation management, first question, what is online reputation management in your own understanding?

Participant 5: Online reputation management is when there’s brand damage particularly where there must be a crisis management in a way that it must be managed very well in order for the image and reputation of the institution to be viewed and protected, to also enhance the reputation is part of reputation management.

Interviewer: OK great, so how do you manage online reputation in your line of work?

Participant 5: So basically ehm with our social media following for instance we do have the editor, the admins and someone who just looks at the page if maybe there’s a post that might cause damage it can be removed or edited or or something or action any action that can be taken as soon as possible before it reach many people, I do understand in some instance were by other people's negative information and news spread quickly there will be more shares yeah yeah so in that regard to it being used to creating posts and and and and try to manage and alert the universities PR if in case the media contacts you.

Interviewer: Ok great, so how do you respond to negative comments, please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment

Participant 5: We actually deal with it offline as things may go south if we try dealing with it online.

Interviewer: Oh ok, so what is your role specifically as a social media manager in an online context?

Participant 5: So basically my role is to develop the content is to upload the content and also to post the content as well as to show the universities look and feel, the campuses, to create consistency and to ensure we’re speaking with the same voice and language because that is very vital.

Interviewer: So what would you say is the objective of managing social media pages?
Participant 5: there so may objectives of having pages, ehm...its top create awareness and to also build the reputation of the institution, and instead of people having to research they can just go to the social media pages, and to engage with the stakeholders instead of emails for example, it’s also easier to see the publics perceptions about particular products and services that we are offering by looking at the response rates so its quantifiable instead of using a print out that you cannot measure.

Interviewer: ok great stuff, the 5th question is...are you familiar with their social media policy?

Participant 5: yes I am very familiar with it

Interviewer: So what is your take or understanding of the policy, do you think its user friendly, easy to understand, do you think there’s a lot of law jargon?

Participant 5: It’s understandable and its user friendly beside ehm...it even highlights that on your personal page if you don’t write something that favours the university the policy might come against you because as much as it's on your personal time and everything since its linked to the university it might put you in hot water that limits an individual to express themselves.

Interviewer: alright, so have you attended a social media training at UJ?

Participant 5: yah, it’s quite good and very relevant.

Interviewer: so do you think there’s room for improvement?

Participant 5: ahh ehm the training is expecting you to be on another level it gives you some fundamentals of managing a page so I’d say it’s very good. And if someone wants an even more advanced knowledge id refer them to another institution to study it for say six months, I know other universities offer that because I know it not your core duty to deliver a training.

Interviewer: well it is actually, it’s part of our KPI.

Participant 5: Ya but I’m saying as a core duty because we don’t expect you to perform miracles.
**Interviewer:** So what you’re saying is that there could be an advanced course for the training?

**Participant 5:** Yes its part of our KPI but it’s not like part of your duty, so what I’m saying is that its quite good and we don’t expect the institutional advancement, so if a person needs a specialised knowledge based on social media and digital as a whole they’d rather opt to go to other institutions but don’t get me wrong they doing a good job.

**Interviewer:** great stuff, so were you affected by the fees must fall crisis and how did that affect your daily operations?

**Participant 5:** ahhh well fees must fall, I was not effected that much compared to my seniors because I was just receiving messages form my line managers and I didn’t really interact or debate on social about it I just kept quiet and then institutional advancement I do believe they were active in that regard on managing and especially the students and replying to the questions but at faculty level we didn’t really engage with students and we didn’t post anything that indeed related to that because at that might also arise and political issues and other stuff. The comments didn’t even come to our system it went straight to advancement.

**Interviewer:** oh ok wow, so with that being said would you say you have a crises plan or not?

**Participant 5:** ehm I don’t think we had a crises plan because we were relying more on advancement. Because it was not a faculty thing but a national thing, all universities were effected so we couldn’t formulate our own crises plan seeing that it was a national.

**Interviewer:** I see, so what in your opinion can be done in higher education institutions to manage online reputation better?

**Participant 5:** Yoh that’s a good but tricky and broad one, ehm if for instance in future crises occur they need to have a bigger budget in order to have some sponsored posts.

**Interviewer:** so you think will improve online reputation?
Participant 5: it definitely will because messages will reach more people and will create more likes.

Interviewer: ok I think you’re talking about reaching a larger audience, but then how do we avoid bad reputation, perhaps I should rephrase.

Participant 5: avoiding bad reputation would mean staying away from posts that would damage the reputation, I know at times it might be very difficult, example being a public lecture on the land, so as the manager are you going to respond to that post or not as it might create some crises. It’s not about what do you say but rather how do you say it and secondly it’s about checking the posts regularly especially controversial, have clear communication.

Interviewer: Last, question is…do you have any other comments regarding online reputation management?

Participant 5: at this moment no, can’t think of more hey…

Interviewer: well in that case thank you very much for your time it is truly appreciated, enjoy the rest of your day.

Participant 6 – Interview

Interviewer: Thank you so much for seeing me today, as I explained the research is about online reputation management, first question is what is online reputation management in your own understanding?

Participant 6: I actually don’t have a clue now *laughing I guess its building the brand and looking at your ehm… keeping keeping the image that goes outside to the rest of the world as positive as possible and making use of social media.

Interviewer: Nice, second question is how do you manage online reputation in your line of work?
**Participant 6:** I am the manager of our Facebook page and our twitter account so in managing the reputation whether it’s good or bad I have to manage and say yay or nay and make sure that the brand outside is positive.

**Interviewer:** wow, short and sweet answers, third question how do you respond to negative comments please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment.

**Participant 6:** looking at how I respond, I think it what's important is that you have to respond as quickly as possible and depending on the nature of their comment sometimes I would refer them to contact the faculty directly not initially handle it online but to actually see the student or to discuss it but it depends on the nature of the negative comments.

**Interviewer:** so most of the time you take it offline if it is really bad?

**Participant 6:** Yah, I would not dismiss something because I think whenever you just going to delete something you're automatically saying that you guilty of something and I don’t like just deleting comments, but it’s a given that you will come across negative comments, sometimes it's very bad and sometimes it's not that bad and and sometimes the students because we work with students and they just have a wrong perception of and what they see as negative or wrong wasn't necessarily the fault of the department and should be directed to another department for example.

**Interviewer:** Ok fourth question: what is your role as a social media manager in an online context?

**Participant 6:** I do everything I am looking at social media yah and I’m the only one with with access and to our social media pages and profiles and so anything related to those pages and privacy comes down to me.

**Interviewer:** Oh my word, ok please break it down as to what you do, do you do monitoring, please list a few tasks.

**Participant 6:** Main thing is that I have to update the pages, I also use the platforms for filling vacancies, I use social media as a recruitment bases that’s one of our main things, we it for events, a marketing tool, to publish and promote all of our events ehm and brand building.
Interviewer: Awesome, fifth question; are you familiar with the UJ social media policy?

Participant 6: yes, I mean you need to comply to the rules otherwise you going to get into trouble and social media was not something that was thought out by UJ this is a global thing and nationally you have to monitor it you have to stick to certain rules and regulations and policies because you can.

Interviewer: so do you think its user friendly, is there a lot of law jargon?

Participant 6: Yes, it's long and we have been to training and was part of the process of draft one, draft two draft hundred and fifty six *laughing we’ve seen it so many times that its something that's not foreign, to add I think face to face training could make it better because I don’t think people will go through those pages hence I think face to face training is important especially to new users

Interviewer: Ok, great stuff, question six is …have you attended a social media training at UJ?

Participant 6: Yes and it was good. But it would be great to learn about Facebook marketing, like Facebook for business and ads that would be great.

Interviewer: Ok great seventh question, so were you affected by the fees must fall crisis and how did that affect your daily operations?

Participant 6: No we weren’t effected, the only time that we were affected was at the beginning of the year when we couldn’t have our extended first year orientation program and so we had to shorten and that was 2 or 3 years back already so it was only that 1 year we were we were planning to see the 1st years for a whole week and we had to put a two programme together, outside of that it didn’t really affect us.

Interviewer: ok the eight question; is there a crisis plan that guides you on what steps to take should a crisis occur?

Participant 6: looking at social media specific?

Interviewer: yes, is there a crises plan from management down to you?

Participant 6: ehm I know that a crisis plan does exist and that we have clever people at branding and marketing that will assist us, but if there’s an immediate crises I will pick up the phone and get help from the relevant people.
Interviewer: so you as a social media manager in your faculty you don’t have a crisis plan?

Participant 6: No *Looking concerned

Interviewer: in your opinion what can be done in higher education institutions to better manage online reputation?

Participant 6: Training, training, training! And to get people from industry that actually work on these types of things it's one thing we work in a academic environment and I think our approach even to social media is very academic and there’s institutions and agencies that specialize in this type of thing ehm get a specialist in the industry and to come and to come and guide as our lecturers and academics go on conferences and training and all of these big events in their fields so do the same for the marketers and and get the people in charge of these profiles to attend these specialized events so that we are as equipped as possible.

Interviewer: Wow, we almost done…any other comment on online reputation, perhaps you can speak about the communication process at UJ?

Participant 6: Emh, I think its effective but we have just too many channels where you try to communicate, you have newsletters and social media and the website it's just information overload, we should get one message through one channel that should be way better that's just my opinion.

Interviewer: very informative, thank you so much for your time and enjoy the rest of your day.

Participant 7 – Interview

Interviewer: Alright thank you so much for being able to see me today, basically as I explained in the brief the interview is about online reputation management, so first question is what is online and reputation management in your own understanding?

Participant 7: So the way I understand it is that it’s the same you would manage reputation offline it just happens to be online which is a bit more sensitive and goes
viral quickly so my understanding is that the same way you would preserve your own reputation whether you are going out or meeting someone new there’s a certain etiquette those unwritten rules and sometimes written that we all know to follow so I think the same applies the same customer service you’d give offline should be the same online.

**Interviewer:** OK great stuff so how do you manage online reputation in your line of work?

**Participant 7:** so I standardize things so as to make it as easy as possible and to give like a same standard of service and service varies quite a lot so at least if you standardize you kind of give people the same level of service I'm hoping it’s always good so ehm time lines and responding to people they question something as simple as salutations as its standardized signing off the information that’s given so always answer what’s asked, don’t be robotic and keep things inboxed because it’s a bit more controlled and if you have to call then call offline and speak as an actual person I'll keep it very professional and answered that question that’s asked.

**Interviewer:** awesome, so um how do you respond to negative comments please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment

**Participant 7:** So it depends there are different levels of negative comment, if a comment is not directed towards the page say its negative, like I had one about where is the money so that is something that I feel if you respond you are poking something that started out small where people just rant and we all know of trolls so things like that I tend to avoid but if its faculty related like “when are our marks out” then that I entertain but things like “lets decolonise education” that is much more broader and so I try to stay away from political stuff and I ignore questions that aren’t faculty related or direct them to the relevant person within the university.

**Interviewer:** OK great, so what is your role as a social media manager in an online context?

**Participant 7:** so my role is to inform, to make sure that people are always abreast of what's happening, sending info to the right medium or answering queries that are pertaining to their studies, like NSFAS, bursaries and just guidance on how things
work or refer them to the right people I’ve learned to not give what I don’t know and informing different stakeholders.

**Interviewer:** so are you familiar with the huge a social media policy?

**Participant 7:** I am I am I remember when it was updated, I had to just read it just to be one the safe side and I’ve learned not to link my personal page to my professional page as it’s not good for the UJ brand so I kind of like separate the two, I just don’t want to put the brand in disrepute.

**Interviewer:** so looking at the policy, do you think its user friendly is there a lot of law jargon can it be simplified what is your take?

**Participant 7:** I understand it, it’s easy to read but I feel like its missing a whole lot, I’ve got more questions, it’s simple but it could be more specific and tailored for social media managers and not the the general staff, I feel like it can more.

**Interviewer:** That bring us to our next question, so have you attended a social media training?

**Participant 7:** I think I …ehh no… it was a just a brief overview of what Dale was saying but I haven't honestly attended one.

**Interviewer:** Were you affected by the fees must fall crisis and how did that affect your daily operations?

**Participant 7:** ehhh no I wasn’t here at the time.

**Interviewer:** Oh yes, you’re right so is there a crisis plan that guides you on what steps you should take should a crisis occur?

**Participant 7:** No, but I recall that there was a document that was sent out by the Dean to me regarding if students say this regarding the fees must fall saga this is how it should be handled and that document came from marketing there was that but other than that no, there’s no crises plan.

**Interviewer:** Ok second last question is, what in your opinion can be done in higher education institutions to manage online reputation better?

**Participant 7:** ehm, sheew that’s such a good question, well I think we can engage more in terms of for instance ask, it’s scary because you know you opening up yourself
Interviewer: OK right, last question any other comments around online reputation management, to give some guidance you could talk about the communication process here at UJ?

Participant 7: I think it could be easier, smoother, I kind of feel alone and more guidance would be great, as marketers we should see things the same way then speak the same language, I also feel that there isn't enough communication vertically and horizontally the communication is not smooth enough. The communication is also a bit Bureaucratic, look I understand it’s an institution of higher learning but it’s quite bureaucratic...the top down isn’t working but hey we marketers so we adjust and add our own flavour.

Interviewer: ok great, thank you so much and that’s the end of our interview.

Participant 8 – Interview

Interviewer: Thank you so much for making time to see me and do this interview, so I’ll just go straight into the questions, the first question being; what is online reputation management in your own understanding?

Participant 8: It is monitoring and evaluating ehm what the public says about UJ and its reputation, it is also influencing that reputation so it’s got a lot to do with research, what people think and seeing where we need to sway people.

Interviewer: Right so the second question is how do you manage online reputation in your line of work?

Participant 8: ok, well as the manager of a social media and marketing projects that's all that we do because we fall within marketing and brand the division of marketing and brand which reports into the vice chancellor so all that we do is try to ensure that
a reputation is managed online and the way that we do that is we have a strategy that is combined with what the university wants to achieve in the next 10 years along with audience research and then we make a strategy out of that to connect with various audiences and shift perceptions and we do that through online marketing, social media and with social media its very much a day to day community management so online the big picture not just social media.

**Interviewer:** ok the third question is how do you deal with negative comments please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment?

**Participant 8:** emh so we have a strategy of how we respond to negative comments, if it’s something against the policy or against the constitution of the country, defamatory, sexist , racist ehm and if its causing harm or slander then we don’t tolerate it we just shut it down immediately so we do say sorry can you take your views somewhere else because UJ abides by the constitution of the country so we’d prefer you don’t follow this line of communication but in general with negative comments are we tried to resolve if you can you try to resolve so if someone's having a moment and they frustrated because they haven't been able to apply how can we help you know I think the big misunderstanding is is that us as the social media team that we are like a call center that we can help people right there and then but we can only actually direct people to the student enrolment center and try to be as transparent as possible and help as much as possible so there’s not we we refer a lot of negative comments to the relevant place whether its finance or the enrolment we just try to keep things calm so that they don’t escalate and get ugly if there are starting to get ugly and it's not something that we can shut down immediately then we we look bigger and go to management and ask them for a response.

**Interviewer:** Ok great fourth question is, are you familiar with the social media policy?

**Participant 8:** *Laughing YES! Very familiar with it actually too familiar

**Interviewer:** do you think people are responding well to it?

**Participant 8:** I think when people understand the repercussions of the policy and what it means to them on a personal level and how careful you have to be I think they become scared and the people whose stepped over the line are the people who may have not attended our training but truth is we run campaigns we tell people where to
find the policy on the intranet so if you don’t educate yourself how will you know…in this day and age you have to be responsible and you have to know these things and look them up and if you can’t then our training is open to everyone you should at least try it’s an hour and a half of your time.

Interviewer: ok the sixth question, have you ever attended a social media training at UJ?

Participant 8: Yes Michelle, Gugu, Obed, myself along with Monique have run the social media training.

Interviewer: right, question number seven is, were you affected by the fees must fall crisis and how did that affect your daily operation?

Participant 8: yes very very badly affected by it, it was a crash course in crises managements and and if anything it taught us how to handle crises comms on social media and what to believe and what not to believe , ehm during the fees must fall it was just not business as usual the way we ran social media was, ehm if there were little problem we’d deal with them it just took us by storm and it just absolutely flawed us ehm ja it was a nightmare, I think I still have post-traumatic stress from it *laughs I would go to sleep with my phone in my hand and on twitter, wake up on twitter check if anything had happened over night that’s why we actually drove hard for the policy.

Interviewer: Forth question what is your role as a social media manager in an online context?

OK so I'm a social media manager and now managed people that are social media managers actually because I have to have a birds eye view of what's going on and try filter content so I would say that I’m more of a content manager these days which is quite strange cause sometimes I'm unaware of the developments that have happened on platforms like Facebook has changed this that and then I go on and be like ooh that changed so yah and when the paw paw hits the fan I’m there and governance and things like that so my role has changed over the years so I’m more of a content manager.
**Interviewer:** question number eight, is there a crisis plan that guides you on what steps to take should there be a crises?

**Participant 8:** yes as part of the policy we have standard operating procedures document which outlines the crisis plan so there’s levels we call defcons, so like defcon 5 is big big problems them defcon one is sort of like bubling issues that’s happening and then per defcon we have actions that need to be taken so the person dealing with social media if it’s a defcon 1 problem and we then outline what constitutes a defcon one problem and what they need to do and if it goes past a defcon three then we start worrying but we normally know of big issues because the public has picked up on it.

**Interviewer:** ok interesting ok ninth question what in your opinion can be done in higher education institutions to manage online reputation better?

**Participant 8:** I think that a higher education institutions need to start taking social media more seriously and and also understand that their target market and their demographics that’s where they operate, so your marketing personal, your comms person wherever social media may lie within within your institution they need to start hiring people that play in that world because it’s very necessary to communicate your audiences in the space that they comfortable in.

**Interviewer:** ok the last question is do you have any other comments around online reputation or even the communication process from management to all the managers what is your take on that?

**Participant 8:**ehm and I wish that we could have a faster response from management I think that the way that social media works it's so fast and so quick by the time there’s been a war Room meeting with all of the management players then that's it's escalated like crazy and not gone viral and then it's too late to release something then you putting out a bigger fire if you just trample old quickly needs people to make quicker decisions and I understand that you've got to be responsible and that some decisions aren't that easy but I think it's it's important to be timeous!

**Interviewer:** Thank you so so much for your time this was sweet and short.
Interviewer: OK thank you for having the time to do this interview, question one is, what is online reputation management in your own understanding?

Participant 9: It would be literally managing our reputation, we’ve got Facebook, we’ve got twitter, Instagram and a website so it’s to ensure I’m posting something in the UJ domain and also ensuring that the followers don’t say anything negative on my page, like bashing students and staff.

Interviewer: How do you manage online reputation in your line of work?

Participant 9: Its basically making sure that my settings are correct, meaning my settings don’t allow people to just post directly on my page or rather my timeline, so now no one can start raving I would need to approve it first and secondly it’s just to ensure everything this aligned to the UJ policy.

Interviewer: Ok third question is how do you respond to negative comments, please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment?

Participant 9: Most negative comments are people who are just frustrated I think well I must say that I’m lucky I’ve never had an incident where someone was aggressively attacking anyone or having a personal vendetta on any media platform but there times where people are upset when they not getting a response and the external people thinks we are ignoring them whereas we just not in the office so in that case it’s important to apologize it doesn’t hurt anybody and avoids a whole fight.

Interviewer: I see, ok fourth question, what is your role as a social media manager in an online context?

Participant 9: To share events and to share achievements and awards and lastly to answer administrative queries and if the questions are too specific or deep you take it offline and to the correct person via email. And I never ignore I’d rather have an automated response.

Interview: sheew this interview is moving quite fast, ok fifth question are you familiar with the social media policy?

Participant 9: Yes I am I have to admit though that I haven’t sat down with a pen to highlight the do’s and the don’ts and that’s because we were involved in the
development of this policy so I'm not foreign to it but I can't tell you that point one and four says this and that but we do try to adhere to the policy, like we try to have the correct logo.

**Interviewer:** so would you say it's understandable when you read it?

**Participant 9:** yes it is and I mean it's a policy so it has to be written in a certain way but what I would suggest is to have a summary, a summarized page that just explains it in layman's terms like in a nutshell this is what we are saying.

**Interviewer:** Have you ever attended a social media training at UJ?

**Participant 9:** Yes I have, I've attended quite a few

**Interviewer:** and what’s your take on it?

**Participant 9:** it was informative and insightful but I do find that is repetitive, like if you’ve been to one you don’t have to be at another one I’m also thinking there should be a basic one and an upskilled one as well where we are trained on how to grow our strategies or follower, like an in-depth session.

**Interviewer:** ok seventh question is, where you effected by the #FeesMustFall crises and how did it affect your daily operations?

**Participant 9:** well not really, no wait I’m lying...at one point we had students throughout the building so we were informed to stay calm and push the doors closed. My dean did say do not be a hero, go back to your space and let the students do what they need to do, if you see someone lighting something then call security do not want to jump in front of the flame.

**Interviewer:** ok the eighth question, Is there a crises plan that guides you on what steps to take should a crises occur?

**Participant 9:** No there isn’t a crises plan but I do know protocol and what procedure to take since I’ve been here for ten years now

**Interviewer:** and just to add on that what do you think about out communication process, do you think that you are given enough information?

**Participant 9:** well communication is never 100% in general and it's not a UJ thing, I must say though that the VC note is a bit too long we are reaching a fine between over informing and over communicating because now a lot of information gets lost because it's not read.

**Interviewer:** ok ninth question, what in your opinion can be done in Higher Education Institutions to manage online reputation better?
Participant 9: I think we as UJ are doing a pretty great job but yal need to be a bit stricter and like have a road show so that people know what social media is and what it entails.

Interviewer: ok any other comments you’d like to share?

Participant: I think everything can always be better, we can do better than what we are already doing.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for your time.

Participant 10 – Interview

Interviewer: Right thank you for making time to see me today as I explained the research is about online reputation management and how social media managers manage social media within their respective faculties, ok first question is what is online reputation management in your own understanding?

Participant 10: Managing the perceptions surrounding your brand or organisation or company online. Perceptions of your target audience to be specific as well as secondary audiences, their experience of you, how people view you, what they say, how they engage with you it all boils down to perception.

Interviewer: Ok great second question is how do you manage online reputation in your line of work?

Participant 10: eehm I have an assistant, I have a marketing assistant but what we ensure we do is; number one we ensure that ehm we have content, first of all I'm going to Speak in particular because speaking broadly as I'm finding it hard to speak broadly, let me speak with Facebook as an example it will help me answer the question so for example with Facebook we have various audiences that engage with our content and it is for us to know, like when we post something who we are speaking to, are we speaking to the lecturer, first year students, returning students or a third year student who’s about to leave or are we speaking to the industry people or the leadership, so the content we post is with reference to who we are speaking to, number two we are responsive as well, we respond to quires timeously.

Interviewer: Third question is how you respond to negative comments please provide an example of how you dealt with a negative comment.
Participant 10: yoh, ok so the only one that’s coming to mind now, is the acronym of our faculty so in Setwa or Sepedi that could be interpreted to mean something else like a harlot or a prostitute so I think that person was engaging with our page probably for the first time because most of our post have the hashtag name of our faculty so this person kept asking who came up with such a hashtag so instead of us assuming we asked him why does he ask and in their response I realised its their meaning in their comment so I had to explain that its actually an acronym that stands for the name of our faculty so we’ve learned to answer carefully to avoid other negative comments coming on.

Interviewer: What is your role as a social media manager in an online context?

Interviewer: It’s to ensure that you are social in that social, well basically. *laughing like for real we have to go back to the drawing board when it comes to social media what was it created for you know it’s a social space so your role is to ensure that you are continually involved in the conversation you are continually engaging with your audience as you are continually observing them and their needs and that you know what is relevant and what is not relevant so for example if its exam time, you can’t be posting about Christmas you need to know what’s currently happening. *Laughs again

Interviewer: I hear you, question five; are you familiar with the UJ social media policy?

Participant 10: yeah.

Interviewer: so what is your take about it, do you think its user friendly, do you feel it could be simplified?

Participant 10: I know they do like workshops for people or marketers that manage social media and they talk about what the policy is and what it is about, I think it’s good to have a point of governance because it could get out of hand I believe that you cannot discipline where you haven’t laid down the ground rules so it’s good to have a governing tool and it speaks to reputation as well. I’ve skimmed through it and feel it’s sufficient and as a marketer I can easily understand it but for someone who’s not in the space may need someone to further explain it and what it’s saying like bring it to their level.

Interviewer: Ok question six, have you attended a social media training at UJ?
Participant 10: yeah, yes I have.

Interviewer: so what do you think of it?

Participant 10: its not in depth enough to be honest they just touch the surface and not go deeper, look I feel there’s more to social media than what they teach, every time I go there I’m hoping to learn something new I feel like they saying the same obvious thing and move on to the next level.

Interviewer: ok interesting, question number seven were you affected by the fees must fall crisis and how did that affect her daily operations?

Participant 10: in my area of work?

Interviewer: yes

Participant 10: eish me I was in a different faculty hey, yoooh we had to cancel shows hey it was hectic, they even broke the glass door and we had to cancel and refund people who came to the arts centre so it was bad on the business side.

Interviewer: ok eighth question, is there a crises plan that guides you on what steps you should take should a crises occur?

Participant 10: as in line a detailed one? One that’s documented and all?

Interviewer: yes, like a step by step guide on what to do in a crises situation

Participant 10: ok no we don’t.

Interviewer: is that a cause for concern?

Participant 10: Well I haven’t given it much though hey, well yes it’s a concern like even when I have to hand over to someone who’ll take over my role they would need to know what to do, so for that reason I’d say yes.

Interviewer: ok ninth question, what in your opinion can be done to manage online reputation in higher education institutions better?

Participant 10: They need to present content with their audiences in mind, who you’re speaking to is important and how they are most likely to respond, you know, that would help you to manage your brand perceptions better. Don’t speak at them, speak with them.
Interviewer: Any other comments that you would like to add?

Participant 10: Something just came to me now, learners in rural areas tend to ask questions in vernec so we need to be more empathic towards that and be more accommodative.