



**THE USE OF FACEBOOK AS A COMMUNICATION TOOL BETWEEN
UNIVERSITIES AND STUDENTS**

By

**K M Bollapragada
209510557**

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Business Administration**

**Graduate School of Business and Leadership
College of Law and Management Studies**

Supervisor: Professor MS Maharaj

DECLARATION

IK M Bollapragada.....declare that

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation/thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
- (ii) This dissertation/thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
- (iv) This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a) their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced:
 - b) where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.
- (v) This dissertation/thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the dissertation/thesis and in the References sections.

Signature:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to my supervisor Professor Manoj Maharaj for his guidance and support.

I would like to thank the management of Corporate Relations, Ms Nomonde Mbadi Executive Director Corporate Relations University of KwaZulu-Natal and Mr. Alan Khan, Director, Durban University of Technology, for allowing me to conduct my research at both the Universities, and for giving me the resources and the opportunity to complete it on time.

I would like to thank Mr. Ashay Nathoo and Ms Brigitte Read from Corporate Relations, University of Kwazulu-Natal for their support.

I would like to thank Ms Raylene from Corporate Relations, Durban University of Technology for her support

I would like to thank all the participants in my study.

ABSTRACT

Universities are beginning to embrace social media and realizing the potential power and implications of using social networking sites such as Facebook as a communication tool to reach its target audience. It has become an integral part of their overall communication and marketing strategies. Social media is redefining how we communicate with each other, and how students want their organizations to serve them. Facebook is a social utility that connects people with friends and colleagues who work, study and live around them. In the current study, the existing Facebook pages of two tertiary institutions namely University of KwaZulu-Natal and Durban University of Technology were explored to investigate the effectiveness of Facebook as a communication tool. The key strategies behind adopting Facebook as a communication tool that would ensure effective communication were determined. The barriers to effective implementation of Facebook as perceived by the students were also examined. A thorough analysis of the content of the Facebook page revealed that it is being effectively utilized by the university and its students. To examine the key strategies employed by the UKZN and DUT, the Facebook administrators of both the institutions were interviewed. The findings from the interviews shed light on the universities policies, its advertising and marketing strategies as well as how a university tackles the issues created by implementing a new media to communicate. In the third part of the study, the barrier to effective communication as perceived by the students is examined by sending an electronically administered survey to all the Facebook users of both the universities. The respondents indicated the advantages and drawbacks of utilizing Facebook at an educational institution and the barriers they face in accessing the site were identified. Suggestions for improvement were indicated. The research is primarily an exploratory study of the findings, and recommendations are provided.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One – Introduction

1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Research Context : Background	1
1.3	Problem Statement	2
1.4	Aim of the Study	2
1.5	Research Objectives	2
1.6	Research Questions	2
1.7	Significance of Study	3
1.8	Chapter Organisation	3
1.9	Conclusion	3

Chapter Two- Literature Review

2.1	Introduction	4
2.2	Public Relations and Communications within Higher Education	4
2.2.1	Purpose	4
2.2.2	Channels of Communication	5
2.3	Evolution of Public Relations and Communication	6
2.3.1	Hierarchical Communication	7
2.3.2	Two-Way Communication	8
2.3.3	Factors Influencing the Evolution of Public Relations and Communication	8
2.4	Social Media	12
2.4.1	What is Social Media	12
2.4.2	Types of Social Media and Market Penetration	13
2.5	Implementation of a Social Media Strategy	19
2.5.1	Goals	21

2.5.2	Resources	22
2.5.3	Strategy	22
2.6	Barriers to Social Media	26
2.6.1	Access and Infrastructure	26
2.6.2	Implementation	26
2.6.3	Usage	27
3.0	Conclusion	28

Chapter Three - Research Methodology

3.1	Introduction	29
3.2	Exploratory Research	29
3.3	Sampling Strategy	30
3.3.1	Non-Probability Sampling	30
3.3.2	Techniques of Non-Probability Sampling	30
3.3.3	Sample Size	32
3.4	Data Collection Instruments	32
3.4.1	Questionnaires	34
3.4.2	Electronically Administered Questionnaires	34
3.4.3	Design of the Questionnaire	34
3.5	Data Analysis	35
3.5.1	Observations	35
3.5.2	Validity and Reliability	35
3.6	Ethical Considerations	36
3.6.1	Informed Consent	36
3.6.2	Protection and Privacy	36
3.6.3	Permission	36
3.7	Scope and Limitations	37
3.8	Conclusion	37

Chapter 4 – Presentation of Results

4.1	Introduction	38
4.2	Effectiveness of Facebook page as a communication tool between university and students	38
4.2.1	DUT Facebook page	39
4.2.2	UKZN Facebook page	44
4.3	Barriers to communication as perceived by the students in using Facebook as a communication tool at the university	49
4.3.1	Research instrument	49
4.3.2	Section A - Social demographic characteristics of sample population	49
4.3.3	Section B - Accessibility, Communication and Barriers in using Facebook	54
4.4	Key strategies behind introducing Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT that would ensure effective communication?	64
4.4.1	Facebook administrator demographic characteristics	64
4.4.2	Social media administrator interview results	64
4.4.3	Section A: Test items 1, 2, 3, and 4 - Resources	65
4.4.4	Section B: Goals and Objectives	66
4.5	Conclusion	76

Chapter Five – Discussion of Results

5.1	Introduction	77
5.2	Discussion and Interpretation of Results	77
5.2.1	Content analysis	77
5.2.2	Key Strategies behind introducing Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT that would ensure effective communication?	78

5.2.3	Barriers to communication	82
5.3	Conclusion	85

Chapter Six – Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1	Introduction	86
6.2	Findings from Literature Review	86
6.2.1	Effectiveness of Facebook page as a communication tool between university and students	86
6.2.2	Key Strategies behind introducing Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT that would ensure effective communication?	86
6.2.3	Barriers to implementation of Facebook as perceived by students	87
6.3	Findings from Primary Research	87
6.3.1	Effectiveness of Facebook page as a communication tool between university and students	87
6.3.2	Key Strategies behind introducing Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT that would ensure effective communication?	87
6.3.3	Barriers to implementation of Facebook as perceived by students	88
6.4	Conclusions	88
6.4.1	Research Objective 1	88
6.4.2	Research Objective 2	88
6.4.3	Research Objective 3	89
6.5	Overall Conclusion	89
6.6	Recommendations	89
6.6.1	More inclusive study	90
6.6.2	Formulation of a social media strategy	90
6.6.3	Improve barriers to implementation	91
6.7	Summary and Closure	91

References	92
Appendix 1	
Durban University of Technology Facebook key metrics	103
UKZN Facebook Key metrics	106
Appendix 2	
Interviews with UKZN and DUT Facebook Administrator	109
Student Survey using Surveybob	112
Ethical Clearance	
UKZN Approval Letter	
DUT Approval Letter	
Registrar Gate Keeper Permission Letter	

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1:	Map depicting change in social network profile over 2 year period	15
Figure 2.2:	Face book users by age	17
Figure 4.1:	Number of students visiting DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	39
Figure 4.2:	Number of lifetime likes for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	40
Figure 4.3:	Number of daily likes and comments for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	41
Figure 4.4:	Number of daily likes and comments for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	42
Figure 4.5:	Number of daily news feed impressions for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	43
Figure 4.6:	Number of daily users for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	44
Figure 4.7:	Number of daily users for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	45
Figure 4.8:	Number of daily likes and comments for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	46
Figure 4.9:	Number of daily likes and comments for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	47
Figure 4.10:	Number of daily likes and comments for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	48

Figure 4.11: Students participated in the study at UKZN and DUT	50
Figure 4.12: Age Distribution of Respondents at UKZN and DUT	51
Figure 4.13: Breakdown of Race of Respondents	52
Figure 4.14: Gender Distribution of Respondents at UKZN and DUT	53
Figure 4.15: Educational Qualifications of Respondents at UKZN and DUT	54
Figure 4.16: Number of students who access the Facebook page at UKZN and DUT	55
Figure 4.17: Number of students who expressed about the barriers to effective communication at UKZN and DUT	57
Figure 4.18: Number of student's impression on the usefulness of Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT	58
Figure 4.19: Number of students who expressed about what they like in the University facebook page at UKZN and DUT	60
Figure 4.20: Percentage number of students who think is the most irritating thing about Facebook as a communication tool between the University and students.	60
Figure 4.21: Percentage number of students who suggested several improvements with regards to the usage of Facebook as a communication tool between University and students at UKZN and DUT	64

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1:	Classification of Social Media by social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self disclosure.	21
Table 4.1 :	Average number of students visiting DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	39
Table 4.2 :	Average number of life time likes for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	40
Table 4.3 :	Average number of daily likes and comments for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	41
Table 4.4 :	Average number of daily posts for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	42
Table 4.5 :	Average number of daily news feed impressions for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	43
Table 4.6 :	Average number of daily users for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	44
Table 4.7 :	Average number of life time likes for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	45
Table 4.8 :	Average number of daily likes and comments for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	46
Table 4.9 :	Average number of daily wall posts for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	47
Table 4.10:	Average number of daily news feed impressions for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011	48
Table 4.11:	Age Distribution of Respondents at UKZN and DUT	50
Table 4.12:	Breakdown of Race of Respondents	51
Table 4.13:	Gender Distribution of Respondents at UKZN and DUT	52
Table 4.14:	Educational Qualifications of Respondents at UKZN and DUT	53
Table 4.15:	Percentage number of students who access the Facebook page at UKZN and DUT	55
Table 4.16:	Percentage number of students who expressed about the barriers to effective communication at UKZN and DUT	56

Table 4.17: Percentage number of student's impression on the usefulness of Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT	58
Table 4.18: Percentage number of students who expressed about what they like in the University Facebook page at UKZN and DUT	59
Table 4.19: Percentage number of students who think is the most irritating thing about Facebook as a communication tool between the University and students.	61
Table 4.20: Percentage number of students who suggested several improvements with regards to the usage of Facebook as a communication tool between University and students at UKZN and DUT	63

Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The contemporary world has seen a number of advances technologically that have changed the way in which people and organisations communicate and interact (Walton and Ahmadu, 2011). With the advent of Web 2.0 and the exponential growth in the popularity of social media, organisations have had to create strategies to adapt to changes in their larger contexts and their particular target audiences.

The social media phenomenon has become a pervasive part of modern day life, with Facebook in particular taking the lead as the world's preferred social platform. Facebook is a social utility that has altered communication between people and organisations, facilitating multi-directional communication.

This study examines the effectiveness of Facebook as a tool to facilitate effective symmetrical communication between University public relations and communications departments and its students.

1.2 Research Context : Background

The social media revolution has seen pertinent changes in how people communicate. Facebook in particular, built on Web 2.0 infrastructure, allows for instantaneous two-way communication between organisations and their target audiences. Facebook proves to be the most popular channel engaged by organisations given its current position as a leader in terms of market penetration (Wauters, 2011).

In contemporary society, institutions and organisations must move away from traditional means of communication. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of Facebook as a tool to facilitate communication in a way that not only allows the concerned organisations to achieve strategic goals, but also satisfies the wants and needs of the relevant target audiences.

1.3 Problem Statement

UKZN and DUT face a problem of a technology savvy student population whose needs and wants for communication are very different to previous generations. The institutions must find effective and efficient ways of communicating with a student population that is characterised by growth in size and communication patterns.

1.4 Aim of the Study

This research aims to explore the effectiveness of Facebook as a communication channel at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Durban University of Technology, and understand the barriers to the use of such media in order to devise more effective strategies to facilitate improved communication.

1.5 Research Objectives

- To determine whether the existing Facebook page is effective as a communication tool, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Durban University of Technology
- To identify the key strategies behind adopting Facebook as a communication tool.
- To determine the barriers to the effective implementation of Facebook as a communication tool.

1.6 Research Questions

RQ 1: What is the effectiveness of Facebook page as a communication tool between the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Durban University of Technology and their students?

RQ 2: What were the key strategies behind introducing Facebook as a communication tool at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Durban University of Technology that would ensure effective communication?

RQ 3: What are the barriers to communication as perceived by the students in using Facebook as a communication tool at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Durban University of Technology?

1.7 Significance of Study

This study is significant in that the Y-Generation communicates in a manner that cannot be compared to previous generations. The immediacy afforded to current communication through platforms such as Facebook means that organisations must more carefully manage their reputation and relationships with their various stakeholders.

Designing and implementing an effective communications strategy based on social media, Facebook in particular, may prove to be useful as UKZN and DUT endeavour to manage their reputations and build relationships with their student bodies.

1.8 Chapter Organisation

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study and contextualises the research problem. Chapter 2 reviews the current literature applicable to the research topic. Chapter 3 deals with the research methodology employed in this study. Chapter 4 presents the results yielded from the use of the research instrument on the sample population. Chapter 5 discusses the results presented in Chapter 4, and Chapter 6 provides recommendations and conclusions based on the results and the discussion thereof.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided an introduction to this study by outlining the research context. The problem statement and aims of the study were discussed, after which the research objectives and questions were clearly delineated. The chapter then focussed on the significance of this study, and closed by detailing the chapter organisation that it will follow. The next chapter deals with the literature review conducted towards this research.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the current body of knowledge regarding social networking sites and communication. While the literature on the above topic is extensive (Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite, 2010), the effectiveness of these channels as tools to facilitate communication between higher education institutions public relations departments and their students is limited. The chapter begins by examining the role of public relations departments within higher education. This is followed by a discussion on the evolution of public relations and communication strategies and models, after which the factors influencing this process are detailed. This brings the focus to social media, and in particular, Facebook, as a tool to be used by public relations and communication departments in adapting to their environments. Suggestions on the implementation of social media strategies are highlighted, followed by a discussion of the possible barriers to the implementation of such strategies.

2.2 Public Relations and Communications within Higher Education

Most organisations in contemporary society has a public relations department of some kind (no author, 2009). In larger organisations, these departments may be more formalised, with specialists dedicated to the various aspects of the profession. Smaller organisations may have a team of multi-skilled individuals who are expected to handle more than one part of the public relations practices. Most higher education institutions have entire departments dedicated to the management of their public image and reputation (Brunner & Brown, 2009).

2.2.1 Purpose

The public relations and corporate communications departments at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and the Durban University of Technology (DUT) are responsible for communication with both internal and external stakeholders. These departments are tasked with ensuring that the university wide community is informed

of institutional progress, developments, changes, news, success, and share the objectives and values of the University.

Often, communications strategies are segmented for various audiences. Internal communication may be tailored to the requirements of students, academic and administrative departments and possibly even executive management structures. Internal communication often includes general housekeeping announcements (such as examination timetables or on-campus events), strategic communication to ensure that staff and students share a common vision and mission, and may act as a feedback mechanism for institutional management (Freeman, 2009). Furthermore, public relations departments should ideally focus internal communication at the organisational level, while encouraging and fostering a culture of effective internal communication at the departmental level.

Coombs and Holladay (2010) asserts that External strategies may be directed toward portraying a particular image of the institution, and may therefore have to be adapted to suit a particular audience. External stakeholders could include alumni, prospective students, the media and the general public. These strategies should focus on addressing queries or providing channels of engagement with prospective students.

Given that the main objectives for public relations and communication strategies may vary, it becomes necessary to examine the channels that may be used by organisations in managing their image and reputation.

2.2.2 Channels of Communication

Attansey, Okigbo and Schmidt (2009:29) state that multiple communication channels and engineering of consent are the hallmarks of public relations. Essentially, what this means is that good practice entails the careful segmentation of audiences for effective communication. This implies that the most appropriate channels should be selected for not only each audience segment but also for specific messages and purposes.

Channels include:

- Online Newsletters that are published either through the University website or emailed to specific users;
- The University website, which includes both public access sites as well as University-specific intranet websites;
- University email sent out to specific target audiences (for example staff or students);
- Print, which may include printed flyers, newsletters, printed advertisements in newspapers or billboards;
- Broadcast Media such as radio or television. These may be placed through public or private entities, or even through internal University-owned radio or television stations;
- University Notices, which may be placed online or on notice boards strategically located on-campus (these may be electronic notice boards or traditional poster boards);
- Social Media, through channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Bebo and various others.

Each of the channels mentioned above have specific advantages and disadvantages. The effectiveness of each channel has to be examined within the context that it is to be used, with careful consideration paid to the target audience.

A current trend has seen a shift from traditional media to online and social media. Solis and Breakenridge (2009) support the utilisation of new Internet based technologies by public relations departments stating that the profession is evolving, and will require more careful listening and learning in order to develop better conversations. This implies that public relations departments must be aware of the environment in which they are operating and take cognisance of how they are perceived by their various audiences. Furthermore, while the public relations and communications departments at UKZN and DUT do support the use of social media to facilitate dialogue, threats to institutional reputation must be carefully managed.

2.3 Evolution of Public Relations and Communication

As mentioned above, contemporary public relations practices have seen a shift from the traditional to the technological. The shift has not only affected how public relations and communications initiatives are rolled out, but also impacted on the thinking behind the crafting and implementation of strategies.

2.3.1 Hierarchical Communication

Previously, public relations and communications departments engaged in 'one-to-many' strategies that were more concerned with sending a message than facilitating dialogue. This is supported by boyd (2010), who states that newsletters and magazines, TV news, and radio are legacy media and have always existed in a broadcast model: We talk, you listen. Barnett (1997) also cites ownership as a possible obstacle, and refers to how traditional media (print and broadcast) have been controlled by very few people. This created certain issues for communication strategies. For example, an organisation in conflict with the ownership of a particular media group may find it difficult to negotiate for usage of a given channel.

It can be argued that news is not a scarce resource anymore. In order to prevail in the competition for attention, the news producers and distributors should adapt their strategies and tactics accordingly (Jarvis, 2008). Holtz (2002) expands on this notion, by pointing out that communication now needs to be multi-directional. The audience needs to be able to communicate in return with the originators of a message.

Holtz (2002) further suggests that the hierarchical top-down approach that has generally dominated the way organisations have been run is not conducive to communicating in an information economy. Philips and Young (2009:6) state that managers were gatekeepers of information. As a consequence, information from top management that may have been communicated internally may not always have cascaded down to the correct individuals. Communications strategies may have failed to take into account the people dynamics involved in the sharing and dissemination of information. This has seen a shift in public relations and

communications strategies from hierarchical one-to-many messages to the creation of conversations and dialogue with relevant stakeholders (Taylor, Kent and White, 2001).

2.3.2 Two-Way Communication

In response to major environmental and internal changes, public relations and communications departments have seen a shift from 'top-down' communication strategies to the public relations ideal of two-way symmetrical communication (Sledzik, 2008). This evolution of the profession now sees organisations seeking to actively engage with their various stakeholders. This reflective practice is aimed at proactively managing organisational reputation and promoting a positive organisational image.

Grunig et al. (2002) argue that the relationship between the organisation and its target audience must balance the interests of both the parties, that is, the relationship needs to be two-way and symmetrical. This suggests that an organisation can no longer produce communications aimed at information-giving, or with the expectation that a 'call-to-action' will be answered. It becomes necessary for a successful organisation to ensure that the public relations department actively listens to its various stakeholders and engages in customised conversation.

2.3.3 Factors Influencing the Evolution of Public Relations and Communication

There are several factors that have contributed to the shift in public relations and communications practice detailed above. These include technological advances, the introduction of Web 2.0, globalisation as well as the Generation Y (Carnevale, 2006) phenomenon.

2.3.3.1 Technological Advancements

Coombs and Holladay (2010) note that technology is one of two central trends that is shaping the future of an organization's public relations. In other words, advances in

technology are changing the larger environment in which organisations are operating. While this may impact on daily operations, it also has serious implications for how public relations and communications strategies are handled.

In the internet driven world anyone can make their voice heard to the vast global community with access to a computer sitting at their home or office (Phillips and Young, 2009). Since the 1990s, email is the fundamental standard of how people connect with one another. Messages, pictures and memos were sent around the world to co-workers, friends and family with a click of a mouse. Frequently sending an email has given rise to conversations that are comprehensive updates of the daily happenings which became equivalent to calling a long lost friend once a week or month (Gruber, 2009).

Universities are beginning to utilize technology to communicate with current and prospective students (Gruber, 2009). Much communication has shifted from traditional means to electronic methods. Carnevale (2006) supports this notion by stating that the traditional communication methods used by universities are outdated as the Y- generation students are more inclined to using new technologies, such as email, text messages and online communication portals.

2.3.3.2 Web 2.0

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) state that Web 2.0 is all about user generated content. This implies that end users can make use of various channels, such as social media, to generate and interact with content. Johansson (2010) supports this, stating that social media is almost entirely based on Web 2.0. O’Rielly (2007) argues that the Web 2.0 revolution in 2005, gave new meaning to what an internet is all about. This ultimately led to the birth of social networking and blogging. Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Orkut, Cyworld and Bebo attract millions of users and give instant access to update the happenings in their daily lives. This can be explained as mentioned by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) that user generated content is published on a public domain such as a website accessible by a group of people created outside their professional routines and practices. Therefore, Web 2.0 is made up of a combination of technological drivers “(e.g. increased broadband

availability and hardware capacity); economic drivers “(e.g. increased availability of tools for the creation of UGC)”;

and social drivers “(e.g. rise of a generation of digital natives and screenagers).”

Gruber (2009:6) states that unlike email, where communicating was semi-frequent and drawn out, social media is short and instantaneous letting people share their lives online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Thus the use of the Internet is now no longer limited to websites and email. The focus has shifted to new ideas such as “participation, usability, design, and accessibility” and to new web technologies such as “RSS, CSS, AJAX, and the overall convergence of these technologies within single platform” (O’Rielly 2007:2). This implies an integration of web and internet applications than ever before.

As a consequence, developers are constantly seeking to achieve greater integration with their applications. Email service providers such as Google now allow for the integration of contact lists on email accounts and cellular phones. Furthermore, iPhones and Blackberrys, are at the finger tip of the students, allowing the technology that makes Web2.0 useable (Philips and Young, 2009). According to Solis and Breckenridge (2009), the “public” has been put back into public relations. The increased accessibility, integration and interactivity afforded by Web 2.0 developments has created massive changes in how public relations and communications departments carry out their function.

2.3.3.3 Globalisation

The second central trend shaping contemporary public relations is globalisation (Coombs and Holladay, 2010). With the technological developments and advent of Web 2.0, the world has become smaller as people around the world can instantly communicate with the use of social media. Instantaneous communication means that people are now empowered more than ever (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011). Social networking tools have seen an increase in interactivity, and now more than ever, public relations and communications departments must manage their online reputation with the utmost care. Search engines like Google allow people to search for online information regarding almost anything. Even private individuals with the

right knowledge can skew how an organisation is perceived through search engine optimisation.

Globalisation has changed the face of many organisations, as they attempt to capitalize on the power of social media. However, higher education institutions must find innovative methods in order to survive and prosper given the ever-receding boundaries of technological advances.

2.3.3.4 Generation Y

Y-generation students or “Generation Next” students are defined as those who are born in between the years 1970-2000 (Salkhordeh, 2010; Kissler, 2010). These students are influenced by the communications and digital technologies and their reliance upon the technologies sets them as different from other generations.

The Y-Generation is different to any other and makes use of social media extensively. A report released from the Pew Research Centre about the Y-Generation students considers them to be “confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat and open to change” (Millenials, 2010). It can be construed that Generation Y students would be more receptive to symmetrical communication. They would seek avenues to express themselves confidently, and prefer this over traditional one-to-many communications where they are ‘told’ rather than engaged.

The report (Millenials, 2010) expands on the topic by saying these students are excellent in multi tasking using the handheld items instinctively, and are steeped in digital technologies and social media. Furthermore, 3 out of 4 Generation Y students use social networking sites. (Lenhart et al., 2010) reported that in their study, 75% of the Generation Y population surveyed had some form of social networking profile, compared to 50% of Generation X members.

As a consequence, specialised public relations and communications strategies must be devised to facilitate meaningful interaction with this demographic. Carnevale (2006) supports this notion by stating that the traditional communication methods used by universities are outdated as the Y- generation students are more inclined to

using new technologies. University public relations departments ideally should constantly explore new ways to communicate, and share information about student and faculty achievements. Social media may yet prove to be a highly effective communication tool at the organisation-student interface.

2.4 Social Media

Environmental and audience changes have created challenges to which University public relations and communications departments have to adapt. Social media can provide a tool that can address many of the changes and factors that have been discussed above (Folkens, 2012).

2.4.1 What is Social Media?

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:61) define social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. This suggests that social media has been born as a result of technological and Web 2.0 developments. It has a strong focus on interactivity, giving power to the user to create, generate and manage content.

Social media gives an opportunity for organisations to share information through new media instantly, as easily as sending a message using an online newsletter, print and broadcast medium or email (Hermida, 2009). Weber (2009) mentions that social media can take many different forms including social networking sites. The best-known 'friendship' social networking site is Facebook apart from other popular sites.

Social networking websites are services on which users can find and add friends and contacts, send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends, contacts or colleagues about themselves. Additionally, on some social networking websites, users can join networks organized by workplace, school, or college. Solis and Breckenridge (2009:1), describe how the social networking sites have impacted on the way messages are conveyed by the public relations practitioners and

communicators to their target audience. They state that social media has empowered a new class of authoritative voices that we cannot ignore.

Facebook and social networking have become *de facto* sources for news, and referrals, ahead of Google and even news websites (Hopkins, 2010). This illustrates the power that these platforms have gained in recent years. Even traditional news agencies such as the New York Times have teams of dedicated professionals to manage their online and social media presence (Sreenivasan, 2010). This model can be adapted to higher education institutions to create fans from the target audiences. Solis and Breckenridge (2009) argue that the social media has changed the way the new generation interact and communicate in the global space. Whilst the social media has certainly changed how some industries incorporate specific communication channels to reach their target audience, many public relations practitioners are still operating using a set of traditional communication tools, particularly in higher educational institutions.

Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite (2010), agree that these changes have become reality, and that institutions must adapt. Bull, Thompson, Searson, Garofalo, Park, Young and Lee (2008) found that in universities the relationship between the organization and its constituents is constantly changing by the subtle nature of social media. It is arguable that this form of media is attracting the attention of all stakeholders and constituents in some form. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) state that social media and Web 2.0 allow for global communication that facilitates interaction. This is the fundamental advantage that social media holds over traditional media.

2.4.2 Types of Social Media and Market Penetration

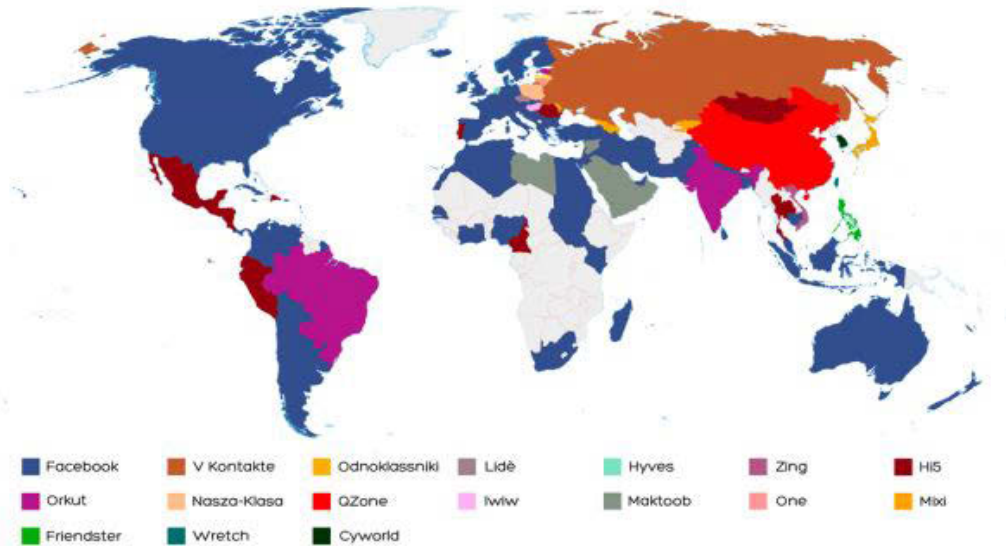
With technological advances, the advent of Web 2.0 and the influence of Generation Y in a globalised world, social media has grown exponentially O’Rielly (2009: 2) reports that in 2009, social networks have officially surpassed email in global usage and these networks are growing in popularity twice as fast as search engines and web portals. This implies an ever-increasing market penetration, and as a consequence, growth in the associated audience.

Social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Orkut, Cyworld and Bebo attract millions of users and give instant access to update the happenings in their daily lives (O’Rielly, 2009). For example, Facebook, a popular social networking site in South Africa, allows users to post messages on its walls about daily happenings in their lives. As soon as the information is posted on Facebook, it automatically updates the message in their friends (social connections on Facebook) news feed within a few seconds. Should other users comment on the message, the poster (and anyone authorised to view the postings) automatically receive updates as well.

The figure below compares the global usage of various social media platforms over a two year period. This figure clearly illustrates how the global reach of certain platforms has grown. In particular, the market penetration of Facebook has seen it become popular in most of the world. This is shown in Vincenzo Cosenza’s work, as cited in Wauters (2011) on creating a world map of social networks. This study illustrates how the various social networks have dominated each country. The study collected data from Alexa and Google Trends for Websites. The current findings state that Facebook is considered to be the world ‘leader’ in almost 119 countries out of the 134 countries surveyed.

WORLD MAP OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

June 2009



June 2011



credits: Vincenzo Cosenza www.vincos.it

license: CC-BY-NC

sources: Google Trends for Websites/Alexa

Figure 2.1 Map depicting change in social network profile over 2 year period
Adapted from Is Facebook taking over the world. Nunes. D. 2011

Wauters (2011) discusses the importance of the market penetration achieved by social networking platforms. This market penetration is the main reason why many organisations, including higher education institutions, are embracing social media. Facebook in particular has become a popular choice due to its applicability and

reach. Selwyn's (2009) study supports the assertion that Facebook has become the prominent field of social software, with over hundreds of millions of users using the application. According to another study, the evolution of Facebook has replaced the traditional way of correspondence by e-mail. Facebook is the most popular communication tool, followed by text messaging and e-mail (Van der Pool, 2009).

To illustrate this point, it has been noted that 99% of the students in South Africa have access to the Internet via their student LAN in the higher education institutions (Ostrow, 2009). This statistic provides a strong base for the institutes of higher education in South Africa to share information related to their universities, connecting with prospective and current students, distributing their newsletters, vacancies opened in the universities, sharing the thoughts of academia, promoting institutional events, and connecting with the alumni by using social networking services/blogs/podcasts. Given the above statistics the higher education institution's main objective in line with their strategy should be to listen, talk, network and distribute, support and participate with the university community at large (Brogan, 2010).

Most of the current organisational public relations and communications strategies place a strong emphasis on using Facebook as the primary social media tool. This has been due to its popularity amongst users, as well as its applicability and integration with other applications and devices (such as iPhones and Blackberrys). Facebook's popularity has grown exponentially in the last few years, so much so that it has been depicted "as an alternate to email" (Botha, Farshid and Pitt, 2010).

2.4.2.1 Usage and Growth

Gieger and Sa (2009) assert that the social media adoption rate has improved from 55% in 2007 to 63% in 2008. Ramig (2011:1) describes social networking sites as the mainstream media for many tweens, teens and adults, and there are sites that attract kids as young as 5 years old. It is estimated that there are over 2.2 million Facebook users in South Africa. Almost 42% of South African Facebook users are in the 14-24 age group (Reuben, 2008). Earlier in this chapter, the dominance of

Facebook as a market leader amongst social media platforms was discussed. Given its popularity and continuing growth, Facebook has proven to be a popular choice of social media tool for public relations and communication departments.

Burbary (2011) research conducted on global usage of Facebook according to age is shown in the figure below.

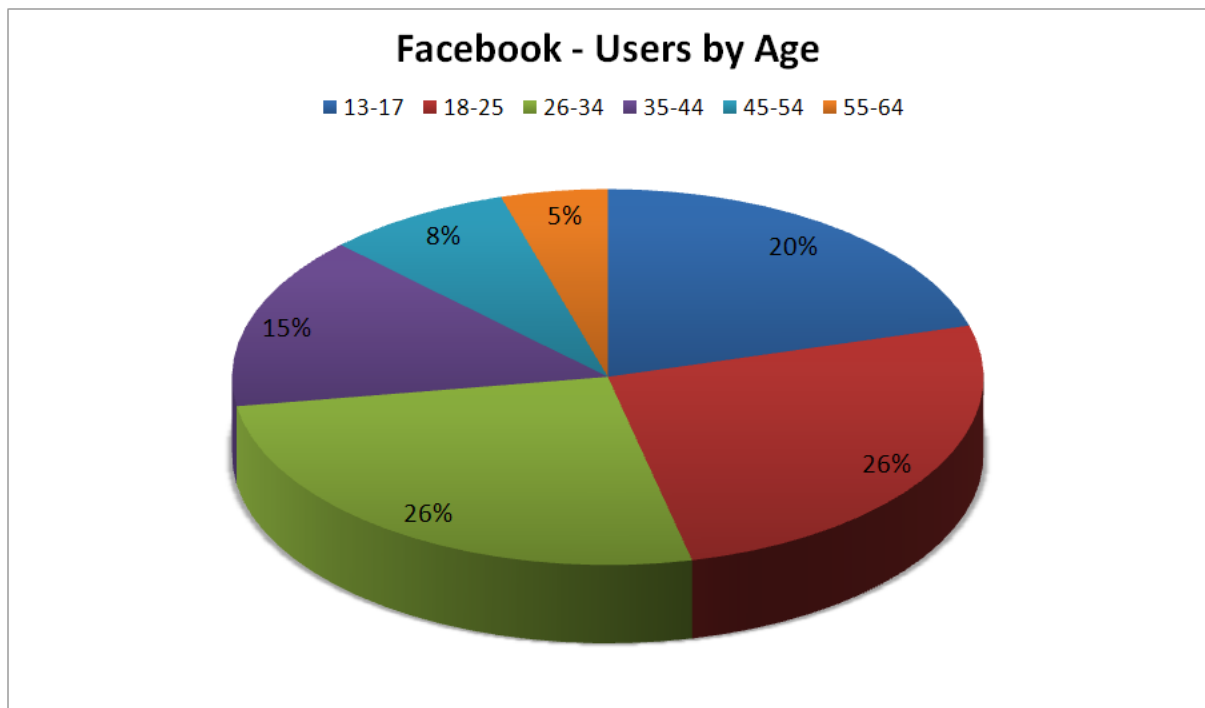


Figure 2.2. Facebook users by age
Adapted from Burbary. K. 2011.

The table above illustrates the age distribution of Facebook users. From the figure it is evident that 26% each of Facebook users fall within the age groups of 18-25 and 26 -34.

2.4.3.4 Application for Public Relations and Communication

Social media allow for the development and maintenance of sound relationships with target audiences. This facilitates the development of trust, allowing for the provision of information that is useful to target audiences as they make 'informed decisions'. Public relations practitioners can count on these media as effective channels in addressing their particular target audiences (Solis and Breckenridge, 2009).

In South Africa, as Facebook is the most popular platform to communicate among the traditional college-age demographic, Universities are beginning to utilize this technology to communicate with current and prospective students (Gruber, 2009). Universities have realised that in order to be competitive at a recruitment level, as well as to satisfy current students, steps must be taken to improve communication. Carnevale (2006) supports this notion by stating that the traditional communication methods used by universities are outdated as the Y- generation students are more inclined to using new technologies. According to (Staskeviciute and Neverauskas, 2008), University environments are best suited to adapt to these new communication channels. The main elements of any university is to educate their students, keeping them up to date with new technologies and make them ready to face the world competitively. Using social media may equip students with the skills necessary to implement their own communications strategies in the work place.

Reed (2011) states that the “business customers are on Facebook”. This would provide impetus for businesses to be on Facebook. It provides a page or a group for free and allows users to connect to their target audience. It is estimated that each Facebook user is connected to at least 60 other pages. This could be used by Universities in finding and engaging with prospective and current students.

It has also been estimated that “likes” on Facebook are each worth \$8 for its clients in terms of the immediate next sale (Chompon, 2011). Furthermore, the concept of “likes” for any organization are of significant value, since liking an organization’s Facebook page exposes it to others and encourages further visits. This enhances the potential to attract more visits to the page and has the potential to increase the “likes” of the page by posting status updates, comments, pictures, video, links, advertising an event, and notes, for example (Fincham and Sturgill, 2010).

The majority of university administrators today are embracing Facebook as an effective way of communication to reach current and prospective students (Richwalsky, 2009). This view is supported by McNeill, Diao and Gosper (2011) who relate that social media skills have already been learnt by the target audience. It is of particular interest to this study to note that Facebook itself was developed in a

University environment. The evolution of the platform can therefore be very closely linked to trends in higher education.

Hewitt and Forte (2006) argue that Facebook seems to have become a pervasive element of student's lives; as such, the potential exists for it to have a significant impact on social practices in university environments. Thus, it can be understood that Facebook has become an integral part of the lives of University students. They use it to communicate with each other – this may extend to inter-institution communication.

2.4.3.5 Issues to Consider

While Facebook has numerous benefits and applications in the public relations and communications context, there are some issues that must be carefully considered by those implementing or managing such strategies. Firstly, while conversations may lead to better relationships with constituents, they can also damage them if not handled wisely. It is therefore worthwhile considering crafting and implementing a solid social media policy with a code of conduct for users of the media. Reuben's (2008) research highlighted some of the issues that arise when higher education institutions grapple to use social media platforms. The primary concern is loss of control with the chance of gathering some negative comments feedback, information overload, and the chance of anyone creating an "official" Facebook page.

According to Bargh and McKenna cited by Ellison (2007:6) "some forms of computer-mediated communications can lower barriers to interaction and encourage more self-disclosure". While this may create an environment of sharing, collaboration and open communication, it may also impact on the privacy of individuals and the reputation of the organisation.

2.5 Implementation of a Social Media Strategy

Playle (2011) explores the key for the success of implementing Facebook in public relations and communications strategies by noting that this relies in having set objectives and a culture of readiness at a University. This means that the institution

must be open to using new and innovative strategies, and have the capacity to manage and adapt to them. It is also important to choose appropriate tools and conduct a study to determine “where the organization is in terms of the social technographic profile and cultural readiness” to determine where the institution is, and by implication, the direction in which it should be going (Playle 2011:1).

Holtz (2002) asserted that before any social media platform to communicate with the target audience is chosen, public relations practitioners need to know who their priority audiences are. Solis and Breckenridge (2009) assert that the principles and channels used to reach people are changing as a result of the increased demands and empowerment of the twenty-first-century market dynamics. In keeping abreast with market trends, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010:62) recommend that businesses choose social media carefully. The table, adapted from the above authors, indicates critical factors to consider when making a decision regarding social media channels.

		Social Presence/media richness		
		Low	Medium	High
Self- presentation/Self disclosure	High	Blogs	Social Networking sites (e.g. Facebook)	Virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g. YouTube)	Virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft)

Table 2.1 Classification of Social Media by social presence/media richness and self-presentation/self-disclosure. Adapted from Kaplan and Haenlein, M. (2010)

The above table illustrates that social networking sites fall in the high category of self-presentation/Self disclosure levels and in the medium category of social presence/media richness. The authors claim that whatever is current today can be forgotten in the virtual technology landscape of tomorrow. The advantage of choosing a high self/social presence and media richness is that the social media allows them to engage directly with end-users and consumers. This may be achieved at the right time, and at 'relatively low cost' and 'higher levels of efficiency' than can be achieved with more traditional communication tools. Higher education institutions could utilise Facebook, which is rich in the above characteristics and popular among the younger generations to directly reach their students.

2.5.1 Goals

Grunig (2009) argues that the relationship between the organization and its target audience must balance the interests of both the parties, that is, the relationship needs to be two-way and symmetrical. Zailskaite-Jakeste and Kuvykaite (2010:1) suggests that "effective internet-based communication will be when organisations

can reach the right audience, at the right time and can give them right message.” For example, higher education institutions are prone to strikes by students. Internet based communication can become useful if the students are engaged in a dialogue with the respective parties to resolve the issues at the centre of the dispute. In addition, communications departments can quickly provide immediate news updates to the university community at large. Internet-based communication therefore has a significant role to play in the engagement and creation of dialogue between the universities and its target audience during emergencies.

Ultimately, the goal of using Facebook as an effective tool must be clearly defined by the organisation’s public relations and communications department. Once this has happened, steps can be taken to concretise the strategies used to achieve these goals.

2.5.2 Resources

Rios-Aguilar, Canche, Deil-Amen and Davis III (2011) suggest recommendations to put emphasis on the resources allocated to social media when integrating it into their institutions. As mentioned earlier, some organisations dedicate alot of time and entire teams to the management of social media and online reputation.

2.5.3 Strategy

Orsini (2007) suggests that finding the best way to communicate with target audiences helps to ensure that a potential customer will recognize your services and the communication program will be effective. The social media experts, Solis and Breckenridge (2009) assert that the principles and channels you use to reach people, whether your influencers or direct customers are changing as a result of the increased demands and empowerment of the twenty-first-century market dynamics. Therefore, the question that arises within the public relations departments of universities is whether web2.0 and the mass adoption of social media can make PR communication more effective

Gruger (2010:9) argues that in the age group of 16-24 students in the higher education institutions, there is not only an experience gap, but there is also a difference in their motivation to use social media. He states that “16-24 year olds are on sites like Facebook and YouTube to keep in touch with friends and share their daily lives.” This highlights the point of their increased usage of cell phones in their daily life. The iPhones and Blackberrys, are at the finger tips of the students, allowing the technology that makes Web2.0 useable. According to Solis and Breckenridge (2009), “We now have the real ability to put the public back into public relations. The public means communicating to many different groups, even those hard-to-reach niche communities on the Web.” The authors infer that the people PR practitioners want to reach, have access to the equipment and technological know-how of social media. While some PR practitioners do indeed need to reach some of their public via the web, traditional communications media employed by higher education institutions in developed and developing parts of the world need to reach many more people, and this is accomplished by the cell phones the students carry ascertaining their effectiveness.

Grunig (2009:12) discusses a normative model which specifies that organisational communication should be practiced strategically, which is important for public relations to make organizations more effective and manage communication programs. To facilitate the above, the author expands by stating that public relations practitioners must influence organisational policy, strategy, and decisions to maximise opportunities and reach the set goals of the organization.

Gruber (2010) asserts that it is not only important to communicate with current students, it is also valuable to admissions and academic departments of the university to accurately assess the communication channels to reach out to the prospective students through these mediums. With an accurate understanding of the role these technologies can play throughout the academic and admission process, universities can tailor their recruitment strategies to utilize social media technologies to increase brand awareness and enrolment.

Ganley and Lampe (2009:267) states that the key strategy in implementing Facebook by the organization is to develop relationships with the customer and this

is often rewarded by an "abstract concept of social capital". Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe cited in McCorkindale (2010:3) define social capital as "the benefit one receives from one's relationship with other people." This idea is best seen when groups are created in the Facebook page to create a beneficial and sustainable community. Ganley and Lampe (2009) further explains that another advantage of successfully developing online groups using Facebook, is to understand the audience's needs, and to use this information to help reach organizational goals. Higher education institutions can create different groups for prospective students, current students, alumni to improve their communications with them.

Owing to the ability of Facebook to communicate messages with ease, online groups are created by the universities which are particularly useful for enabling discussion forums and threads based on common interest. Organisations should react to different messages and comments, to find time for answers and not ignore the negative information. As stated by McCorkindale (2010), Communication mediums through the Internet are constantly evolving. While it may not be expensive to share the information, it does require creativity, time and sincere dedication to distribute messages and strategically engage the target audience. Facebook has enriched communication in higher education, by enhancing multi-directional communication through its 'wall' function. This has been a significant development in terms of the evolution of communication from the old model of one-to-one communication (Hawn, 2009).

However, Salkhordeh (2010) asserts that the social networking phenomenon cannot be a casual interaction and relationship with customers. As businesses from all over the world have taken notice of the power of social media they are learning that social networking is not just a tool used to attract customers to their products and services, but also has the potential to create strong and lasting relationships with their customers and to build value of their brands in the marketplace.

In the above context, University public relations departments constantly explore new ways to communicate, and share information about student and faculty achievements. Facebook provides one of these avenues (Lavrusik, 2009). The article states that the university community can be engaged directly by Facebook,

instead of public affairs offices focusing their attention on promoting information to mainstream media like newsletters, TV, radio, university student email accounts.

Zailskaite-Jakste and Kuvykaite (2010: 851) suggest that while trying to have “good relations” with the target audiences higher education institutions strive to build strong positions in the market too. The author asserts that to have good relations there needs to be a dialogue with their audiences. At the same time they need to act on the responses from the prospective students.

However, Philips and Young (2009:137) state that public relations at its most senior level have to establish board commitment to online strategy. Its significance is greater than executive board roles such as human resources, marketing, product development and supply chain, because each of these is deeply dependent on an effective Internet strategy. This shows that the organization’s strategy should involve pre-determined guidelines, or ‘Netiquette’ on Internet dependent communication strategies. Furthermore, the authors stress that communicators need to use the appropriate Internet and social networking tools strategically and at their own discretion.

From the discussion it can be argued that, whilst the Internet has changed how the public relations practice, many organizations are still applying “old rules” to internet based PR, “therefore the capabilities and characteristics of the internet require new concepts and paradigms” (Wang, Hwang and Fesenmaier, 2009:160). A lot of money is been spent by PR for advertising campaigns to represent the organizations. Scott cited by Zailskaite-Jakeste and Kuvykaite (2010:2) agrees, A lot of organisations are still constantly sending inane pitches to journalists in the hope that they will get picked up. As some organizations thrive to publish the news on the internet using “blogs, podcast, video and content rich websites”, some organizations simply adhere to the traditional understanding, hoping that they reach wider audiences more effectively through media such as “TV, radio, printed newspapers, magazines”. Other companies are succeeding by publishing content based in internet with blogs, podcast, video and content rich web sites.

Therefore, the question arises is whether the higher education institutions advertised their use of Facebook for communication purposes, instead of thinking that the traditional ways of communication will better reach their audiences, so that the information they send out using this communication medium is identified by them. O'Hanlon cited by Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman and Witty (2010) talks about the value in exposing students to Facebook, by arguing, PR can operate as if they are the gatekeepers of these social networking sites, by constantly reading over the whole messages their students wish to publish, including profile information, and blog entries. Thus they can also manage the universities reputation by constantly monitoring the content of Facebook.

Shepherd (2011) states that adapting to every new medium of communication will always comes with a repercussion. Jackson Fried and Hansson cited by Shepherd (2011:3) pointed out that "What do you gain if you ban employees from, say, visiting a social-networking site or watching YouTube while at work. You gain nothing. That time doesn't magically convert to work. They'll just find some other diversion. When you treat people like children, you get children's work," and even if you ban social media at work, that will not stop employees using them unless you also ban mobile phones. More than half of all internet access on mobile phones is on Facebook. While universities do recognize the strategic importance of social media (Ryberg, 2005) there are unfortunately also constrained by bandwidth availability as well as academic issues and thus are forced to restrict access to these sites via the University network during working hours. This naturally does not prevent such access by students via mobile networks. Lipsett (2008) cautions that by taking these steps Universities are missing out on the potential for social networks to contribute to teaching and learning.

Kosik cited by Bosch (2009) Facebook is also used for academic purposes by some of the students, to contact their fellow students in their respective classes regarding the information about assignments, lecture and test schedules and even during crisis. The students believe that they preferred Facebook rather than the University education software programme and email accounts, because it provided them with immediate responses.

2.6 Barriers to Social Media

2.6.1 Access and Infrastructure

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) explore the impending use of new media in higher education to open communication on a global space. However, they observe that the lack of infrastructure to access the Internet and other forms of new media may hinder the adoption of the media. This is a particularly significant factor in the South African context.

2.6.2 Implementation

Implementing technology can come with different barriers. Groff and Mouza (cited by Klopfer, Osterweil, Groff and Haas, 2009:16) observed that research and policy factors, factors associated with the students, and factors inherent to Technology itself are key determinants behind the implementation of a social media strategy. They argue that not all the factors are easily manipulated or accounted for as they exist outside the higher education institutions. Organisations have to carefully identify the opportunity and address the concerns to achieve success in line with their objectives.

2.6.3 Usage

Solis and Breckenridge's (2009) book is an interesting take on the value of Facebook for public relations, but it places much emphasis on the ability of social media to revamp the PR industry, and does not take into account factors like access to technology, infrastructure, literacy levels, the public's perceptions of a company – with or without social media, and the exposure of companies to negative criticism on social media platforms.

Duboff cited by (Bosch, 2009), found during a qualitative study at Yale, faculty members reflected that their posts on Facebook indicated to students that they were part of the same academic community, and that it helped break down barriers between themselves and students. However, while they try to cut down on one

barrier, they may introduce new barriers by creating a separate community for academic purposes, or creating a Facebook page for the faculty or college in the University. This can make it tough for students to check updates on multiple Facebook pages. Also Hewitt and Forte (2006:1) observe that social networking sites are constructed on self presentation; attributes to identity management as a considerable issue for the partaker in the communities as their membership crosses perceived social boundaries and organizational power relationships. The authors further asserts that “Facebook offers tradeoffs to community members who must balance the potential social gain associated with new opportunities to establish ties and the social pain of relinquishing some control over the presentation of self” (Hewitt and Forte 2006:2). This shows that users grapple with perceived loss of control over performance and privacy issues as they address broad, unknown audiences which may consist of peers, supervisors, subordinates and parents and especially in the category of academic communities professors and mentors.

3.0 Conclusion

This chapter examined the current state of the literature regarding social media, and Facebook in particular, as a means of communication between an organisation and its target audience. The chapter began by examining the role of public relations departments within higher education. This was followed by a discussion on the evolution of public relations and communication strategies and models, after which the factors influencing this process were detailed. Social media, and in particular, Facebook, was discussed as a tool to be used by public relations and communication departments in adapting to their environments. Suggestions on the implementation of social media strategies were highlighted, followed by a discussion of the possible barriers to the implementation of such strategies. In the following chapter will look at the qualitative research methodology to be used in this study.

Chapter Three - Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the research methodology employed in this study. Firstly, the type of research that this study falls under is examined, followed by a discussion on the sampling strategy used for this study. The data collection instrument is then examined. Lastly, the chapter notes ethical considerations that have been taken into account for this study.

3.2 Exploratory Research

This study essentially focuses on investigating and probing a particular phenomenon. Welman and Kruger (1999: 154) state that exploratory research is not concerned with the testing of hypotheses or comparison of phenomena. Instead, it is rather concerned with determining whether or not a phenomenon exists, and becoming familiar with it. For this kind of research, it may be necessary to conduct an extensive literature review and consult various experts or knowledgeable sources.

There are five characteristics that usually define exploratory research (Welman and Kruger, 1999: 154).

- The first of these relates to sample size. In general, the sample size will be small due to the nature of the phenomena being examined.
- Secondly, non-probability sampling is most likely used as a sampling strategy. This may be due to the limited population that is able to provide information regarding the topic of research.
- Thirdly, the data requirements for this kind of research are vague. Where descriptive and causal research methods are bound by requirements to ensure the validity, reliability and generalization of studies, the essential nature of exploratory research does not allow for stringent application of such rules.

- Fourth, the objectives of exploratory research are more general than specific. This method aims to investigate as many facets of a phenomenon as possible. As a consequence, many characteristics may be unknown, making specific objectives more difficult to identify. In addition, the data may present itself as more qualitative than quantitative.
- Lastly, it can also be argued that exploratory research may not provide any concrete recommendations to dealing with problems that may be unearthed during the research process. The analysis may provide information about a phenomena, but not necessarily solutions or recommendations.

For this particular study, the researcher has opted to undertake exploratory research. The study aims to explore the effectiveness of Facebook as a communications tool at UKZN and DUT.

3.3 Sampling Strategy

3.3.1 Non-Probability Sampling

Non-probability sampling is by nature non-random, subjective and purposive (Trochim 2006). This implies that the researcher may select individual elements without necessarily taking randomness into account in order to achieve pre-determined research goals. Coldwell and Herbst (2004:79) state that non-probability samples may be selected using the expertise or judgment of the investigator and is not possible to assess whether the sample is representative of the population or not. This may be done to achieve a particular purpose or goal.

3.3.2 Techniques of Non-Probability Sampling

Non-probability sampling offers two main techniques that may be used for obtaining a sample. These include convenience sampling and purposive sampling.

- Convenience sampling, as the name suggests, provides the researcher with the power to select available elements for inclusion in the study. While this

method may be less difficult than others, it can compromise reliability of the study. It is a quick method, but not necessarily a representative one (Trochim 2006)

- Purposive sampling can be divided into three broad categories; judgement sampling, quota sampling and maximum variation sampling. It is undertaken to satisfy a particular need (Trochim, 2006). Judgment sampling refers to any sample that is a generic term that is used to describe any sample which is intentionally selected by the researcher in order to satisfy some predetermined non-probability criteria.

For this particular study, the researcher has chosen non-probability sampling because of the following reasons. Firstly, UKZN and DUT are geographically diverse organisations, consisting of a number of campuses in two cities. Achieving a random probability sample representative of the entire population of UKZN and DUT students could have been extremely costly and time consuming. In addition, the number of social media administrators was small. A representative sample was therefore not necessary, as the Facebook administrators were available to respond to the research interviews.

Secondly, as institutions of higher education, students undertaking research constantly bombard the student population with requests to complete surveys and questionnaires. As a consequence, many are loathe to voluntarily supporting research efforts.

3.3.3 Sample Size

The size of the sample drawn from UKZN and DUT was not necessarily representative neither does it specifically allow for generalization. The sample size is the target population which included students that currently subscribe to the UKZN and DUT Facebook pages as well as the relevant institutional social media administrators and managers.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Having selected a research paradigm and sampling strategy, it becomes imperative to select a relevant and effective means of data collection. Shiu, Hair, Bush and Ortinau (2009) identify the following as tools that may be used in the collection of research data:

- Questionnaires or surveys (Shiu et al., 2009: 223) are used when the researcher requires a convenient and quick means of collecting data in a non-intrusive or non-threatening manner. These documents can often be mailed for administration, and offer the possibility of anonymity on the part of the respondent. However, using this method can result in a low response rate.
- Interview Schedules (Shiu et al., 2009: 204) can be used when further probing is required. It can be argued that interview schedules can be implemented when researchers are aiming at acquiring more information around responses or questions in a questionnaire.
- Observation (Shiu et al., 2009: 309) is another option that can be explored. It can be descriptive in nature, and merely involves taking note of what takes place. This method can however, have certain limitations. At times, the performance or responses of certain individuals may be impacted on due to the fact that they are aware that they are being observed.
- The review of historical documentation can also be used as a research instrument. If a researcher aims to gain understanding of how an organization works without any negative effects on its employees, reviewing historical data can provide a sound vantage point from which to begin analysis.

For the purpose of this research the researcher employed three types of data collection to learn about the Facebook page at UKZN and DUT. In the first part of the study effectiveness of Facebook page as a communication tool between UKZN and DUT and their students is identified by thoroughly doing an observation of the official Facebook page.

In the second part of the study the key strategies employed in introducing Facebook as a communication tool is determined by interviewing the Facebook administrator at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the communication manager of Durban University of Technology. A set of questions designed previously are asked in the interviews. The interviews were not audio recorded instead notes were taken to put the respondent at ease while answering the questions.

In the third part of the study the barriers as perceived by the students in adopting Facebook as a communication tool were identified by sending a questionnaire to the target population. The link to the survey questionnaire is posted on the UKZN and DUT official Facebook page. The total number of respondents who completed the survey at UKZN are 126 and 27 completed the survey at DUT.

3.4.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire can be defined as a “preformulated written set of questions to which respondents record their answers, usually within defined alternatives” (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010:197).

They are an efficient means of data collection where the researcher clearly understands how to measure the variables of interest. They can be administered personally or distributed to respondents electronically or via post.

3.4.2 Electronically Administered Questionnaires

Electronically administered questionnaires allow the researcher to collect all the completed responses within a short period of time (Sekaran & Bougie 2010:197). This form of distributing a research instrument is particularly useful when a study is not confined to a local area. In addition, this means of administering the research instrument relatively allows for an increased response rate from the target population. UKZN and DUT have a number of campuses in two cities. For this study, the researcher electronically distributed the questionnaires to the target population.

The questionnaires were not intrusive on respondents in any way, and allowed for anonymous provision of responses.

3.4.3 Design of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed with a particular focus on three specific areas as highlighted by Sekaran and Bougie (2010: 198). These included the wording of the questions, the planning of issues with regard to how the variables will be categorized, scaled and coded as well as the general appearance of the questionnaire.

Questions were categorised according to two major areas. These included a section that assessed the effectiveness of Facebook-based communication, a part that focussed on identifying strategies behind UKZN and DUT's social media policies, and questions aimed at determining the barriers to the implementation of Facebook-based communication strategies. Questions were positively worded so that responses could be coded using a scale, which is presented in the following chapter.

An aggregate score for individually assessing the concepts was calculated by adding the scores for the test items measuring each concept. The composite score calculated for each concept was then plotted on a scatter graph in order to identify the student perceptions on using the Facebook as a communication tool.

3.5 Data Analysis

Once quantitative data has been collected, the researcher is faced with a decision regarding how to interpret and analyse the data so that it may be presented as information. For this particular study, all items in the questionnaire were coded so that responses could be entered into a database (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010: 306).

Once the coding had taken place, the data was captured using statistical software. The electronic survey software, SurveyBob, was used to collect responses. The data was then transferred into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Once entered here, the data was edited so as to ensure its consistency, as recommended by Sekaran and

Bougie (2010: 306). Responses for each test item were individually collated for examination. The data was analysed according to the coding, with findings presented in the form of percentages and graphical representation.

3.5.1 Observations

As stated by Krippendorff (2004:2) analysing the content entails a systematic reading of body of texts, images, and symbolic matter which is exploratory in process. In this analysis the researcher has done an inquiry into what actually happens in the relationship between the university and its students on a daily basis. A thorough investigation into the content of UKZN and DUT Facebook page is conducted to determine the effectiveness of Facebook as a communication tool.

3.5.2 Validity and Reliability

Validity is the degree to which the instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Validity refers to the degree in which our test or other measuring device is truly measuring what we intended it to measure (Anonymous 2, No date). The instrument used in this research aims to measure the three items, which include the effectiveness of Facebook page of UKZN and DUT, key strategies employed and the barriers to the implementation of Facebook as a communication tool.

The questions used in the research instrument for this study all aim to qualitatively uncover and answer the research questions set out at the beginning of this research proposal. The researcher has strived to reduce bias and that respondents are not led in any way. All questions in the instrument have been validated are relevant to this particular research in order to analyse the reasons for the business problem being experienced.

Reliability is the degree of consistency with which the instrument in the study measures a variable. The idea behind reliability is that any significant results must be more than a one-off finding and be inherently repeatable (Shuttleworth 2008). Three variables were made part of the researcher's objectives and all three are tested by

the research instrument consistently. The questions in the interview schedule target a particular variable and do not overlap in any way.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The following ethical issues that are relevant to this study are considered.

3.6.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent suggests that the individual understands the reason of the research and waives his or her right to privacy when he or she agrees to participate in the research study (Zikmund, 2003: 73). All respondents were fully notified to the nature and consequences of their participation.

3.6.2 Protection and Privacy

Privacy is an issue that involves the subject's freedom to choose whether or not to comply with the investigators research (Zikmund, 2003: 75). While the respondents have given informed consent, this research will be conducted in a manner so as to protect respondents and information providers from any harm, be it physical psychological or social. All information was gathered anonymously, with confidentiality being maintained. The researcher ensured that the information gathered was made only accessible to relevant parties which include the academic institution approving this research.

3.6.3 Permission

Permission was gained for this particular research from the Executive Director of Corporate Affairs at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Durban University of Technology. Please see Annexure for the signed copy of the letters.

3.7 Scope and Limitations

The scope of this research relates to the communication aspect of public relations of UKZN and DUT and their students. Limitations of this research include the inability of utilizing the entire population of UKZN and DUT student community. The sample focuses on the students who are the active users of Facebook and who liked the University Facebook page.

3.8 Conclusion

The research methodology employed for this study strove to provide congruence between the target population, the research objectives and research questions. In addition, care was taken to ensure that participants in this study were not subjected to any inconvenience. The electronically administered questionnaires allowed for efficient recording of responses, while ensuring anonymity for respondents. The research instruments detailed in this chapter are used in finding the results and are analysed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 – Presentation of Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the results yielded from the research instruments. The chapter begins by analysing the contents of the DUT and UKZN Facebook pages. This then brings forward the results of the surveys administered to students detailing the social demographic characteristics of the sample group. The focus then shifts towards the interview responses from the social media administrators at both institutions, which will form the bulk of the chapter.

4.2 Effectiveness of Facebook page as a communication tool between university and students

University of KwaZulu-Natal and Durban University of Technology were encouraged to join Facebook in February 2011 and April 2011 respectively. An analysis of the content placed on the Facebook pages of UKZN and DUT was conducted to explore whether it has been used effectively as a communication tool.

While there are several aspects of Facebook pages that can be studied, the investigation performed herein is limited to four categories from the breakdown of the PR related Facebook communication.

1. Recounting and reflecting on the university experience
2. The insights that the organizational Facebook page provides.
3. The wall posts of the Facebook page,
4. Information related to news, events, and links.

These included the number of daily active users, the total number of 'likes', daily 'likes' and comments, daily wall posts and daily news. The content was analysed for the period of August, September, and October 2011 and a monthly average was calculated where appropriate.

4.2.1 DUT Facebook page

The average number of daily active users visiting the DUT Facebook page increased over the three months during which the analysis was conducted. In August, the page had an average of 22.97 daily users. This figure increased to 28.83 in September and 38.35 in October.

Table 4.1 : Average number of students visiting DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

Month	No. of users
August	22.97
September	28.33
October	38.85

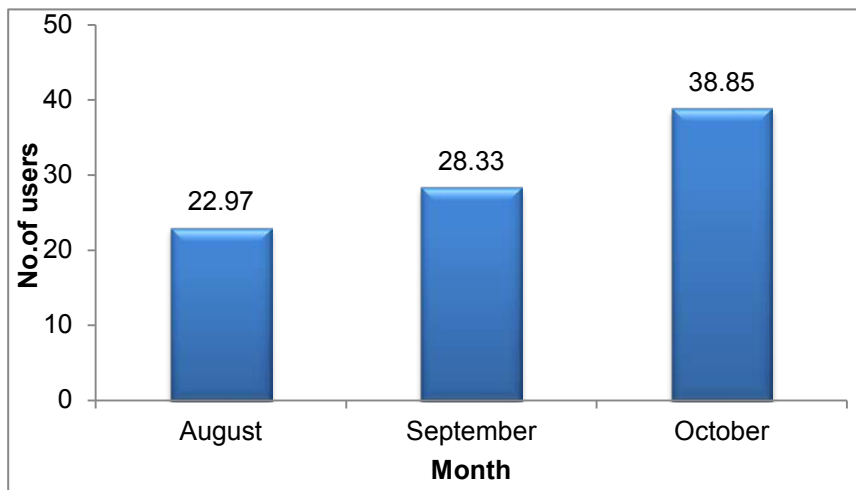


Figure 4.1: Number of students visiting DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

DUT's lifetime total likes also increased during the period of this study. The August total of 282 increased to 398.33 in September, and 466.48 in October.

Table 4.2 : Average number of life time likes for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

Month	Life time total likes
August	282
September	393.33
October	466.48

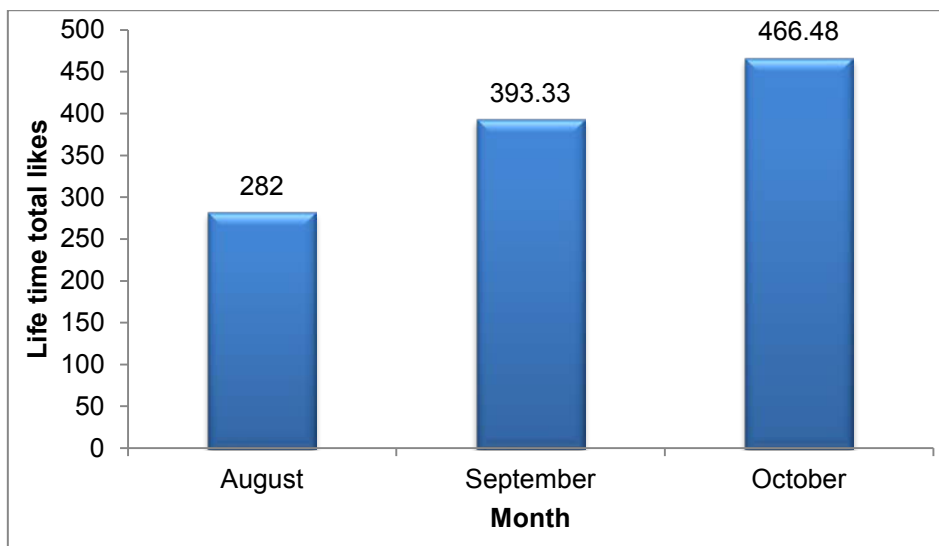


Figure 4.2: Number of lifetime likes for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

In contrast to the increases in lifetime total likes and daily active users, DUT’s daily likes and comments decreased during the assessment period. This was a steady decline from 6.22 daily likes and comments in August to 4.66 in September and only 2.09 in October.

Table 4.3 : Average number of daily likes and comments for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

Month	Daily likes and comments
August	6.22
September	4.66
October	2.09

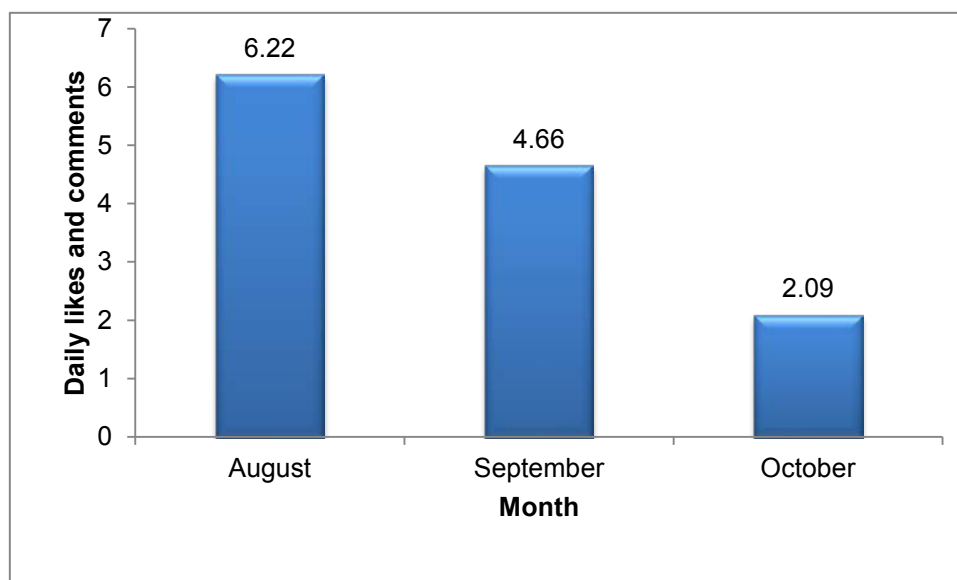


Figure 4.3: Number of daily likes and comments for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

The daily wall posts at DUT also indicated a decline. August saw an average of 1.22 wall posts. This decreased to 0.76 in September and was even lower (0.67) in October.

Table 4.4 : Average number of daily posts for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

Month	Daily wall posts
August	1.22
September	0.76
October	0.67

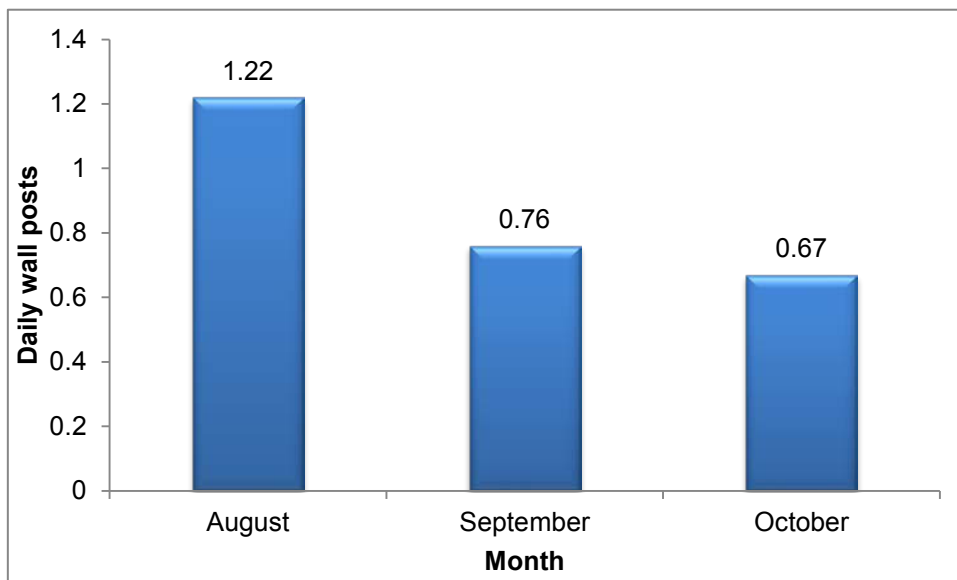


Figure 4.4: Number of daily likes and comments for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

The daily newsfeed impressions at DUT showed an incline in the number of times people have viewed a newsfeed story posted by the university. This is increased from 237.84 in August to 317.3 in September and by 333.06 in October.

Table 4.5 : Average number of daily news feed impressions for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

Month	Daily news feed impressions
August	237.84
September	317.30
October	333.06

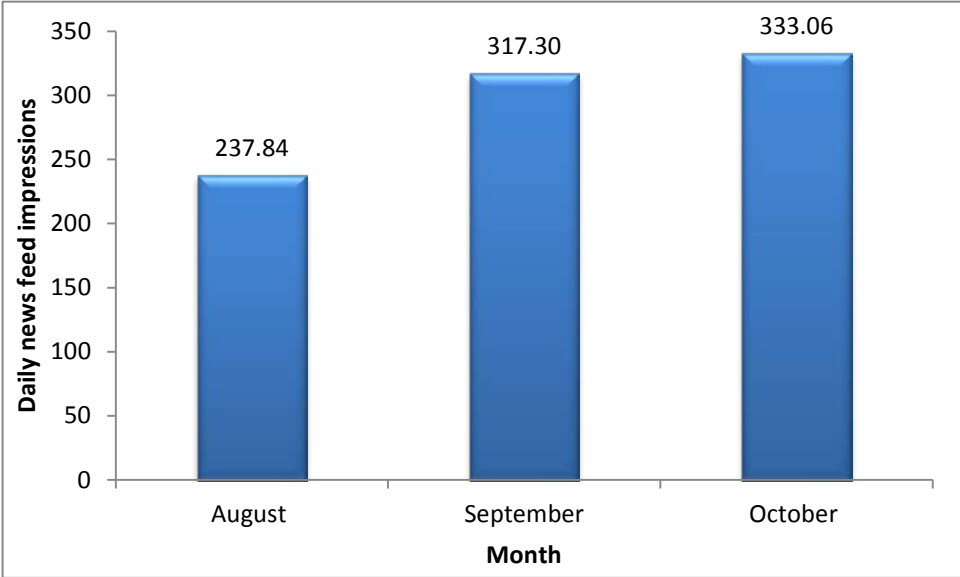


Figure 4.5: Number of daily news feed impressions for DUT Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

4.2.2 UKZN Facebook page

The UKZN Facebook page indicated an increase in the number of daily active users. In August, this number was slightly over 471 users per day, increasing to 568.2 users per day in September and 868.32 in October.

Table 4.6 : Average number of daily users for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

Month	No. of users
August	471.03
September	568.20
October	868.32

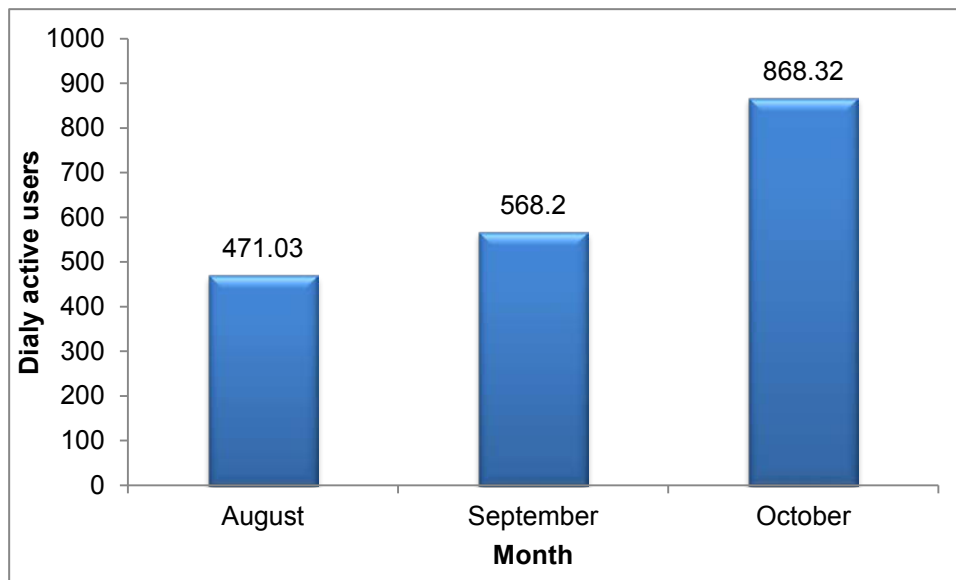


Figure 4.6: Number of daily users for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

UKZN's Facebook page also indicated an increase in the lifetime total likes in the three month period during which the content analysis was conducted. In August, the page had approximately 5909 total likes. This increased to 6333 in September and 6663 in October.

Table 4.7 : Average number of life time likes for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

Month	Life time total likes
August	5909.54
September	6333.70
October	6662.96

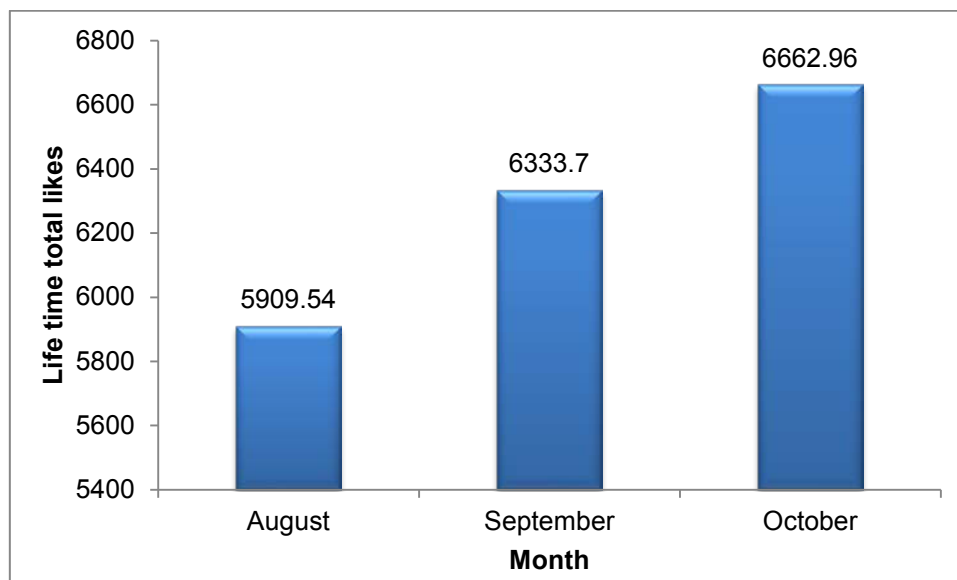


Figure 4.7: Number of daily users for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

A trend with the UKZN Facebook page can be identified by the increase in its usage. In addition to the increased daily active users and total lifetime 'likes', the number of daily likes and comments on the page also increased. In August, there were an average of 22 likes and comments per day, compared to 99 in September. By October, this had increased to an average of over 102 likes and comments per day.

Table 4.8 : Average number of daily likes and comments for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

Month	Daily likes and comments
August	22.00
September	92.23
October	102.87

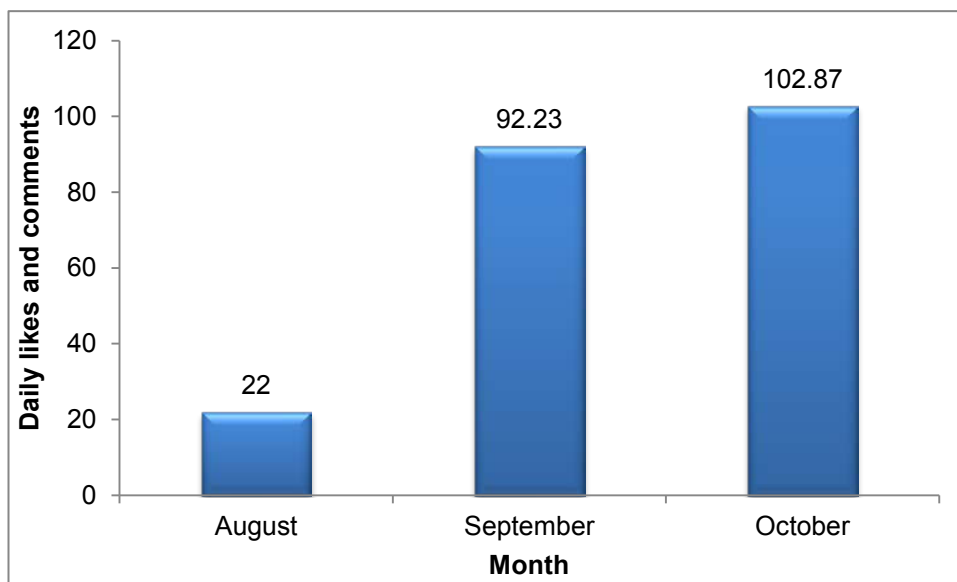


Figure 4.8: Number of daily likes and comments for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

The average number of daily wall posts in August was 4.9. This increased in September to an average of 21.76 posts, and decreased once again in October to an average of 5.87 posts per day.

Table 4.9 : Average number of daily wall posts for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

Month	Daily wall posts
August	4.90
September	21.76
October	5.87

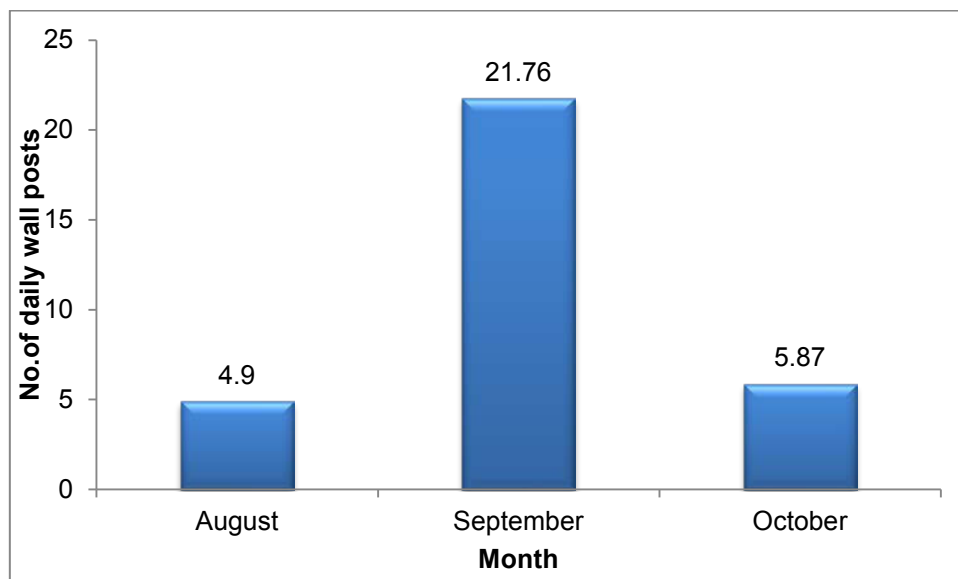


Figure 4.9: Number of daily likes and comments for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

The daily newsfeed impressions at UKZN showed a steep incline in the number of times people have viewed a newsfeed story posted by the university. This is

increased from 3157.742 in August to 4183.067 in September and by 7753.581 in October.

Table 4.10 Average number of daily news feed impressions for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

Month	Daily news feed impressions
August	3157.74
September	4183.07
October	7753.58

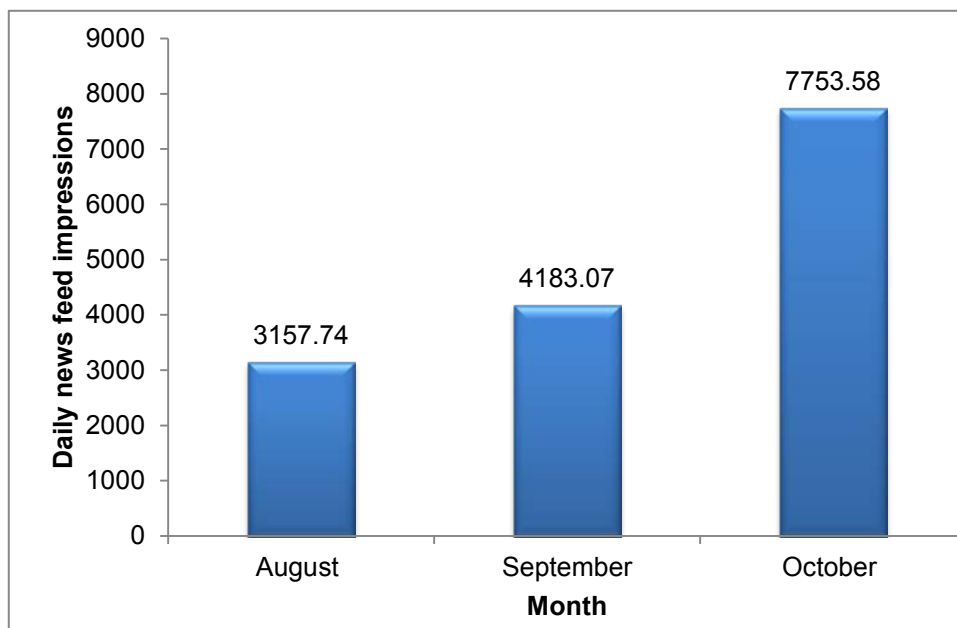


Figure 4.10: Number of daily likes and comments for UKZN Facebook page from August 2011 to October 2011

4.3 Barriers to communication as perceived by the students in using Facebook as a communication tool at the university

4.3.1 Research instrument

The survey was distributed to students electronically where they were required to respond to the questions by putting a tick on the relevant box. In total, 153 students from DUT and UKZN completed the electronically administered survey. Of these students, 126 were from UKZN, with 27 from DUT. The results were captured electronically, collated, analysed and interpreted as presented herein. The survey consisted of 10 test items. The initial four test items in section A were used to quantify social demographic characteristics. The next five test items in Section B consisted of questions. The sample population were asked to tick the relevant answer. Responses were compulsory and, the students are allowed to answer more than one option allowing multiple responses. The last test item in section B is an open ended question asking students to provide any suggestions to improvement. The results from the test items are discussed below.

4.3.2 Section A - Social demographic characteristics of sample population

This section discusses the social demographic characteristics of the sample population. Firstly, the student dynamics are presented, followed by an examination of the profile of the social media administrators employed by DUT and UKZN.

In total, 153 students from DUT and UKZN completed the electronically administered survey. Of these students, 126 were from UKZN, with 27 DUT students participated in the study. A further breakdown of the sample population will be presented below.

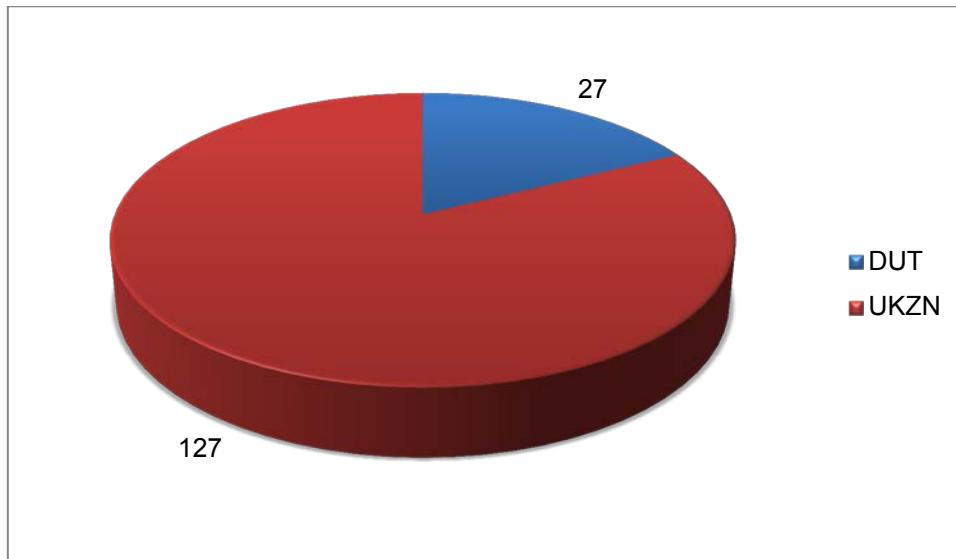


Figure 4.11: Students participated in the study at UKZN and DUT

4.3.2.1 Test item 1 – Age

The majority of the students who participated in the study fell into the 18 to 21 years of age category (51%). One fifth of respondents (20%) fell into the 22 to 23 years of age category, while 17% of students indicated that they were between the ages of 23 to 26, only 12% were over 27 years of age.

Table 4.11: Age Distribution of Respondents at UKZN and DUT

AGE	UKZN	Percentage (%)	DUT	Percentage (%)	Total	Percentage (%)
18 to 21	63	50%	15	56%	78	51%
22 to 23	24	19%	6	22%	30	20%
23 to 26	22	17%	4	15%	26	17%
27 and over	17	13%	2	7%	19	12%
Other	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

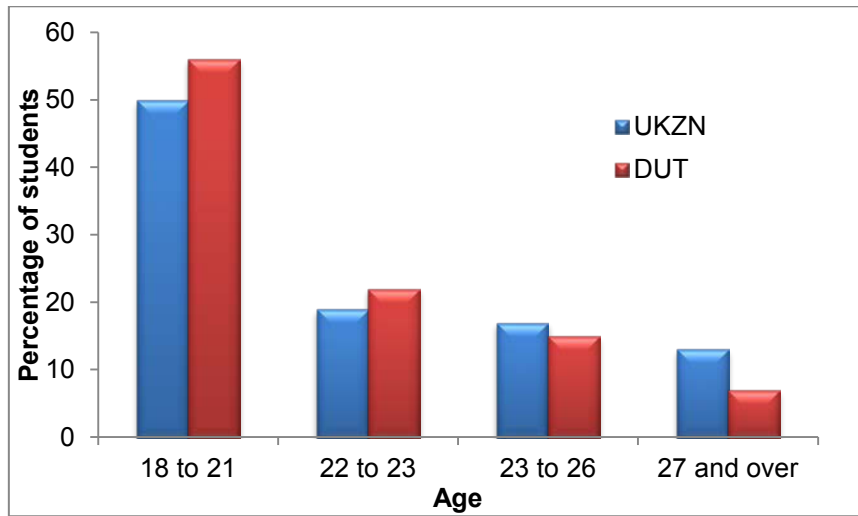


Figure 4.12: Age Distribution of Respondents at UKZN and DUT

4.3.2.2 Test item 2 – Race

Of the 153 respondents, 94 were Black African, 5 were Coloured, 38 were Indian, 15 were white and 1 opted for the ‘Other’ category. The main observation here is that at DUT, only Black African and Indian students participated in the study.

Table 4.12 Breakdown of Race of Respondents

Race	UKZN	Percentage (%)	DUT	Percentage (%)	Total	Percentage (%)
African	75	60%	19	70%	94	61%
Coloured	5	4%	0	0%	5	3%
Indian	30	24%	8	30%	38	25%
White	15	12%	0	0%	15	10%
Other	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%

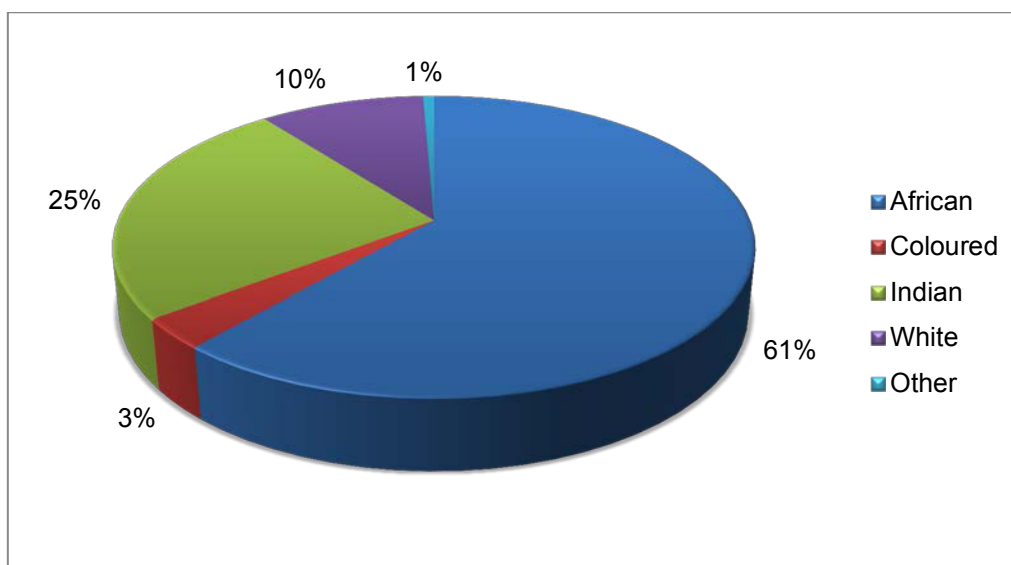


Figure 4.13: Breakdown of Race of Respondents

4.3.2.3 Test item 3 – Gender

Of the respondents, 62% were male, with the remaining 38% being female. This saw a split of 60% male and 40% female at UKZN, with DUT’s profile indicating that 70% of respondents were male, with 30% being female.

Table 4.13: Gender Distribution of Respondents at UKZN and DUT

Gender	UKZN	Percentage (%)	DUT	Percentage (%)	Total	Percentage (%)
Male	76	60%	19	70%	95	62%
Female	50	40%	8	30%	58	38%

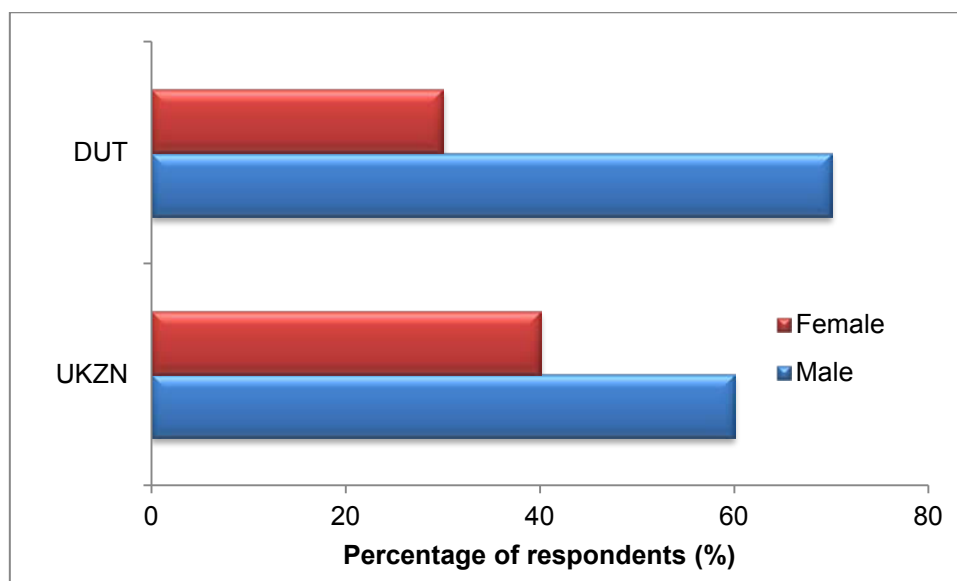


Figure 4.14: Gender Distribution of Respondents at UKZN and DUT

4.3.2.4 Test item 4 - Education Level

The largest percentage of student participants reported holding a Bachelor's degree (65%). This was followed by Masters qualifications (15%) and Diplomats (12%) and Other (8%). A minority of participants (5%) reportedly held Doctoral qualifications.

Table 4.14: Educational Qualifications of Respondents at UKZN and DUT

Education Level	UKZN	Percentage (%)	DUT	Percentage (%)	Total	Percentage (%)
Diploma	0	0%	18	67%	18	12%
Bachelor's	90	71%	3	11%	93	61%
Masters	18	14%	5	19%	23	15%
Doctoral	7	6%	0	0%	7	5%
Other	11	9%	1	4%	12	8%

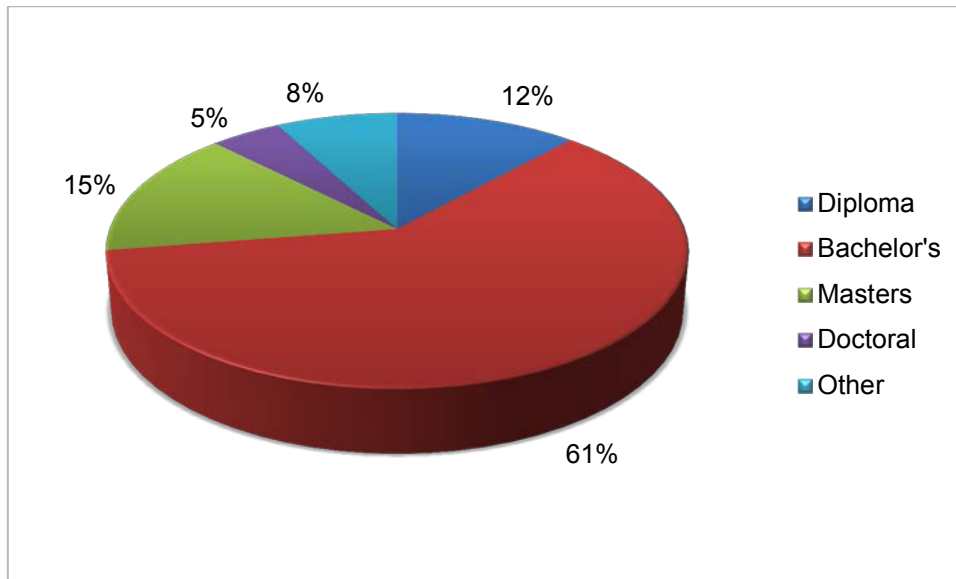


Figure 4.15: Educational Qualifications of Respondents at UKZN and DUT

4.3.3 Section B – Accessibility, Communication and Barriers in using Facebook

There were six major questions relating to social media that were put to participants. Most questions were closed-ended, with the option to choose more than one response. Furthermore, the last question allowed for an open-ended response regarding improvements that could be made to the administration of the Facebook pages at DUT and UKZN.

4.3.3.1 Test Item 5 – From which facility do you access Facebook? (Allowed multiple responses)

The majority of students at UKZN access Facebook through the student LANs (32%) or their cell phones (32%). The third most popular means of accessing Facebook was through laptops (23%) with a minority (12%) gaining access at home using a personal computer.

The most popular means of access at DUT was through cell phones (50%), with 30% of respondents making use of laptops to access Facebook. Only 10% used the

University LANs for Facebook access, while an even smaller percentage (7%) accessed Facebook at home with a personal computer.

Table 4.15: Percentage number of students who access the Facebook page at UKZN and DUT

From which facility do you use to access the Facebook page?	UKZN (%)	DUT (%)
University LAN (After 4pm)	32	10
Cell phone	32	52
Laptop	23	30
Personal Computer at Home	12	7

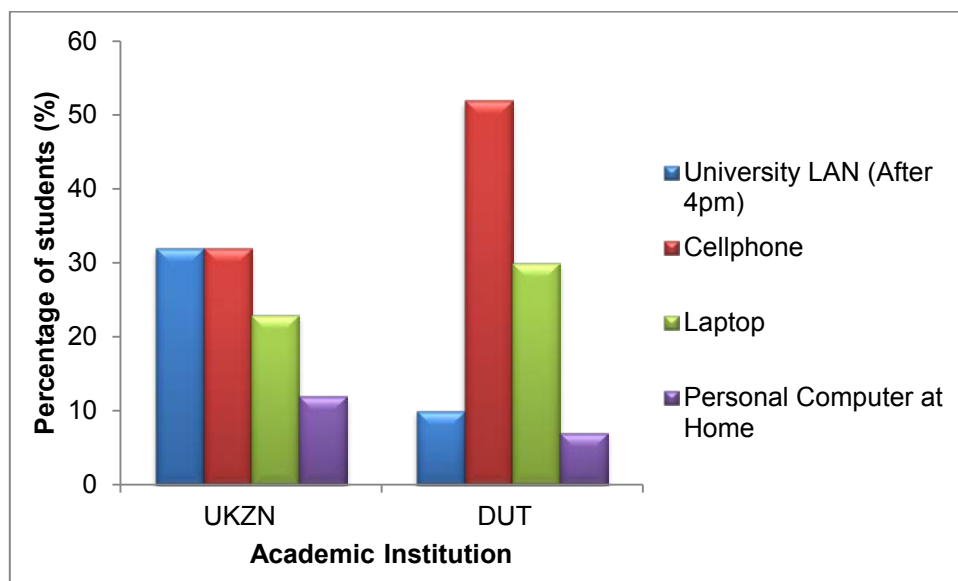


Figure 4.16: Number of students who access the Facebook page at UKZN and DUT

4.3.3.2 Test Item 6 - What do you think are the barriers to effective communication in using Facebook to interact with the university? (Allowed multiple responses)

The greatest barrier to use the Facebook page at UKZN was the limited access at the University LANs (42%). The second ranked barriers were limits on internet access (19%) and concerns about privacy (19%). Of the students surveyed, 18% felt that UKZN did not respond to their queries in time.

At DUT, the majority of students (35%) felt that the institution did not respond to queries in time. Concerns over privacy as well as limits on internet access (22% each) were also ranked as barriers to the use of Facebook as a communication tool. Only 19% felt that the prohibition of Facebook access at DUT LANs was a barrier.

Table 4.16: Percentage number of students who expressed about the barriers to effective communication at UKZN and DUT

What do you think are the barriers to effective communication in using Facebook to interact with the university? (Select all that apply)n	UKZN (%)	DUT (%)
Facebook is banned in LANs until 4pm	42	22
Concerned about privacy on Facebook	19	22
Do not receive feedback for queries in time	18	35
LANs have a time limit for student internet access	19	19

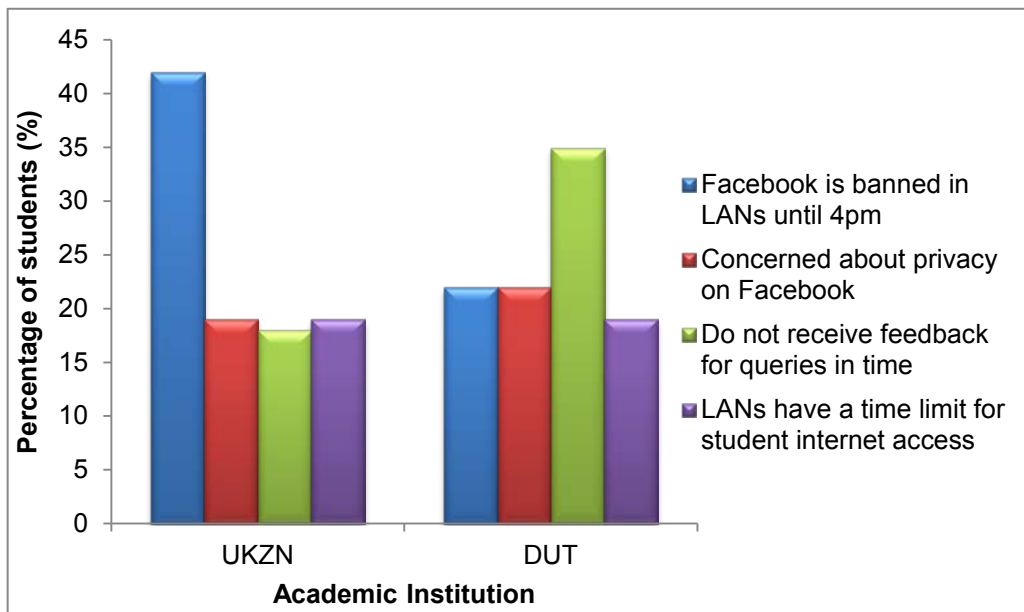


Figure 4.17: Number of students who expressed about the barriers to effective communication at UKZN and DUT

4.3.3.3 Test Item 7 - Do you think that communicating with the university through the Facebook page is useful to students. (Allowed multiple responses.)

A majority of UKZN students (34%) felt that Facebook was useful for communication, especially during emergencies such as strikes. Of all the respondents, 29% felt that Facebook was the most effective means of communication with students. This view was supported by a quarter of the respondents who felt that Facebook met students' needs for communication. A minority of students reported that Facebook communication cluttered their private profiles (5%), with the same percentage opting for the response 'Do not know'.

DUT's students shared similar views, with 33% reporting that Facebook was the most effective means of communication with students, 30% finding that Facebook met their requirements, with 30% stating that it was an effective channel, especially during emergencies. A small percentage (4%) was unsure of their response.

Table 4.17: Percentage number of student's impression on the usefulness of Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT

Do you think that communicating with the university through the Facebook page is useful to students? (Select all that apply)	UKZN (%)	DUT (%)
Yes, it meets the needs of students	25	30
Yes, it is the best channel to communicate as the students are on Facebook	29	33
Yes, easy to receive information during emergencies(e.g. strikes)	34	30
No, it clutters my home profile page, which I prefer to keep personal	5	0
Do not know	5	4

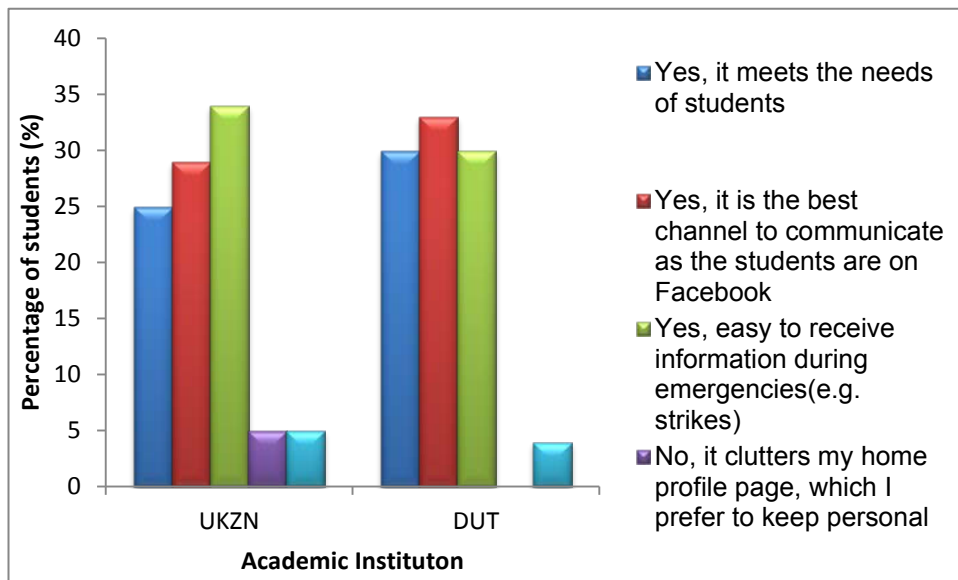


Figure 4.18: Number of student's impression on the usefulness of Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT

4.3.3.4 Test Item 8 - What do you like most about University Facebook?

UKZN students indicated that they held positive views of Facebook as a means to obtain news, events and pictures (31%). One fifth of students surveyed felt that it was an effective means to interact with other students and alumni, with 17% reporting positive responses to competitions run through Facebook. The least popular responses were concerned with applications information (16%) and the submission of complaints (14%).

At DUT, the students surveyed indicated a similar order of preference. The most popular positive aspect of Facebook communication was the instantaneous nature of news, events and pictures (30%). Just over one fifth (22%) of respondents found it useful to engage with alumni and other students and to facilitate application queries. The variance between the institutions saw only 11% finding the channel effective for competitions, while 13% used Facebook to lodge complaints.

Table 4.18: Percentage number of students who expressed about what they like in the University Facebook page at UKZN and DUT

What do you like most about University Facebook?	UKZN (%)	DUT (%)
To get information about the University news, events, view pictures instantly	31	30
Application and other enquiries	16	22
To engage with fellow students and alumni	20	22
Taking part in the competitions that the University runs to engage students	17	11
To lodge complaints	14	13

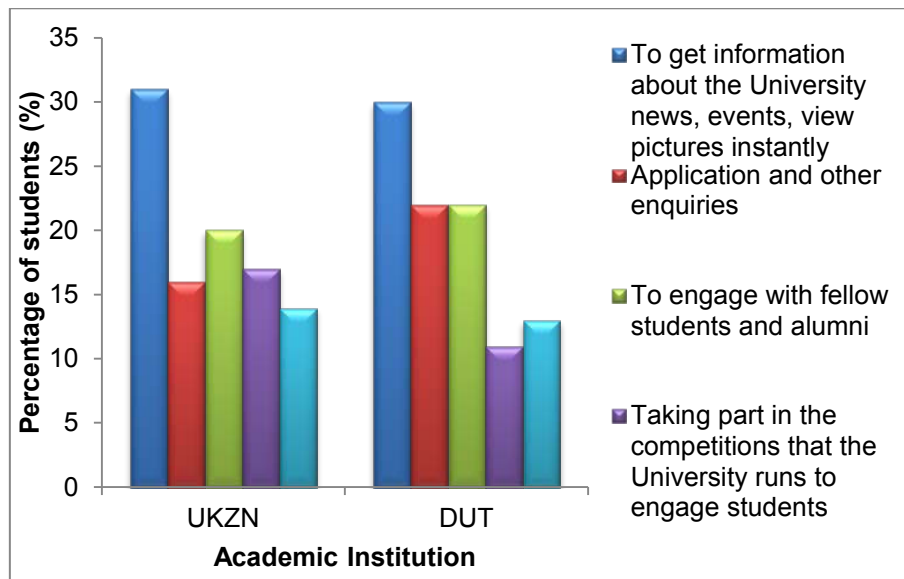


Figure 4.19: Number of students who expressed about what they like in the University facebook page at UKZN and DUT

4.3.3.5 Test Item 9 - What do you think is most irritating about the Facebook as a communication tool between the University and students?

The majority of UKZN students found multiple institutional pages to be a critical negative aspect of Facebook communication (42%). Not getting responses within acceptable time frames from the institution proved to be another challenge to the use of this channel (34%). Only 24% reported that the University Facebook page was invasive on their private profiles.

DUT's students reported that the worst aspect of their institution's Facebook page was that responses from the University were not made within acceptable time frames (67%). Only 14% felt that the organisation's page was invasive on their personal profiles, while 17% reported multiple institutional pages to be problematic.

Table 4.19: Percentage number of students who think is the most irritating thing about Facebook as a communication tool between the University and students.

What do you think is most irritating about the Facebook as a communication tool between the University and students?	UKZN (%)	DUT (%)
Multiple Facebook pages for the university and departments	42	17
If I don't receive an update from university about my query	34	67
My home page gets full with too many messages from university	23	14

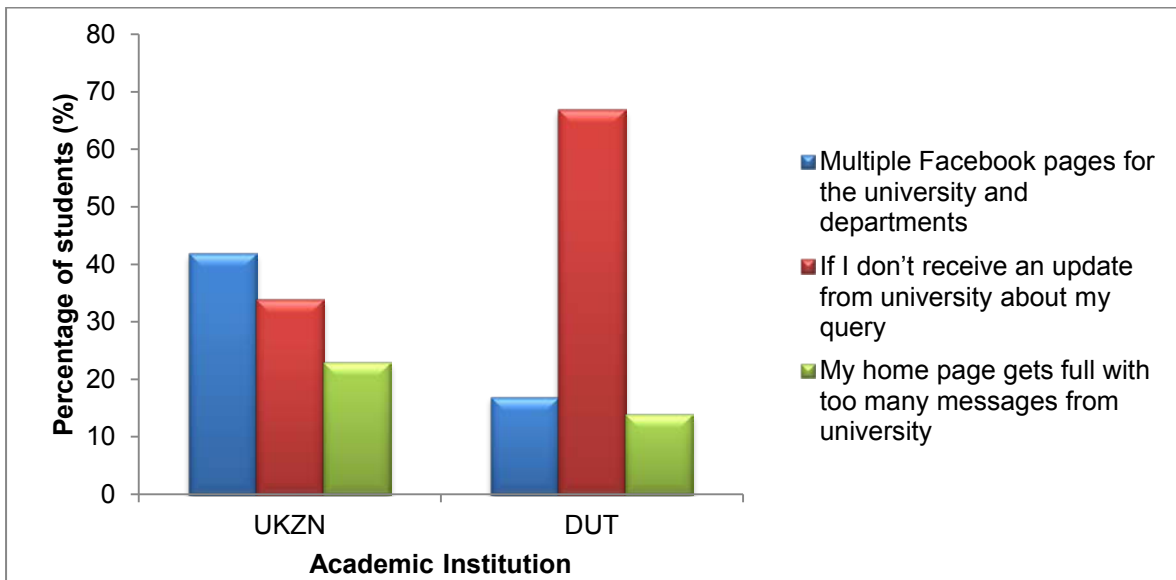


Figure 4.20: Percentage number of students who think is the most irritating thing about Facebook as a communication tool between the University and students.

4.3.3.6 Test item 10 – Suggestions for improvement

There were several comments and statements from respondents regarding their opinions on how to improve Facebook communication at UKZN and DUT. It should be noted that this was not a compulsory question, and respondents were free to

abstain from providing an answer. An analysis of these comments revealed several common themes.

The most popular of these related to the administration, monitoring, evaluation and updating of the pages. A total of eight students felt that it was critical to effectively administrate the page. These comments also indicated the importance of monitoring and evaluating postings on the page. In addition, it became apparent that a critical factor to improving Facebook communication would be to update the page on a regular basis.

Another trend that emerged was the positive response to Facebook as a communication tool. Comments from five students indicated that having an institutional Facebook page was a positive move for DUT and UKZN, and was an effective, efficient means of communication. An additional theme that emerged indicated that some students feel that Facebook is an inappropriate channel for communication with students. Students that made these statements qualified them by noting that Facebook can be a distraction to students and may lead to less commitment to academic pursuits.

Lastly, and in opposition to the previous point, some students held the view that access to Facebook should be increased. This may involve lifting the blocking of Facebook at University LANs until 4pm during week days.

Table 4.20: Percentage number of students who suggested several improvements with regards to the usage of Facebook as a communication tool between University and students at UKZN and DUT

Suggestions to improve	UKZN	UKZN (%)	DUT	DUT (%)	Total	Total (%)
Limit access to limit distraction from academic work	1	4.17	0	0.00	1	3.70
Not an appropriate channel	3	12.50	0	0.00	3	11.11
Must be regularly administrated and monitored	8	33.33	0	0.00	8	29.63
Create pages for specific purposes	1	4.17	0	0.00	1	3.70
Must be supported by other appropriate channels	1	4.17	0	0.00	1	3.70
Extend access to Facebook	3	12.50	0	0.00	3	11.11
Comments must receive responses/action	1	4.17	0	0.00	1	3.70
Limit postings - do not flood / spam personal pages	1	4.17	0	0.00	1	3.70
Efficient and cost effective means of communication	5	20.83	0	0.00	5	18.52
Do not insult students	0	0.00	1	33.33	1	3.70
Access to results	0	0.00	1	33.33	1	3.70
Application information	0	0.00	1	33.33	1	3.70

The Figure below shows the percentage number of students who suggested several improvements and disagreements to the usage of Facebook page at UKZN and DUT.

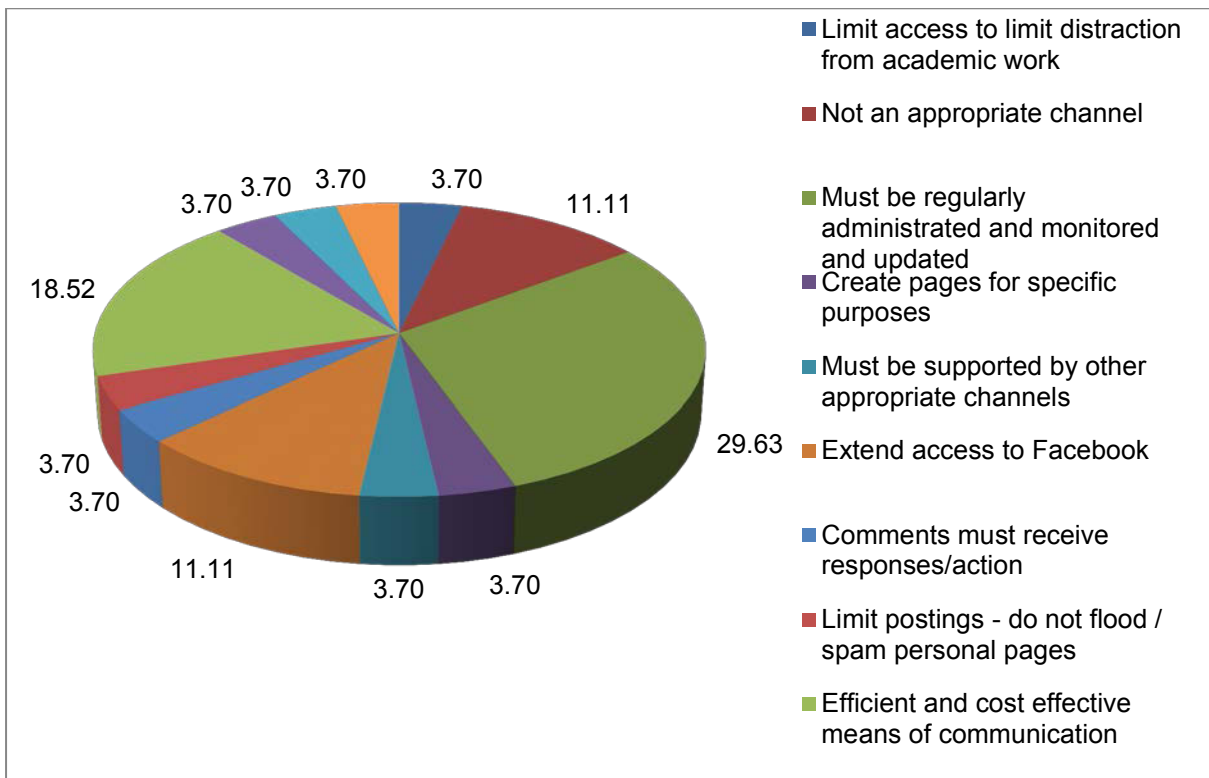


Figure 4.21:Percentage number of students who suggested several improvements with regards to the usage of Facebook as a communication tool between University and students at UKZN and DUT

4.4 Key strategies behind introducing Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT that would ensure effective communication?

4.4.1 Facebook administrator demographic characteristics

The two Facebook administrators interviewed for this study at UKZN and DUT are both females and hold a Master's degree in media relations.

4.4.2 Social media administrator interview results

A total of 21 questions were asked in the interview conducted to reflect on the strategies behind incorporating Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT. From the conversation with the Facebook administrators it is made obvious

that they are *au fait* with the social media and especially with Facebook. The responses from the Facebook administrators at both the universities are revealed in this section.

4.4.3 SECTION A: Test items 1, 2, 3, and 4 – Resources

UKZN

One staff member was dedicated to update the Facebook page at UKZN. University has plans to hire a person who is responsible for updating the page in future so that they can be more dedicated to monitoring and updating the page. It was found that the benefits of having an official Facebook page for the University far outweighs the costs associated to the page as there are no costs associated with it, apart from the salary paid to the person.

DUT

Two staff members were responsible to update their official Facebook page of the university. Mainly done by an administrator within the Communications department and the communications officer oversees and assists with the process. At DUT the topic of creating a social media officer position within the structure has been broached, but it an unlikely event to have such a position in place. Whilst there are no costs associated with having an official Facebook page, University puts strong emphasis on potential for negative publicity as a cost. The university has in the past been reluctant to engage in social media due to fears of loss of control. At DUT, their communication budget is extremely limited and this has to cover other forms of communication expenses such as publications, DUT website, media, internal and external communications and public lectures. As the university is revamping their website, embarking on the communications through social media platforms will form part of the website budget.

4.4.4 Section B: Goals and Objectives

Test item 5 – Motive to embrace Facebook as a communication tool

UKZN

UKZN thinks Facebook is an excellent way to keep the students updated on the happenings at UKZN. Firstly, the administrator observed that students of this era often do not read their university emails from their student accounts but do spend time accessing Facebook. By communicating via the Facebook page students can read about the university news and events, announcements while they are accessing their Facebook profiles. Secondly, UKZN strongly believes that students are used to using Facebook as an information source and at the same time Facebook allows the students to communicate with the University as they are able to post their views and opinions on the University Facebook.

DUT

The internal communications at DUT has always been a challenge to the communication department. Being a multi-campus institution with 25000 students spread across 2 different cities has posed budget as an issue to the university. Whilst the difficulties faced DUT has able to realize many advantages, including the obvious fact that a large number of Facebook users are the youth who are their core customers. As the students started to communicate with their peers through their mobile phones, it is the viewpoint of the University to embrace Facebook as an ideal platform to communicate with a wider spectrum of staff and students.

Test item 6 – Does Facebook enhance the intervention strategy?

UKZN

The administrator asserts that definitely Facebook page enhances intervention strategy as it reaches far more people than normal communication means. She adds as people pay more attention to the news available on Facebook. For this reason, if

the University has to bring about particular change they will be able to communicate this message far more effectively through Facebook than through normal traditional communication means. Furthermore, it is possible to get feedback from those who will be affected by this change which will help the University to fine-line this potential change.

DUT

The communication manager believes it is a crucial communication tool as an intervention strategy as it addresses a number of problems the University has with internal communications. These include being able to communicate with a large number of students, and directly to the students cell phones; the traditional method of sending SMS and calling each and every student at the University, the communications department has to shell out over R8000. Considering the budget is rather limited, this is exorbitant. Further she asserts that Facebook costs are minimal as compared to this. While the university does not employ a digital media expert, if they did, the costs would be much lower compared to communication channels like SMS'es.

Test item 7 – Is it right time to introduce Facebook to the students?

UKZN

UKZN thinks that there is never a wrong time to introduce Facebook to students unless it is during the difficult times at University like strikes as it might be difficult to manage the page as there would be a lot of activity on the page.

DUT

DUT strongly feels that Facebook has been extremely successful with reaching a wider variety of people as it is noted that not only students, but parents are also on Facebook. This proves it is a right time to introduce Facebook to the students. Facebook has grown at a phenomenal rate in a short span of time, and it is much more popular than Twitter. The numbers of Facebook likes are almost double the

number of followers on Twitter and there is also a higher level of engagement on Facebook than on Twitter and University has not explored other social media platforms like Google Plus.

Test item 8 – Institutional tone and voice of university Facebook identity

UKZN

Although Facebook is an informal communication method, university try to keep the tone 'formal'. The administrator is very particular about the language use as it is important to be grammatically correct at all times. Furthermore, they use an anonymous 'UKZN VOICE" so that it appears as though the actual University is dealing with the queries and interacting with them hoping that it creates a bond with the students and the university.

DUT

The institutional voice on the Facebook page is always about their students and staff who excel at Universities research initiatives and academic/public lectures at the University. It has been observed that the Facebook friends comprise of current and potential students, DUT's main idea is to inspire them.

Test item 9 – Can Facebook help to reduce barriers for communication to the students?

UKZN

UKZN believes that Facebook helps to reduce barriers for communication. Students can access information/university news in their own time when they feel like and as they always check their messages on Facebook they can check university information at the same time instead of logging into their university student account.

DUT

The Facebook administrator at DUT indicated that Facebook helps to reduce barriers for communication as it is a quick means to spread news across the University and students are more technologically advanced to access their social networking profiles instantaneously.

Test item 10 – Is it an effective means to spread and receive time-sensitive and critical information through to the students in case of emergencies (e.g. strike)?

UKZN

The administrator asserts that they have over 6800 students on Facebook. They are able to communicate with this number and in turn they can communicate the same information to their friends who are not part of Facebook about any news related to strike. This can motivate those students to friend with UKZN in improving its Facebook contacts.

DUT

DUT's notion is that Facebook cannot be used as a crisis communication device during an emergency to a large extent. They believe that it can be used just to inform students about student demands and management's responses, but cannot be relied to communicate during an emergency. This is not only because a small proportion of students are on Facebook, but also because even though a student is on Facebook, it doesn't mean that they are checking their Facebook feed during an emergency. They may only see the post a day or two later. Therefore, it can be used to supplement other communication channels, e.g. SMS'es, but cannot be used in isolation. During strikes, urgent news (e.g. the closure of the University) is communicated using SMS'es. The costs are excessive, but the SMS system ensures that every student who has supplied the University with their contact information receives an SMS.

Test item 11 – Do the students know about the existence of the University Facebook page? Strategies drawn to advertise the university Facebook page.

UKZN

UKZN believes that almost all the students know about their Facebook page. A University wide communiqué was sent to all the students university accounts and various communiqués were posted in newsletters to advertise the Facebook page together with a link on UKZN website.

DUT

DUT states that many students do not know about the University Facebook page. The only method of advertising is done by placing the links of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube channel on the DUT website. Future plans to market the social media platforms in adverts are on its way by the Marketing department.

Test item 12 – Strategies in place to maintain the university’s reputation

UKZN

The Facebook administrator vocalised her concerns about students and social media, and the repercussions for both students and the university. To maintain universities reputation UKZN has set guidelines to follow. These guidelines are sent to all the departments before they create their own departmental websites. She asserts that students should feel responsible for their actions in protecting the university’s reputation as the negative comments made by students may jeopardise their employability and conduct in future. It was indicated that while the Executive Management had undertaken to block social media during work hours, this would simply prevent the public relations department from monitoring conversations regarding the university, and would therefore have a negative impact on the image of the university.

DUT

At DUT one of the blows to the University's reputation is negative media coverage during strikes. The unfortunate reality is that the strikes have done much damage to the University's reputation. The strategies adopted to combat this issue are by getting positive stories placed in the media. In terms of social media, DUT searches for negative coverage on the internet and makes comments where possible and appropriate. This is not feasible if someone is posting negative comments on their own personal Facebook page and it is not accessible by the public. They ensure that the Facebook page is constantly updated to keep the students in the loop to maintain the University's reputation.

Test item 13 – Management of inappropriate comments and moderators response to the controversial messages.

UZKN

UKZN does not delete any posts unless profanity or inappropriate language has been used. They prescribe to 'free speech' within reason. However, if the moderator finds any posts will offend others they might delete the comments in order to safeguard the university reputation.

DUT

As DUT has only started making inroads with the Facebook page early 2011 they have not experienced a barrage of negative comments. The main probability of receiving negative criticism is mainly during strikes which they face beginning of every academic year. The moderators remove any abusive/foul language. It was found that if people are posting constructive criticism, DUT always responds as best as they can.

Test item 14 - Different departments/faculties have different Facebook pages within the university, how does it affect the official university Facebook page to ensure that its tone is consistent?

DUT

It was observed that many staff, departments and students have set up their own Facebook pages which are maintained by different individuals on their own capacity. Even though the reality is that DUT has only one official Facebook page. Therefore it became extremely difficult for the university to maintain a single tone. It was found that it is simply not possible given the rights that staff and students have to express themselves freely.

Test item 15 – Number of hours spent per week to update statutes, posting articles/events, responding to student’s inquiries

UKZN

The Facebook administrator constantly accesses the page throughout the day to post comments and see if there are any queries to respond to. It is a task for the administrator that never ends. At present university only responds to student’s queries or post news and information during weekends and after hours at times like emergencies such as strikes.

DUT

The Facebook administrator spends about two hours on Facebook distributed throughout the day. It includes posting new entries and responding to student queries. They often need to consult with other departments to provide an answer to student queries, or they give the students the relevant department’s contact details to expedite the process.

Test item 16 - Evaluating the effectiveness of using Facebook as a communication tool?

UKZN

It was observed that the Facebook administrator makes use of the insights application provided by the Facebook page to monitor how many people are active, and frequently responds to posts. The main consideration factor for the communication department at present is to check how many students are joining and leaving the page. It was found that there is not much emphasis put on evaluating the Facebook page.

DUT

The DUT administrator also makes use of insights application to evaluate the Facebook. It was believed that if they had greater following on Facebook it would suggest that Facebook would be more effective as a communication tool.

Test item 17 – key aspects of the social media policy/Guidelines

UKZN

As the usage of social media platform like Facebook as a communication tool is still a new experimental factor, it was noticed that everyone is enthusiastic about the benefits Facebook is set to provide an educational institution. UKZN is in the process of finalising a social media policy.

DUT

At present the university does not have a social media policy in place. They are expecting to design a policy by 2012.

Test item 18 – Benefits of using Facebook within the University

UKZN

UKZN has realized various benefits of what Facebook can provide for an education institution. Facebook has provided a personal touch to the universities communications. It has helped to create a bond between the University and its students making them feel as though the university cares about them. UKZN is proud to say that it is an excellent way to keep students up to date on the current University news. UKZN hope that the students are starting to realize that the University is there to provide help by implementing innovative methods at any cost. UKZN is trying their best to deal with all complaints and comments on the Facebook page on a daily basis.

DUT

While social media was being explored as a tool for communication, it was not being used to the extent that they would like it to be. It was noted that they found it extremely challenging to implement social media as a tool for communication. Citing the economic context in South Africa, and the economic situation of many of the students at the university face as a major challenge to overcome, the lack of access to working computers in computer laboratories on campus, as well as a lack of cell phones with access to the internet.

Test item 19 – Advertisement of any commercials (for revenue generation and fund raising)

UKZN

University is not keen on advertising any commercials as they do not want their page to become a voice for commercial organizations.

DUT

The university is bound by a Tenet agreement which precludes advertising of this nature.

Test item 20 – Publicizing research highlights, high achievements, news and events through Facebook

UKZN

UKZN has managed to upload newsworthy events by posting the news about their students and staff's achievements together with their daily announcements. At the same time they are concerned about the over posting as this will litter the users newsfeeds and may discourage them from using the University Facebook page.

DUT

DUT strongly believes it is quite effective to publicise research highlights, high achievements, news and events through Facebook. They state that if they have greater following they can achieve effective communication. They post news updates from Monday to Fridays, an average of 2 or 3 posts per day depending on the availability of interesting news.

Test item 21 – Marketing strategies to push Facebook in to wider audiences

UZKN

UKZN is one step ahead by using innovative methods to publicize its official Facebook page by conducting a tagline competition to spread their Facebook page into wider audiences. This encourages the students to participate in the competition by posting their ideas and winning exciting prizes. Furthermore, they send communiqués out mentioning their Facebook page in a regular basis and by having a link on their webpage.

DUT

It emerged that no attempts were made to market Facebook to their students as the University is concerned about their reputation.

4.5 Conclusion

The results obtained through the research instruments employed in this study have been presented in this chapter. The social demographic characteristics of the sample population, a content analysis of the DUT and UKZN Facebook pages, as well as the results of the student and social media administrator surveys distributed to both institutions were presented. The next chapter focuses on the discussion of these results.

Chapter Five – Discussion of Results

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results obtained from the research instrument presented in the preceding chapter in light of previous discussions referred in the literature review. The results have been discussed in accordance with the research objectives that the study aimed to achieve. The findings from the study are examined with reference to the literature review as well as the primary research conducted herein. In the discussion of the primary research the Facebook usage patterns by the public relations practitioners of the university and their students are identified and areas where the literature has been confirmed or contradicted are highlighted.

5.2 Discussion and Interpretation of Results

5.2.1 Content analysis

A content analysis examining how the Facebook page is actively used by the students of UKZN and DUT to communicate with the University was conducted. A detailed content analysis of daily active users reveals that there is a significant increase in the activity over a three month period (from 22 users to nearly 40 users at DUT and from 470 users to 870 users at UKZN).

DUT's lifetime total likes also increased during this three month period of this study from 280 to 466 and at UKZN this was increased from 5000 to 6660. These findings seem to concur with (Chompon, 2011), who explores the value of "likes" for any organization, as liking an organization Facebook page encourages further visits creating a viral effect. Also, it is noted from the visual observation of the wall posts of both the universities agree with (Fincham and Sturgill, 2010) findings which states that there is a potential to increase "likes" of the Facebook page by posting status updates, comments, pictures and videos of events and advertising an event.

In contrast to the increases in lifetime total likes and daily active users, DUT's daily likes and comments decreased during the assessment period (from 6 to 2) where as likes and comments at UKZN increased (from 22 to 102), this may be due to activity

profile and accessibility factors such as availability of LANs and mobile phones. Universities access to mobile phones by students reinforces the point raised by Hewitt and Forte (2006) who state that “Facebook has become a pervasive element of student’s lives as such, the potential exists for it to have a significant impact on social practices in university environments”. It has become an essential part of the student’s lives to communicate with each other and with the university.

The daily wall posts at DUT also indicated a decline from (1- 0.5). Whereas at UKZN the average number of daily wall posts in August indicated was 5 and increased to 21 in second months and observed a decline to 5 in the following month. This trend can occur due to the universities limited information during those periods. The daily newsfeed impressions at both the universities showed a steep incline in the number of times people have viewed a newsfeed story posted by the universities.

Although a content analysis of this size can only be exploratory, these findings seem to indicate that students are extremely active in social media. It appears that students are to embrace social media, regardless of whether the university public relations practitioners are ready to do so.

5.2.2 Key Strategies behind introducing Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT that would ensure effective communication?

The interview questions aimed to assess the strategies adopted by the University in using Facebook as a tool to communicate with students.

Test item 5, 7 – Motive and Introduction of Facebook

Both the Universities mentioned that it has the right time to introduce Facebook to students in the University environment. The findings support the notion that the Universities have to evaluate where the Institution is, and where it would be in the near future by implementing Facebook. Also the management were beginning to understand the importance of social media as a tool for communication, as a means of communicating university wide news, posting pictures and video as a way to spread the university image and communicating during a crisis. This supports the

notion of (Playle 2011:1) that higher educational institutions should have set objectives and readiness to implement innovative strategies. It is found that UKZN is keen in implementing new innovative technologies; DUT seems to be sceptical to use Facebook as a communication tool depending on the issues Facebook poses on Fits finances and reputation of the University.

Test items 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 12 - Resources and Logistical issues surrounding the use of Facebook page

During the course of the research in August, September and October there is a significant increase in the daily active users and lifetime likes at UKZN than compared to DUT. This trend can be well explained by the communication manager at DUT, when the researcher asked about whether the students were familiar about the existence of University Facebook page. The main issue around the Facebook use on campuses is that many students are oblivious to the University Facebook page as it is not widely advertised yet in different media. The link to the page is placed on the DUT website. It can be said that although to 'like' a page can create a viral phenomenon in the Facebook environment, students at DUT seem to be more reluctant to the use of Facebook and they were unaware of its existence as only student commented that university should advertise Facebook page to be more popular among students as many students are not familiar with it.

The lack of social media officers at both the universities to monitor and manage the Facebook page pose a major obstacle in the practice of new media to be effectively used for communication purposes. The traditional communication channels used by the universities to engage with students using one way communication – e.g. letters, emails or sms's to students. It needs resources to respond to postings or queries at a faster rate. This includes more budget to recruit people to manage the Facebook page.

It is indicated that the costs to implement the Facebook page are minimal at both the Universities. This can be explained by the findings of Reed (2011) that it creates a page or group for free and allows an organization to connect with their target population. Another issue to consider is that the fear of loss of control, negative

publicity during strikes, and anyone creating an official Facebook page. Both the Universities were concerned about the damage to the Universities reputation especially during strike situations, as once a statement is made it is public, anyone can access the comments during that time. These issues are supported by Reuben (2008) research, that while they are numerous benefits and applications of Facebook; there is a chance of gathering some negative comments of feedback and information overload which have to be considered by the higher educational institutions.

Test item 6 – Facebook as a tool to enhance intervention strategy

Interventions made within the organizational developmental strategies may target specific processes and look for areas where change may bring about a desired outcome. The results of this test item lend credence to (Wang et al 2009) who highlight the impact of the role played by the content published using social media will reach wider audiences more effectively than simply adhering to traditional media like TV, Radio, printed newspapers, magazines. It is emerged that both the universities indicated positive response and though that this change will help ‘fine-line’ there practices.

Test item 10, 11, 13, 14, 18, 20, 21 - Strategic benefits of using Facebook

The respondents have stated that Facebook has many advantages and it is an excellent way to keep the students updated on the happenings at university. It is identified that the public relations are aware about the fact that with the advent of technology students tend not to access their University email accounts. Instead they spend most of their time checking their Facebook newsfeeds. By the introduction of official University Facebook page students have a propensity to read the University news while they access their Facebook profiles. This confirms the selwyn’s (2009) study asserting that Facebook become a “prominent field of social software”, with over a million users using the application and has replaced traditional way correspondence by email. Furthermore, it was found that students communicate with their peers using Facebook on their cell phones. It is the University communication department’s viewpoint that this should make Facebook an ideal platform to

communicate with a wide spectrum of students and their parents. This asserts Shepperds (2011) study on internet usage through cell phones.

The DUT respondents agree that it is a cost effective, easy way to communicate with current and prospective students. Both the Universities indicated that it is an excellent way to enhance student – university relationship. The main strategy to use Facebook in both the universities is to inspire, to engage the student community, to spread the University news across the target population about the events and research initiatives.

It is highlighted that UKZN has employed tag-line competition to market Facebook into wider audiences. It is observed during the content analysis that Facebook activity was increased during this competition period. The competition was well advertised through by sending communiqués. The strategy behind this competition served to increase their fans and in turn helped both the university and students to establish communication. The lack of strategical approach to DUT Facebook can be noticed directly by looking at their number of fans and active user’s statistics.

Test item 8, 10 - Communication during emergencies

At DUT, they strongly feel that Facebook is not recommended as a crisis communication device during an emergency situation. Whilst Facebook is the quickest and most direct way to send information to a campus community DUT’s management is sceptical towards using Facebook. DUT need a strategic intervention to inform students, of the existence of the official Facebook page so that it may be used as a means of crisis communication replacing traditional means. In contrast to these opinions UKZN posted the information related to strikes as revealed during content analysis and engages students in conversation to avoid negative publicity.

Test item 16 – Evaluation

Both the universities feel that strategically Facebook would be more effective as a communication tool given that they had greater following on Facebook. It is not explained what steps can be taken to improve their Facebook exposure and

subscription. They suggest that one can evaluate the effectiveness of using Facebook by monitoring the Facebook “insights”, provided by the Facebook application provider for an organizational page to monitor user and content activity on the Facebook page. It gives daily as well as monthly results. It is detected that the university Facebook pages are not evaluated for its effective use.

Test item 17 - Social media policy

DUT and UKZN are both in the same process of finalizing an effective social media policy by 2012, which will ensure the code of conduct for users of the media. Through the policy in place higher education institutions can achieve the goal of utilizing Facebook as an effective communication tool as explained by Zailskaite-Jakeste and Kuvykaite (2010:1)

Test item 19 - Advertising of commercials

It was found that UKZN and DUT have strict rules in place which precludes advertising of commercials. This contradicts the notion of Salkhordeh (2010) who suggests that implementing social networking is not just a tool used to attract customers to their services and products, but can create a lasting relationship with their customer, build value to their brand and can also generate revenue.

5.2.3 Barriers to communication

The test items under the student’s survey results section in the previous chapter serve to examine barriers to communication as perceived by the students at DUT and UKZN.

Test item 1- 4 - Social demographic characteristics of students

The UKZN has approximately 40,000 staff and students and DUT has nearly 20,000 staff and students. The sample population considered for this study is not necessarily representative of the entire population of UKZN and DUT. Content analysis for this study period shows that the total number of fans of UKZN Facebook is 6336 compared to 536 of DUT Facebook page.

A comprehensive survey has been put forward to the above users which are mainly the student population, 153 students responded from UKZN and 27 students responded from DUT. The survey response rate was greater at UKZN when compared to the DUT which indicates that UKZN students seem to be more active users.

It is also found from the student survey that the majority of students who are active users of Facebook fall under the 18 to 21 year old category doing the Bachelors degree at both the institutions. This correlates with the findings of Burbary (2011) research, which is discussed in the literature review. These Y- generation students are more inclined to using new technologies that were available at their disposal. It is interesting to find that out of 153 respondents 93% were Black African, 38% Indian students and 14% were from other race groups participated. This shows that Black African students spend quality time in communicating using Facebook than the other categories. And it can be also due to a large number of African students being registered at the University. Facebook activity is dominated by Males (60%) at DUT and UKZN. This may be due to females being more protective of their privacy.

Test Item 5 – From which facility do you access Facebook?

In both the universities majority of students access their Facebook profiles by using their smart phones, It is an easy way for students to access internet and to login to University facebook page where ever they are. From the findings it can be articulated that information can be sent to students in split seconds as they tend to check their updates from the university. It is found that with the smart phone invention the students are now able to check the university related information on their Facebook newsfeed section together with their friends updates. This seems to prove that the restriction on Facebook access at University LANs is no longer a barrier to achieve communication with the students. From the findings 32% students access their Facebook profile using their smart phones at both universities and 32% of students use the LAN facilities. The LAN users are found to be the users who stay after hours at the institutions. Nearly 23% of students use their laptops to access their Facebook

profile and 12% use their computers at home. It is evident that students use one way or other to check their updates on Facebook to stay connected with their peers.

Test Item 6 - Barriers for effective communication within the university

At both the universities the respondents were asked for barriers for effective communication, it is interesting to note that DUT students use Facebook to query for help; majority of students feel that the university did not respond to their queries in time. This can be due to university privacy policies and internet access viabilities. Whereas at UKZN, majority of students find that lack of internet access is a barrier for them to access Facebook page. The point that is articulated in this research supports the finding of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) that the lack of infrastructure to access the internet can hinder new media usage as explained by). It is understandable that as an academic institution, the university need to implement strategies to address the barriers posed to the students.

Test Item 7 - Communicating with the university through the Facebook page is useful to students.

This test item illustrated a general consensus amongst respondents from UKZN and DUT that Facebook is an effective means of communication especially during emergencies and it meets the needs of students. It didn't matter to them if their profiles are cluttered with lot of feeds from the universities. It can be explained from the findings that by communicating through Facebook, the university could combat false information spread by the media and staff or students instantaneously.

Test Item 8 - Students like most about University Facebook page

The majority of respondents at UKZN and DUT indicated that they like the university Facebook page as they receive up-to-date information on news, events and applications and information related to admissions and interesting pictures from university wide events. From the findings it is also evident that they like the page due to the competitions that university embarks on. It also serves as a platform for them to lodge their complaints.

Test Item 9 - Most irritating about the Facebook as a communication tool between the University and students

A large majority at both the institutions of the sample population indicated that the most annoying aspect being not getting responses within acceptable time period from the institution. A small group reported that by liking or becoming a fan of university page could lead to unnecessary clutter on their private home pages due to excessive postings from the university. Both the universities had multiple Facebook pages which seem to create confusion among the target audiences.

Test item 10 – Suggestions to improvement

The most interesting aspect of the responses to this test item is concerned with the students views on further improving the social media feeds from the universities, several views were reported from both the universities. It is imperative from the student suggestions that having a Facebook page is a great initiative to attain effective, efficient means of communications. Students suggest that they should be given sufficient access time and LAN facilities to engage in Social media which may involve reviewing the ICT policies to lift the blocking of Facebook at University LANs until 4pm.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter featured a discussion of the results presented in chapter four. The exploratory study revealed a positive light on Facebook as an effective tool for communication in between the University and its students. However, there were several test items that indicated a need for review and improvement in terms of UKZN and DUT effective implementation of Facebook. These will be discussed in the following chapter on recommendations and conclusions of the study.

Chapter Six - Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters presented and discussed the results of this study. This chapter moves on to presenting conclusions drawn from the study, after which several recommendations are made based on the findings of the study. The dissertation mainly represents an attempt to explore the effectiveness of Facebook as a communication tool employed by the public relations and communication department at University of KwaZulu-Natal and Durban University of Technology in South Africa.

6.2 Findings from Literature Review

6.2.1 Effectiveness of Facebook page as a communication tool between university and students

An extensive study of relevant literature was conducted in order to provide a solid theoretical framework on which to base this study. The majority of universities public relations are embracing Facebook as an effective way of communication to reach current and prospective students. The literature suggests an active that having as many likes and active users can initiate the concept of 'social capital' and can effectively reach their target audience.

6.2.2 Key Strategies behind introducing Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT that would ensure effective communication?

Public relations need to reach their target audience through multiple ways of communication channels. Strategically an organization may reach their target audience through media that is popular with their audience. The literature review suggests that Universities need to have set plans and objectives when embracing new innovative channels of communication. The key strategy for any organization is not only to attract the customers to their products and services but also needs to create lasting relationships.

6.2.3 Barriers to implementation of Facebook as perceived by students

Implementing Facebook as a communication tool within higher education institutions is a relatively new area of study in comparison to other aspects of Facebook usage such as in teaching and social networking with friends. While students appreciate this social media as a viable and effective communication tool, they are often hampered by the lack of access, due to high costs or alternatively community policies. The literature showed light on 4 different barriers that come with implementation of social networking sites, which are factors inherent to technology, the extent of Facebook usage by students, having different Facebook pages for different departments, and student identity.

6.3 Findings from Primary Research

6.3.1 Effectiveness of Facebook page as a communication tool between university and students

This study indicated a positive view on the effectiveness of using Facebook as a communication channel at DUT and UKZN.

6.3.2 Key Strategies behind introducing Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT that would ensure effective communication?

The findings from the interviews with Facebook administrator shows that DUT and UKZN understand the importance of social media as a tool for communication and have set objectives. But the lack of strategies in place and the fear of loss of control and negative image during strikes made them use traditional ways of communication.

6.3.3 Barriers to implementation of Facebook as perceived by students

Several barriers identified in the literature were tested for using the research instrument employed in this study. Respondents indicated that the barriers identified in the literature were present at DUT and UKZN. This may indicate that the management at UKZN and DUT must take steps in addressing these barriers in order to effectively implement Facebook as a communication tool.

6.4 Conclusions

6.4.1 Research Objective 1:

To determine how the existing Facebook page is effective as a communication tool, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Durban University of Technology

The study merely indicates that students are active users of social networking sites. Especially the Generation Y students are working with ease and confidence in this social communication environment. The analysis revealed an increase in wall posts, daily likes and news feed impressions for the duration of the study. This suggests that the social media channel has potential to be used as an universal University/student communication tool.

6.4.2 Research Objective 2:

To identify the key strategies behind adopting Facebook as a communication tool that would ensure successful communication in between the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and the Durban University of Technology and its students.

The results of this study indicated that the advantages Facebook presents as a communication tool is not being used to its full potential at UKZN and DUT. The traditional methods of communications utilised by public relations and

communication departments are still valued and effective. This appears to be mainly due to a fear of losing control and negative image portrayed during emergency situations like strikes. However, the public relations practitioners at the selected institutions are aware of the need to embrace social media for professional development within PR (a current global trend).

Therefore, the recommendation is that as a means of improving the existing strategies amongst UKZN and DUT will ensure successful communication with their students.

6.4.3 Research Objective 3:

To determine the barriers to the effective implementation of Facebook as a communication tool within higher education institutions

This research objective was concerned with detailing and defining the barriers to the implementation of internal marketing strategies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Durban University of Technology. Four major barriers were identified in the literature, and these were tested using the research instrument. The test items identifying barriers to the effective implementation of Facebook as a communication tool at UKZN and DUT yielded responses confirming the literature.

6.5 Overall Conclusion

The Facebook administrators confirm that communication through Facebook is an effective way to communicate with its target audience at UKZN and DUT. However, there are several barriers to the effective implementation of Facebook as a communication tool may be hinder achievement of successful communication, and hence urge the need for improved strategic approach in the higher education institutions.

6.6 Recommendations

There are several recommendations that are aimed at addressing the limitations of

this study as well as issues that it uncovered. These will be discussed below.

6.6.1 More inclusive study

These results should be interpreted as exploratory due to the limitations of the sample sizes used, the amount of content analysed and the timeframe of this dissertation. Further research is recommended to explore these variables with larger sample sizes and thereby enable more conclusive results. Additionally, future quantitative research in this area could investigate the mind-set of students towards social networking sites, how the university communicates with them.

It emerges that there is gap in the research into the use of social media at higher education institutions particularly in South Africa. While some researchers around the world have tackled social media to a certain extent, it focuses on the use of social networking as a teaching tool rather than as a communication tool between Universities and its students.

Lastly, if public relations departments do not embrace social media, the reputation of the universities they represent may suffer irrevocable damage due to the bad electronic communications.

6.6.2 Formulation of a social media strategy

Since DUT does not have an official strategy in place for their usage of Facebook, it is evident that there was not enough time and attention is being devoted by the administrators to Facebook as a communication tool. At UKZN and DUT only one staff member is dedicated to update the Facebook page for the whole University spread across different campuses can be a factor for the above issue. It is articulated from the findings that the communication department should put emphasis on advertising and marketing the Facebook page as well as implementing a social media policy will enhance the effectiveness of Facebook as a communication tool.

6.6.3 Improve barriers to implementation

An improvement in the LAN access and responding to student queries can alleviate the barriers identified at UKZN and DUT. The implementation of Facebook within the Universities Communication strategy should respect the expectation and desires of its target audience. Mechanisms to improve the administration of Facebook page need to be undertaken to effectively utilize Facebook as a communication tool at DUT and UKZN.

6.7 Summary and Closure

The study aimed at exploring the effectiveness of social media platform such as Facebook as a communication tool at University of KwaZulu-Natal and Durban University of Technology. It also set out to determine the key strategies employed and barriers to its implementation. This chapter has concluded the study by examining how the researcher has satisfied all the research objectives of the study and answered the research questions.

References

- Anonymous. 2. No Date. *Research Methods*. [Online] Available WWW. <http://allpsych.com/researchmethods/validityreliability.html>. (Accessed 16 June 2010).
- Anonymous. 2009. Organization of PR Department Staff and Budgeting. [Online] Available WWW. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/12718723/Organization-of-PR-Department-Staff-and-Budgeting-Ch-3> (Accessed on 1 July 2012).
- Attansey, M., Okigbo, C., and Schmidt, M. 2007. Preparing PR students for the brave new world: students' perceptions of problem- based learning. *Public Relations Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 2, pp. 29-37.
- Bargh, J. A., McKenna, K. Y. A. 2004. The Internet and social life. *Annual Review of Psychology*, Vol. 55, pp. 573–90.
- Barnett, S., 1997. New Media, Old Problems: New Technology and the Political. *European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 12, No. 2: pp. 193-218. [online]. Available WWW: <http://ejc.sagepub.com/content/12/2/193.full.pdf+html> (Accessed 12 October 2011)
- Bosch, T. E. 2009. Using online social networking for teaching and learning: Facebook use at the University of Cape Town. *Communicatio, South African journal for communication theory and research*. Vol. 35 No. 2 pp. 185-200.
- Botha, E., Farshid, M., & Pitt. L. 2010. How sociable? An exploratory study of university brand visibility in social media
- Boyd, D. 2010. Streams of content, limited attention. Article No:495. [online] Available WWW: <http://uxmag.com/features/streams-of-content-limited-attention> (Accessed 12 October 2011)

Brunner, B.R., and Brown, M. H. (2009). Using public relations to address diversity issues on campus: A case study in goals, image and relationships. [online] Available WWW: http://www.prismjournal.org/fileadmin/Praxis_Files/Journal_Files/Brunner_Brown.pdf (accessed 7 November 2011).

Bull, G., Thompson, A., Searson, M., Garofalo, J., Park, J., Young, C., and Lee, J (2008). Connecting informal and formal learning: Experiences in the age of participatory media. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 8(2), 100-107. Available [Online] WWW: <http://www.citejournal.org/articles/v8i2editorial1.pdf>

Burbary, K. 2011. Face book Demographics Revisited – 2011 Statistics, Web Business. [Online] Available WWW: <http://socialmediatoday.com/kenburbary/276356/facebook-demographics-revisited-2011-statistics> (Accessed 29 October 2011)

Carnevale, D. 2006. E-Mail is for old people. As students ignore their campus accounts, colleges try new ways of communicating. [Online] Available WWW. <http://chronicle.com/weekly/v53/i07/07a02701.htm> (Accessed 29 October 2011)

Chompon. 2011. What is the value of a social action in online commerce? Available [Online] http://www.chompon.com/chompon_social_action_value.pdf

Coldwell, D.A.L., & Herbst, F. 2004. *Business Research*. Juta and Co Ltd: Cape Town.

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J (2010) PR Strategy and Application: Managing Influence

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. 2007. The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites. [Online] Available WWW: <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue4/ellison.html> (Accessed 29 October 2011)

Fincham, H., & Sturgill, S. 2010. Promoting your Organization on facebook: A how-to guide [online]. Available WWW: <http://fh.ext.wvu.edu/r/download/84567> (Accessed 29 October 2011)

Folkens, D. 2012. 3 Ways Social Media is changing Public Relations. [Online] Available WWW. <http://www.toprankblog.com/2011/02/social-media-changing-pr/> (Accessed 29 June 2012)

Freeman., A. 2009. Reinventing Internal Communications. University of Minnesota. [online] Available WWW. <http://www.umn.edu/urelate/pdf/RICrcommendations4-09.pdf> (Accessed on 16 November 2011.)

Ganley, D., & Lampe, C. 2009. The ties that bind: Social network principles in online communities. Vol.47. 266–274.

Groff, J., & Mouza, C. 2008. A framework for addressing challenges to classroom technology use. Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE) Journal, 16(1), 21-46.

Gruber, A. 2009. Social Media in Undergraduate University Admissions. Honolulu, Hawaii Pacific University. M.B.A: pp. 1-130.

Grunig, J. E. Excellence in public relations and communication management. IABC Research foundation Available [online] Google books WWW: http://books.google.co.za/books?id=Bs4lSeYi1qkC&pg=PA12&lpg=PA12&dq=normative+model+organizational+communication+should+be+practiced+strategically&source=bl&ots=S0FfxKbdNe&sig=bDzDvB6esxHvv0xpkVv2wl9jf4k&hl=en&ei=EeLBTov_LcKAhQea052DDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&sqi=2&ved=0CBoQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=normative%20model%20organizational%20communication%20should%20be%20practiced%20strategically&f=false (Accessed on 23 October 2011).

Grunig, J. E., Dozier, D.M.G., Grunig, L.E., (2002). Excellence in public relations and communication management Communication_Hillsdale, N.J. : L. Erlbaum Associates.

Halverson, E. R. 2011. Do social networking technologies have a place in formal learning environments? Vol. 19. No.1. pp. 62-67 .

Hawn, C. 2009. Take Two Aspirin And Tweet Me In The Morning: How Twitter, Facebook, And Other Social Media Are Reshaping Health Care. Health Affairs (Project Hope) [Health Aff (Millwood)], 28 (2), pp. 361-8.

Hazleton, V. 2009, March. *Public relations professionals' use of social media*. Presented at the International Public Relations Research Conference, Miami,FL.

Hewitt, A., &Forte, A. 2006. Crossing Boundaries: Identity Management and Student/Faculty Relationships on the Facebook. Poster presented at the Computer Supported Cooperative Work Conference, Alberta, Canada. Available [Online] WWW:<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.94...rep> Accessed on 16 November 2011.

Holtz, S., 2002. Public Relations on the Net (electronic resource): winning strategies to inform and influence the media, the investment community, the government, the public and more. 2nd ed. New York: AMACOM. p. 21

Hopkins, H. 2010. Facebook largest news reader? [Online] Available Web log post WWW: http://weblogs.hitwise.com/us-heather-hopkins/2010/02/facebook_largest_news_reader_1.html

Jarvis, J. 2008. The link economy vs the content economy. Available [online] WWW: <http://www.buzzmachine.com/2008/06/18/the-link-economy-v-the-content-economy/>

Johansson, M. 2010. Social media and brand awareness – a case study in the fast moving consumer goods sector, [Online] Available WWW: <http://pure.ltu.se/portal/files/31175636/LTU-CUPP-10129-SE.pdf>

Kaplan A. M, Haenlein. M., 2010, Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media *Business Horizons*, Vol. 3, issue. 1, pp. 59-68. Available WWW: <http://www.slideshare.net/studente1000/kaplan-andreas-m-haenlein-michael-2010-users-of-the-world-unite-the-challenges-and-opportunities-of-social-media-business-horizons-vol-53-issue-1-p-5968> (Accessed 27 October 2011)

Kaplan, A. M., Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons* Vol. 53 No. 1, pp 59-68. Available [online] WWW: <http://openmediart.com/log/pics/sdarticle.pdf> Accessed on 3 November 2011

Kent, M. L., Taylor, M., & White, W. (2003). The relationship between Web site design and organizational responsiveness to stakeholders. *Public Relations Review*, 29, 63-77.

Kissler, L. D. 2010. Connect.ED: Promoting Higher Education via Social Media to Millennials, Eastern Washington University Master of Science in Communications: 92.

Klopfer, E., Osterweil, S., Groff, J., & Hass, J. 2009. Using the technology of today, in the classroom of today. Education arcade paper Available [online] WWW: http://education.mit.edu/papers/GamesSimsSocNets_EdArcade.pdf (Accessed on 9 November 2011).

Kosik, A. 2007. The implications of Facebook. *Sharing the Commonwealth: Critical issues in higher education* 9–10. Available [Online] WWW: <http://www.pcpa.net/March2006.pdf>.

Krippendorff, K. 2004. Content Analysis: an introduction to its methodology. Sage Publications, Inc. London

Lavrusik, V. 2009. 10 Ways Universities Share Information Using Social media [online]. Available WWW: <http://mashable.com/2009/07/15/social-media-public-affairs/> (Accessed 4 September 2011).

Lenhart, AK. P., Smith. A & Zickuhr. K. 2010. Social Media and Young Adults, Pew Research Centre.

Lipsett, A. 2008. Facebook a valid educational tool, teachers told, Education Guardian.

List, D. 2004. Maximum variation sampling for surveys and consensus groups. Available [Online] WWW: www.audience dialogue.org/maxvar.html. (Accessed 12 May 2010).

Mangold, W. G. & Faulds, D. J. (2009) Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix, Business Horizons. Vol. 52c. No. 4. pp. 357-365.

McCorkindale, T. 2010. Can you see the writing on my wall? A content analysis of the Fortune 50's Facebook social networking sites. Public Relations Journal, Vol. 4, No. 3. [online]. Available WWW: www.prsa.org/.../content_analysis_of_the_fortune_50s_facebook.pdf (Accessed 3 November 2011).

McNeill, M. & Diao, M.M. (2010) Student uses of IT in learning: An ethnographic study. Paper presented at IADIS 2010. [Online] Available WWW: http://www.mq.edu.au/itc/projects/student_it_experience/docs/IADISconference_paper.pdf (Accessed 3 November 2011).

Millennials: A portrait of Generation Next. (2010). , Pew Research Center, Washington.

Moore, D. 2009. An overview of how South African Universities are using Social Media. [Online] Available WWW: <http://www.slideshare.net/weblearning/south-african-universities-and-social-media> (Accessed 3 November 2011).

Nicole, B., Ellison, C. S., & Lampe, C. 2007. The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication Vol. 12. No. 4.

Nunes, D. 2011. Is Facebook taking over the world. UK: CommsTalk, Conversations about media, public relations and social media from Racepoint UK [Online] Available WWW. <http://commstalk.racepointgroup.com/>

Ostrow, A. 2009. Mashable. What is Twitter? 69 Percent of Adults Don't Really Know. [Online] Available WWW: <http://mashable.com/2009/07/28/twitter-adoption/> (Accessed 5 November 2011).

O'Reilly, T. 2009 What is Web 2.0.

Orsini, M. 2007. Using Public Relations and Marketing to Generate Referrals and Sales, Home Health Care Management & Practice, Vol.19. No. 3. pp. 163-168.

PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2011. The power of social media: How CIOs can build business value using social media . PwC Technology Consulting Services [online] Available WWW: http://download.pwc.com/ie/pubs/2011_the_power_of_social_media.pdf (Accessed 5 November 2011).

Philips, D., & Young, P. 2009. Online Public Relations: A practical guide to developing an online strategy in the world of social media. 2nd ed. London. Kogan

Playle, T. 2011. How can a university best use social media for internal communications? [Online] Available WWW. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network/blog/2011/jun/01/universities-social-media-internal-communications> (Accessed on 5 November 2011).

Ramig, R. 2011, Social Media in the Classroom-For Kindergartners (1) Through High Schoolers. MultiMedia & Internet@Schools. [online] Available WWW: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_go2681/is_200911/ai_n42856328/pg_3/?tag=content;col1 (Accessed on 5 November 2011).

Reed, J. 2011. How to use Websites, Blogs, Social Networking and much more. Financial Times Prentice Hall, Pearson, Great Britain

Richwalsky, M. (2009). "Facebook Usage by US College and Universities. UK Web Focus, Reflections on the Web and Web 2.0.", [online] Available <http://ukwebfocus.wordpress.com/2009/07/01/facebook-usage-by-us-colleges-and-universities/> (Accessed 4 September 2011).

Roblyer, M. D., McDaniel, M., Webb, M., Herman, J., & Witty, J. V. 2010. Findings on Facebook in higher education: A comparison of college faculty and student uses and perceptions of social networking sites. *Internet and Higher Education* 13 (2010) 134-140. Elsevier inc. [online] Available WWW: <http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~vcumming/portfolio/PDFs/Facebook%20Findings.pdf> (Accessed on 15 November 2011).

Rios-Aguilar, C., Canche, M. S. G., Deil-Amen, R., Davis III, C. H. F. The social Media in Community Colleges. A survey report from the center for the study of higher education at the University of Arizona and Claremont Graduate University. [Online] Available WWW: http://arizona.academia.edu/hfdavis/Papers/1548098/The_Role_of_Social_Media_in_Community_Colleges (Accessed 10 November 2011).

Reuben, R. 2008. The Use of Social Media in Higher Education for Marketing and Communications: *A Guide for Professionals in Higher Education* [Online] Available WWW: <http://doteduguru.com/id423-social-media-uses-higher-education-marketing-communication.html> (Accessed 10 November 2011).

Ryberg, T. 2005. Challenges and Potentials for Institutional and Technological Infrastructures in Adopting Social Media. [Online] Available WWW: http://www.networkedlearningconference.org.uk/past/nlc2008/abstracts/CJones_Sym.htm. (Accessed 10 November 2011).

Salkhordeh, P. 2010. An exploratory content analysis of the use of Facebook in the lodging industry.

Selwyn, N. 2009. Faceworking: exploring students education-related use of Facebook. *Learning, Media and Technology*, Vol. 34, No. 2, pp 157-174. University of London, London.

Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R. 2010 *Research Methods for Business: A Skill Building Approach*. 5th Edition. John Wiley & Sons Ltd: United Kingdom.

Shepherd, 2011. Does social media have a place in workplace learning? *Strategic Direction Journal*. Vol: 27. No. 2. [online] Available WWW: <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=1901965&show=html> (Accessed 10 November 2011).

Shiu, E., Hair, J., Bush, R. & Ortinau, D. 2009. *Marketing Research*. McGraw-Hill Education.: Berkshire.

Shuttleworth, M. 2008. What is Reliability?. [Online] Available WWW: <http://www.experiment-resources.com/validity-and-reliability.html#ixzz17MWQwKTM>. (Accessed 15 June 2010).

Sledzik, B. 2008. The ' 4 Models' of public relations practice: How far have you evolved? [Online] Available WWW: <http://toughsledding.wordpress.Com/2008/08/10/the-4-models-of-public-relations-practice-how-far-have-you-evolved/> (Accessed 4 November 2011).

Solis, B., & Breckenridge, D. 2009. Putting the public back into Public Relations: How Social Media is reinventing the aging business of PR. FT Press p. 1.

Solis, B. (2008). The essential guide to social media. Retrieved online on September 20, 2009 [Online] Available <http://www.scribd.com/doc/3283966/The-Essential-Guide-to-Social-Media> (Accessed 4 November 2011).

Sreenivasan, S. 2010. News Orgs Take Social Media Seriously by Hiring Editors to Oversee Efforts. [Online] Available WWW: <http://www.poynter.org/how-tos/digital-strategies/e-media-tidbits/100113/news-orgs-take-social-media-seriously-by-hiring-editors-to-oversee-efforts/> (Accessed 4 November 2011).

Staskeviciute, I., & Neverauskas, B. (2008). The Intelligent University's Conceptual Model. *Inzinerine Ekonomika- Engineering Economics* No.4. pp. 53-58.

Steinfeld, C., Ellison, N. B., & Lampe, C. (2008). Social capital, self-esteem, and use of online social network sites: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 29, 434-445.

Taylor, M., Kent, M. L., White, W. J. 2001. How activist organization are using the Internet to build relationships. *Public Relations Review* 27 (2001) 263-284. [Online] Available WWW. <http://faculty-staff.ou.edu/K/Michael.L.Kent-1/PDFs/PRRTaylorKentWhiteActivism.pdf> (Accessed 1 July 2012).

Trochim, W.M.K. 2006 Non-Probability Sampling. [Online] Available WWW: <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/samprnon.htm>. (Accessed 17 May 2010).

Van der Pool, L. 2009. Prompt communications, Cambridge. Boston Business Journal [online]. Available WWW: <http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/stories/2009/12/07/daily54.html> (Accessed 4 September 2011).

Walton, E., Ahmadu, S. 2011. Technology and Globalisation. Available [Online] WWW: www.globalization101.org/uploads/File/Technology/tech2011.pdf

Wang, Y., Hwang, Y. H. & Fesenmaier, D. R. 2009. Futuring Internet Marketing Activities. *Travel Research*. Vol. 45. pp. 158-166.

Wauters, R. 2011 It's a Facebook World...Other Social Networks Just Live In It.
Waters, R. D., Burnett, E., Lamm, A., & Lucas, J. 2009. Engaging stakeholders through social networking: How nonprofit organizations are using Facebook. Press article [online] Available WWW: <http://www.richardwaters.org/PRRNPOfacebook.pdf> (Accessed 3 November 2011).

Weber, L. 2009. *Marketing to the Social Web*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey. [Online] Available Google books WWW: <http://books.google.co.za/books?id=OLXuSpdKeNEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Weber,+L.+2009.+Marketing+to+the+Social+Web.&hl=en&sa=X&ei=c1HgT8fmD4qB4ATE5PidDQ&ved=0CD4QuwUwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false> (Accessed 3 November 2011).

Welman, J. C., & Kruger, S. J. 1999. *Research methodology for the business and administrative sciences*. International Thompson: Johannesburg, South Africa.

Zailskaite-Jakeste, L., Kuvykaite, R. (2010) Internet based communication with target audiences: Case study of higher education institutions. *Economics and Management Journal* Vol. 15 [online] Available WWW: <http://www.ktu.lt/l/mokslas/zurnalai/ekovad/15/1822-6515-2010-849.pdf> (Accessed 25 November 2011).

Zikmund, W.G. 2003. *Business Research Methods*. United States of America: The Dryden Press.

APPENDIX 1

Durban University of Technology Facebook Key Metrics									
Date	Daily Active Users	Daily New Likes	Daily Unlikes	Lifetime Total Likes	Daily Logged-in Page Views	Daily News Feed Impressions	Daily Likes and Comments	Daily Wall Posts	Daily Photo Views
8/1/11	725	11	0	5773	118	7276	28	5	20
8/2/11	327	16	0	5789	98	1484	14	3	4
8/3/11	693	12	0	5801	86	4963	30	7	2
8/4/11	625	8	1	5808	109	2518	12	8	2
8/5/11	957	9	3	5814	115	8535	70	4	29
8/6/11	228	7	0	5821	44	916	3	5	6
8/7/11	228	10	1	5830	71	796	25	5	9
8/8/11	653	11	2	5839	56	5322	29	8	5
8/9/11	118	6	0	5845	35	480	6	6	2
8/10/11	118	6	1	5850	73	429	14	7	2
8/11/11	679	12	1	5861	55	2631	36	4	7
8/12/11	716	8	3	5866	59	4736	18	6	8
8/13/11	138	6	1	5871	31	490	15	1	11
8/14/11	97	5	0	5876	44	289	3	6	3
8/15/11	119	17	0	5893	72	273	25	9	2
8/16/11	726	10	2	5901	77	5051	36	10	2
8/17/11	859	18	4	5915	118	10117	79	4	0
8/18/11	278	15	0	5930	90	1507	18	7	6
8/19/11	805	13	2	5941	93	6641	55	4	5
8/20/11	119	7	1	5947	37	540	3	2	4
8/21/11	107	7	0	5954	55	498	7	0	0
8/22/11	778	9	0	5963	93	3642	34	10	9
8/23/11	879	17	0	5980	114	5337	26	6	0
8/24/11	883	12	0	5992	94	8360	20	3	2
8/25/11	686	14	2	6004	84	3818	19	4	0
8/26/11	467	9	2	6011	48	2063	17	3	0
8/27/11	117	2	0	6013	34	392	4	0	4
8/28/11	76	7	0	6020	38	438	5	5	0
8/29/11	590	5	0	6025	70	2395	13	3	0
8/30/11	632	3	0	6028	68	4907	15	4	1
8/31/11	179	7	0	6035	60	1046	3	3	0
9/1/11	652	81	1	6115	122	3333	89	42	6
9/2/11	786	28	2	6141	109	7137	68	23	7
9/3/11	271	6	0	6147	32	1228	6	10	0

Date	Daily Active Users	Daily New Likes	Daily Unlikes	Lifetime Total Likes	Daily Logged-in Page Views	Daily News Feed Impressions	Daily Likes and Comments	Daily Wall Posts	Daily Photo Views
9/4/11	155	9	0	6156	54	339	10	2	0
9/5/11	363	7	0	6163	87	1277	22	19	0
9/6/11	619	23	0	6186	138	1778	58	32	1
9/7/11	680	13	0	6199	78	4034	49	25	1
9/8/11	976	18	5	6212	110	12316	66	32	1
9/9/11	826	13	2	6223	78	13644	30	15	0
9/10/11	196	12	0	6235	39	1603	5	7	3
9/11/11	165	9	0	6244	44	549	3	6	0
9/12/11	845	19	1	6262	111	6787	25	22	0
9/13/11	790	9	3	6268	93	10660	17	16	0
9/14/11	1010	80	0	6348	329	4590	45	139	3
9/15/11	1397	35	3	6380	326	8571	562	114	1
9/16/11	498	21	0	6401	194	1291	273	39	0
9/17/11	157	14	1	6414	79	288	41	2	1
9/18/11	86	5	0	6419	66	197	9	1	0
9/19/11	159	9	0	6428	129	215	80	8	0
9/20/11	155	11	0	6439	122	192	114	10	0
9/21/11	233	2	5	6436	137	509	132	5	0
9/22/11	1221	11	6	6441	116	13750	73	5	0
9/23/11	1032	6	2	6445	167	4516	363	18	0
9/24/11	146	4	0	6449	49	668	99	10	0
9/25/11	127	7	0	6456	76	802	94	10	0
9/26/11	204	16	2	6470	139	772	222	7	0
9/27/11	310	4	0	6474	99	736	117	6	0
9/28/11	882	10	2	6482	148	2715	155	11	0
9/29/11	1037	8	2	6488	108	13575	78	10	0
9/30/11	1068	3	1	6490	90	7420	72	7	0
10/1/11	137	3	0	6493	41	781	5	0	0
10/2/11	101	5	0	6498	64	508	8	2	0
10/3/11	1269	8	4	6502	123	19552	131	12	0
10/4/11	1040	7	1	6508	98	4456	69	8	0
10/5/11	1294	3	1	6510	104	9874	68	9	0
10/6/11	1164	3	3	6510	95	10315	45	4	0
10/7/11	172	6	0	6516	73	1328	15	3	0
10/8/11	82	5	0	6521	49	420	6	5	0
10/9/11	83	6	0	6527	56	441	9	3	0
10/10/11	1716	29	9	6547	184	24000	246	14	0
10/11/11	1747	80	6	6621	299	25163	496	18	0
10/12/11	1696	28	9	6569	187	36769	470	8	0
10/13/11	1330	55	4	6692	247	20339	516	18	0

Date	Daily Active Users	Daily New Likes	Daily Unlikes	Lifetime Total Likes	Daily Logged-in Page Views	Daily News Feed Impressions	Daily Likes and Comments	Daily Wall Posts	Daily Photo Views
10/14/11	1063	15	1	6705	146	4854	169	20	0
10/15/11	180	6	3	6708	64	653	84	6	0
10/16/11	93	8	3	6713	60	250	57	3	0
10/17/11	1507	4	3	6714	99	10078	80	2	0
10/18/11	1046	2	4	6712	102	10258	72	5	0
10/19/11	1162	10	0	6722	148	5220	97	3	0
10/20/11	1073	5	3	6724	101	4249	51	1	0
10/21/11	178	5	0	6729	77	1268	18	1	0
10/22/11	66	7	1	6735	43	460	3	2	0
10/23/11	54	6	0	6741	42	259	4	1	0
10/24/11	1118	7	2	6746	105	3380	53	7	0
10/25/11	1536	11	2	6755	109	8218	101	2	0
10/26/11	1615	35	0	6790	227	11646	105	10	0
10/27/11	1188	10	0	6800	105	4071	29	6	0
10/28/11	1092	2	2	6800	100	3534	26	1	0
10/29/11	95	3	0	6803	33	295	5	1	0
10/30/11	186	10	0	6813	52	423	31	2	0
10/31/11	1835	18	3	6828	105	17299	120	5	0

UKZN Facebook Key metrics

Date	Daily Active Users	Daily New Likes	Daily Unlikes	Lifetime Total Likes	Daily Logged-in Page Views	Daily News Feed Impressions	Daily Likes and Comments	Daily Wall Posts	Daily Photo Views
8/1/11	725	11	0	5773	118	7276	28	5	20
8/2/11	327	16	0	5789	98	1484	14	3	4
8/3/11	693	12	0	5801	86	4963	30	7	2
8/4/11	625	8	1	5808	109	2518	12	8	2
8/5/11	957	9	3	5814	115	8535	70	4	29
8/6/11	228	7	0	5821	44	916	3	5	6
8/7/11	228	10	1	5830	71	796	25	5	9
8/8/11	653	11	2	5839	56	5322	29	8	5
8/9/11	118	6	0	5845	35	480	6	6	2
8/10/11	118	6	1	5850	73	429	14	7	2
8/11/11	679	12	1	5861	55	2631	36	4	7
8/12/11	716	8	3	5866	59	4736	18	6	8
8/13/11	138	6	1	5871	31	490	15	1	11
8/14/11	97	5	0	5876	44	289	3	6	3
8/15/11	119	17	0	5893	72	273	25	9	2
8/16/11	726	10	2	5901	77	5051	36	10	2
8/17/11	859	18	4	5915	118	10117	79	4	0
8/18/11	278	15	0	5930	90	1507	18	7	6
8/19/11	805	13	2	5941	93	6641	55	4	5
8/20/11	119	7	1	5947	37	540	3	2	4
8/21/11	107	7	0	5954	55	498	7	0	0
8/22/11	778	9	0	5963	93	3642	34	10	9
8/23/11	879	17	0	5980	114	5337	26	6	0
8/24/11	883	12	0	5992	94	8360	20	3	2
8/25/11	686	14	2	6004	84	3818	19	4	0
8/26/11	467	9	2	6011	48	2063	17	3	0
8/27/11	117	2	0	6013	34	392	4	0	4
8/28/11	76	7	0	6020	38	438	5	5	0
8/29/11	590	5	0	6025	70	2395	13	3	0
8/30/11	632	3	0	6028	68	4907	15	4	1
8/31/11	179	7	0	6035	60	1046	3	3	0
9/1/11	652	81	1	6115	122	3333	89	42	6
9/2/11	786	28	2	6141	109	7137	68	23	7
9/3/11	271	6	0	6147	32	1228	6	10	0
9/4/11	155	9	0	6156	54	339	10	2	0
9/5/11	363	7	0	6163	87	1277	22	19	0
9/6/11	619	23	0	6186	138	1778	58	32	1
9/7/11	680	13	0	6199	78	4034	49	25	1
9/8/11	976	18	5	6212	110	12316	66	32	1

Date	Daily Active Users	Daily New Likes	Daily Unlikes	Lifetime Total Likes	Daily Logged-in Page Views	Daily News Feed Impressions	Daily Likes and Comments	Daily Wall Posts	Daily Photo Views
9/9/11	826	13	2	6223	78	13644	30	15	0
9/10/11	196	12	0	6235	39	1603	5	7	3
9/11/11	165	9	0	6244	44	549	3	6	0
9/12/11	845	19	1	6262	111	6787	25	22	0
9/13/11	790	9	3	6268	93	10660	17	16	0
9/14/11	1010	80	0	6348	329	4590	45	139	3
9/15/11	1397	35	3	6380	326	8571	562	114	1
9/16/11	498	21	0	6401	194	1291	273	39	0
9/17/11	157	14	1	6414	79	288	41	2	1
9/18/11	86	5	0	6419	66	197	9	1	0
9/19/11	159	9	0	6428	129	215	80	8	0
9/20/11	155	11	0	6439	122	192	114	10	0
9/21/11	233	2	5	6436	137	509	132	5	0
9/22/11	1221	11	6	6441	116	13750	73	5	0
9/23/11	1032	6	2	6445	167	4516	363	18	0
9/24/11	146	4	0	6449	49	668	99	10	0
9/25/11	127	7	0	6456	76	802	94	10	0
9/26/11	204	16	2	6470	139	772	222	7	0
9/27/11	310	4	0	6474	99	736	117	6	0
9/28/11	882	10	2	6482	148	2715	155	11	0
9/29/11	1037	8	2	6488	108	13575	78	10	0
9/30/11	1068	3	1	6490	90	7420	72	7	0
10/1/11	137	3	0	6493	41	781	5	0	0
10/2/11	101	5	0	6498	64	508	8	2	0
10/3/11	1269	8	4	6502	123	19552	131	12	0
10/4/11	1040	7	1	6508	98	4456	69	8	0
10/5/11	1294	3	1	6510	104	9874	68	9	0
10/6/11	1164	3	3	6510	95	10315	45	4	0
10/7/11	172	6	0	6516	73	1328	15	3	0
10/8/11	82	5	0	6521	49	420	6	5	0
10/9/11	83	6	0	6527	56	441	9	3	0
10/10/11	1716	29	9	6547	184	24000	246	14	0
10/11/11	1747	80	6	6621	299	25163	496	18	0
10/12/11	1696	28	9	6569	187	36769	470	8	0
10/13/11	1330	55	4	6692	247	20339	516	18	0
10/14/11	1063	15	1	6705	146	4854	169	20	0
10/15/11	180	6	3	6708	64	653	84	6	0
10/16/11	93	8	3	6713	60	250	57	3	0
10/17/11	1507	4	3	6714	99	10078	80	2	0
10/18/11	1046	2	4	6712	102	10258	72	5	0
10/19/11	1162	10	0	6722	148	5220	97	3	0
10/20/11	1073	5	3	6724	101	4249	51	1	0

Date	Daily Active Users	Daily New Likes	Daily Unlikes	Lifetime Total Likes	Daily Logged-in Page Views	Daily News Feed Impressions	Daily Likes and Comments	Daily Wall Posts	Daily Photo Views
10/21/11	178	5	0	6729	77	1268	18	1	0
10/22/11	66	7	1	6735	43	460	3	2	0
10/23/11	54	6	0	6741	42	259	4	1	0
10/24/11	1118	7	2	6746	105	3380	53	7	0
10/25/11	1536	11	2	6755	109	8218	101	2	0
10/26/11	1615	35	0	6790	227	11646	105	10	0
10/27/11	1188	10	0	6800	105	4071	29	6	0
10/28/11	1092	2	2	6800	100	3534	26	1	0
10/29/11	95	3	0	6803	33	295	5	1	0
10/30/11	186	10	0	6813	52	423	31	2	0
10/31/11	1835	18	3	6828	105	17299	120	5	0

APPENDIX 2

Interview With The UKZN and DUT Facebook Administrator

SECTION A: Resources

1. How many staff members are dedicated to update the university official Facebook page? New era positions are getting created that were never existed before such as social media officers, does university have such plans to consider?
2. What are the costs associated with the media versus the associated benefits?
3. Can providers afford the financial costs (e.g. expertise to create, ability to distribute) associated with Facebook.
4. How difficult will it be to implement?

SECTION B: Goals and Objectives

1. The objectives for communication programs should be chosen that maximize the extent to which an organization is able to manage its relationships with students. What is the motive in embracing a communication platform like Facebook in the university as a communication tool?
2. Does using Facebook as a communication tool will enhance the intervention strategy or is it just the thing to do as other universities are using?

(Intervention strategy: A strategy used to effect change within its organizational processes. For e.g. interventions made within a organizational developmental strategies may target specific processes involved such as marketing for example, and looks for areas where change may bring about a desired outcome.)

3. Is it the right time to introduce Facebook to the students?
4. As the universities are concerned with upholding and creating their reputations as the leaders in research, innovation, sports, and more – and hoping that each year they will draw a brighter pool of students than the year

before. How do you set the institutional tone and voice of your Facebook identity?

5. Can the Facebook help to reduce the barriers for communication to the students?
6. In the current situation as the total number of students registered in the university is more than the number of students who like the university Facebook page, how do you think it is an effective means to spread and receive time-sensitive and critical information through to the students in case of emergencies(e. g. strike)?
7. Do the students know about the existence of university Facebook page? What are the strategies drawn to advertise the university Facebook page?
8. What are the strategies in place to maintain the university's reputation?
9. How do you manage comments that are inappropriate and where you will draw the line between free discussion and making the decision to delete a comment? How do the moderators respond to these controversial messages?
10. Different departments/faculties have different Facebook pages within the university, how does it affect the official university Facebook page to ensure that its tone is consistent?
11. How many hours do you spend per week using this site to update statuses, posting articles/events, responding to student's inquiries? Do you respond during weekends?
12. Is it possible to evaluate the effectiveness of using Facebook as a communication tool?
13. Is there social media policy/Guidelines in place if so what are the key aspects in the policy.
14. What are the benefits of using Facebook within the University?
15. Do you advertise any commercials (for revenue generation, fund raising)? If so, how effectively?

16. How effectively do you publicize your research highlights, high achievements, news and events through Facebook? How regularly?
17. What are your marketing strategies to push Facebook in to wider audiences?

Student Survey Using Survey Bob

I am an MBA student doing research on “**A content analysis of Facebook as a communication tool between university and students**”, under the supervision of Prof. Manoj Maharaj towards the partial fulfilment of master’s degree.

Please participate in my research by clicking on the link below. You will be directed to the questionnaire where you are required to respond to the questions by just putting a tick on the relevant box. You can also post comments if you want to provide any suggestions further. Please feel free to pass it on or post it as your status. Appreciate your support in this regard.

RQ 3: What are the barriers to communication as perceived by the students in using Facebook as a communication tool at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the Durban University of Technology?

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

Please complete the following questions by putting a tick in the relevant box

1. Age:
 - a) 18-21
 - b) 22-23
 - c) 23-26
 - d) 27 and over
 - e) other (specify)

2. Race:
 - a) African
 - b) Indian
 - c) White
 - d) Colored
 - e) other (specify)

3. Gender:
 - a) Male
 - b) Female

4. Educational Level:
 - a) Diploma
 - b) Bachelors degree
 - c) Masters degree
 - d) Doctorate
 - e) Other (specify)

Section B:

Please put a tick in the relevant box against one or more of the options provided

(Allowed Multiple responses)

5. From which facility do you use to access the Facebook page?
- a) University Lan after 4 pm
 - b) Cell Phone
 - c) Laptop
 - d) Personal computer at home
6. What do you think are the barriers to effective communication in using Facebook to interact with the university?
- a) Facebook is banned until 4 pm in LAN's and wireless LANs
 - b) Concerned about privacy on Facebook
 - c) Do not receive feedback from the university in time for my inquiries
 - d) LANS give only certain time limit to students to access internet
7. Do you think that communicating with the university through the Facebook page is useful to students.
- a) Yes, it meets the needs of students
 - b) Yes, it is the best channel to communicate as the students are on Facebook
 - c) Yes, easy to receive information during emergencies(e.g. strikes)
 - d) No, It clutters my home profile page, I like to be personnel
 - e) Do not know
8. What do you like most about University Facebook?
- a) To get information about the university news, events, view picture instantly
 - b) Application and other enquiries
 - c) To engage with fellow students and alumni
 - d) Taking part in the competitions that the university run to engage students
 - e) To lodge complaints
9. What do you think is most irritating about the Facebook as a communication tool between the university and students?
- a) Multiple Facebook pages for the university and departments
 - b) If I don't receive an update from university about my query
 - c) My home page gets full with too many messages from university

10. Do you have any suggestions to improve the effectiveness of current Facebook to enhance communications?



Research Office, Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
Private Bag x54001
DURBAN, 4000
Tel No: +27 31 260 8350
Fax No: +27 31 260 4609
snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

27 October 2011

Mrs MK Bollapragada (200510557)
Graduate School of Business

Dear Mrs Bollapragada

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/1104/011M

PROJECT TITLE: A content analysis of Facebook as a communication tool between University and ITS Students

In response to your application dated 11 October 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor – Prof Manoj Maharaj
cc. Mrs C Haddon



2nd September 2011

To

Ms.Nomonde Mbadi
Executive Director
Corporate Relations
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Re : Permission to analyse UKZN Face book Page for MBA research

Dear Ms Mbadi

I Mrs Madhuri Bollapragada (MBA Student, Registration number : 209510557) here by would like to request you to grant me internal access to conduct research on University Face book page for my thesis entitled " A contextual Analysis of the use of Facebook as a communication tool between University and the Students" under the supervision of Professor M Maharaj of University of KwaZulu-Natal.

I further request you to grant me permission to interview the Face book Administrator for the statistical analysis of the data.

Thank you.



Mrs. Madhuri Bollapragada
Student No: 209510557

Approved.
N. E. MBADI

2.09.2011.

From: Alan Khan
Sent: Monday, September 05, 2011 9:31 AM
To: Madhuri Katyayani Bollapragada
Cc: Raylene Captain-Hasthibeer; Bongiwe Chiliza
Subject: Research assistance

Dear Mrs Bollapragada

Thank you for dropping off your letter requesting assistance with your MBA research into social medial. This letter serves to confirm that we will assist in answering your questions for your thesis.

Raylene Captain-Hasthibeer is our Communications Manager and she would be able to assist you with your request regarding DUT's communication tools. I am copying her onto this email and advise you to liaise with Raylene when you are ready.

Good luck with your studies and I would love to read your thesis once complete.

Sincerely

Alan

Alan Khan
Senior Director
Corporate Affairs
Durban University of Technology
T: +27 (31) 373 2906
F: +27 (31) 202 2475
www.dut.ac.za



31 October 2011

Mrs M Bollapragada
Graduate School of Business
Westville Campus
UKZN

Dear Mrs Bollapragada,

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained via the Research Office. It is noted the title of your dissertation is:

- 1) A Contextual Analysis of the use of Facebook as a Communication Tool between University and the students

Please note that the data collected must be treated with confidentiality and anonymity.

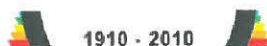
Yours sincerely,

Prof J Meyerowitz
Registrar

Office of the Registrar






Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 8005/2206 Facsimilie: +27 (0) 31 260 7824/2204 Email: registrar@ukzn.ac.za Website: www.ukzn.ac.za



1910 - 2010

100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville