



*Employee behaviour in social media
environments impacting corporate
reputational risk*

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Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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Date

Abstract

An employee who has a low level of awareness of how behaviours impact corporate reputation, and access to large online communities, could potentially expose the business to reputational risk. The vast number of individuals on these networks, combined with the low level of skill needed to publish on these sites, has resulted in comments and behaviours being amplified to a much greater audience. Employees and their behaviours represent the reality of the organisation to external stakeholders, and so offer a potential risk for reputational damage.

This research used an online survey with Likert scales to test the hypotheses. The survey was sent out to a convenience sample, and then a snowballing technique was used to reach the employees within the identified companies.

Managers and employees are equally aware of their impact on corporate reputation; however, they have a difference in opinion on what are acceptable topics to place in the public domain. A breach in the employee-employer psychological contract does not result in an increase in employee's willingness to post sensitive information in the public domain and employees are undecided as to how they feel about being prohibited from posting certain information in the public domain as an infringement of their person rights.

Keywords:

Corporate reputation, employee behaviour, social media.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Social networking is word-of-mouth marketing via the Internet.” (Pitta, 2010)

This statement applies to both personal marketing and corporate marketing. Companies and employers of all types are at risk from the actions of their employees on these very public broadcasting tools due to the reach of this medium. Examples of employees taking to social media to express their frustrations and opinions of their managers and employers are fast becoming common place in the general media.

By the end of August 2012 South Africa had a reported 5.33 million individual active Facebook users on the web (WorldWideWorx, 2012). This figure is said to be underestimated as Facebook does not measure mobile-only users, and the figure may actually be around 6.8 million users. World Wide Worx (2011) also indicated that South Africa had approximately 10 million users on MiXit, approximately 1.1 million Twitter users, and 1.1 million subscribers to LinkedIn by the end of 2011. These numbers are set to rise as South African users adopt social media as the fourth main use of Internet activity, with email, news and banking being the first to be embraced.

Social media has also now crossed the age barrier, with the fastest growing age group on Facebook being the over 60s age group (WorldWideWorx, 2012). This group has grown by 44% from August 2011 to August 2012; in contrast the 30-60 age group grew less than 20% and the 19-30 age group less than 10% over the same timeframe.

Social media sites are not limited to organised social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, and Twitter, but they also include “rating and review sites, video [such as YouTube] and content sharing sites, blogs and specialty groups” (Pitta, 2010:1).

Subscribers to these social media sites are using them to share comments on personal and work-related information. The site www.weknowwhatyouredoing.com trawls Facebook for comments made by Facebook users regarding drug use, hangovers, comments on their managers, and posting of personal phone numbers in their status updates. More recent examples include England cricketer Kevin Pietersen sending provocative BBM (Black Berry Messaging) posts to the opposing South African cricket team, bringing the then current England captain Andrew Strauss' leadership abilities into question (Newman, 2012). Former Goldman Sachs Executive Director, Greg Smith, discussed his reason for leaving in the media over poor management practices in a letter to an online site resulting in the share price dropping by £1.3 Billion (Smith, 2012).

In 2011, the South African CCMA (Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration) reported two precedent setting cases that highlighted to business that their corporate reputation as a business may be at risk due to employee behaviour in these online communities (Everett, 2011). Employees in both cases refuted the claims that their actions impacted on the reputation of the business. This leads on from the research done by Helm (2010) that examines if employees are aware of their impact on corporate reputation.

Employees are sharing their behaviours and opinions with a greater number of individuals online through various types of social media. Companies are at risk in that current and former employee behaviour in the social media environment could result in corporate reputational damage. Employees are not always aware of the reputational impact that their comments in social media may have.

1.1 Problem definition

Employees are primary stakeholders driving corporate reputation (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Helm, 2010). Their personal views of the business, their actions and their intentional or unintentional behavioural signals have an impact on the corporate reputation of a business (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Cravens & Oliver, 2006).

With the advent of the Internet and social media, this effect is amplified and the number of people with whom employee actions and opinions may be shared has increased dramatically (Tennie, Frith & Frith, 2010). “European PR practitioners perceive online communities (social networks) as the most important social media tool for public relations” (Verhoevena, Tenchb, Zerfassc, Morenod, Verčič, 2012:163).

This change in the business landscape has led to the need for a change in the way management monitors the reputation of the business, due to the activities of its stakeholders, in particular its employees (Alsop, 2004). However, employees and managers may not necessarily agree with the types of behaviour that impact corporate reputation, leading to workplace conflict (Miller, 2011). Companies’ ways of managing the behaviours of their employees tends to be reactive (Scott & Walsham, 2005) rather than proactive, to ensure reputational risk is minimised.

The proliferation of social media has had the effect of vastly amplifying employee behaviours and opinions in the public domain. Although employees are primary stakeholders in terms of driving corporate reputation, they may not necessarily be aware of their impact and could differ in opinion on the types of behaviour that places the corporate reputation at risk.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This study aimed to determine if employees are aware that their actions in the public domain have an impact on corporate reputation. It also aimed to determine if there was a difference in understanding between managers and employees as to the types of behaviour that may have an impact on corporate reputation and what is seen to be acceptable in the public domain. The effect of psychological contract breach in the employer-employee relationship and its effect on online posting were also looked at.

Lastly, this study looked at how employees feel about their right to freedom of speech and opinion in the public domain and whether they feel company policies on certain types of behaviour constitutes a breach of their personal rights.

These findings aimed to provide direction for future management decisions and communication strategies to guide employees on what behaviour is considered acceptable and its resultant impact on corporate reputation; in particular, the redefining of outdated policies which may not take into account the recent changes in the social media landscape.

1.3 Why was this problem selected?

Corporate success in today's ever-changing and competitive world is not merely dependant on product, as it is important for a firm to develop unique and differentiated resources in the form of reputational and human capital to ensure they remain ahead of the competition (Alniacik, Cigerium, Akcin & Bayram, 2011). A good corporate reputation offers a company competitive advantage over their rivals which is difficult to imitate (Alniacik, Cigerium, Akcin & Bayram, 2011).

Research into the relationship between corporate reputation and business performance (Davies, Chun & Kamins, 2010; Roberts & Dowling, 2002) has shown that there is a direct positive correlation between a good reputation and a successful business performance in the form of turnover and shareholder value. Davies, Chun and Kamins (2010) point out that company reputation is much more significant in terms of business success in service industries. Hansen, Samuelsen and Silseth (2008) find that a good reputation is positively correlated with customer value.

Helm (2010) writes about the employee awareness of their impact on reputation, however this researcher has to date not found any empirical research on the topic of the difference in opinion between managers and employees as to acceptable behaviours and comments in the social environment that may lead to corporate reputational risk. Helm (2010) looks at the construct of "Internal reputation building as a collective term for all the activities and behaviours employees exhibit in order to contribute to corporate reputation". She refers in her recommendations for future research that the actual behaviours of employees should be studied.

Before the introduction of social media it was very easy for an employee to keep their personal and professional life separate (Henry, 2011). This meant that comments made in their personal life were confined to the individual's physical social network and were not recorded.

Social media has changed the way in which individuals view their work and social environment (Tennie, Frith & Frith, 2010) and share opinions. Individuals can express their opinions and feelings with very little effort and using low levels of skill (Tennie, Frith & Frith, 2010) thereby drastically reducing any barriers to their ability to share opinions publically. Very little information shared on social media sites is private, and individuals often share details about their work, bosses, colleagues and social activities (Tennie, Frith and Frith, 2010). The illusion of anonymity in cyberspace may also provide the individual with a feeling of safety (Tennie, Frith & Frith, 2010).

There have recently been various reported cases in the media in the United States (Keith, 2011), United Kingdom (Kunzler, 2011), and in South Africa (Moyo, 2012; Everett, 2011) over dismissals of employees who have posted damaging comments regarding their employers on Twitter and Facebook. In 2011 a teacher in Massachusetts, USA, was tagged in a photo at a friend's bachelorette party. The photo was seen by a parent of a child she taught at school and she was dismissed for bringing the profession into disrepute (Miller, 2011). Her defence was that it was out of working hours and unrelated to her job or the school where she teaches and so had no impact on the reputation of the school.

Alsop (2004) states that this change in the way in which employees (as stakeholders) are more visible to clients has led to the need for a change in the way management monitors the reputation of the business (Alsop, 2004).

1.4 Conclusion

The above stated disconnect between employee behaviour and the organisation's requirement to protect its reputation makes the need for a deeper understanding of the issue critical.

What is the relevance of this topic to business in SA? The ways in which information and opinions are shared among employees and other stakeholders in the corporate landscape are changing and so too should the way companies manage their reputation in the market (Alsop, 2004). It is important for companies to manage the actions of their employees in a bid to reduce reputational risk and ensure the perception of customers, potential employees, and potential investors of the company is positive (Davis, Chun & Kamins, 2010).

The social media landscape which now plays an integral part in everyday life is defined by interactivity (Aula, 2010), where participants freely send, receive and process their own and others content for anyone to use (Aula, 2010). The risk of not having developed social media policies and engaged employees to ensure awareness and agreement as to what their responsibility is to the company could be far reaching. Employee awareness of their actions and the corresponding reputational risks will offer better control of those actions and comments which may impact reputation. This will in turn enable better control over the company's external reputation, leading to better outcomes for stakeholders (Cravens & Oliver, 2006).

As South African organisations compete in a rapidly globalising market they will be competing with companies that have mitigated reputational risk through employee behaviour control mechanisms. Local companies would be at a high level of risk should they not have similar policies to mitigate risk.

Aula (2010) states that despite companies being aware of the risk on corporate reputation through acts of their employees, they continue to shy away from reputational risk management strategies. This, Aula (2010) believes, is due to the lack of research in how to go about managing online reputational risk.

The South African community now has a significant presence in the social media. Based on current growth trends this presence will continue to increase rapidly. The rapid growth in both the volume and types of social media accessible to employees has enabled them to express their opinions in much wider forums.

These vast forums have the effect of amplifying employee behaviour. Opinions expressed by employees are broadcast to much greater audiences than their physical networks.

An employee who has a low level of awareness of how behaviours impact corporate reputation, and access to large online communities, could potentially expose the business to reputational risk. Due to the lack of research in the field of managing online reputational risk, companies have shied away from reputational risk management strategies.

Chapter 2: Literature review

“People are the core of business. The balance of power has shifted from the corporation to the individual. Technology has made it easier to discover and participate in social networks, but it has not changed their currency: content, authenticity, integrity, reputation, commitment and follow-through” (Deloitte, 2012:1).

2.1 A good corporate reputation

The Corporate Reputation of a company is a “socially collective construct” (Helm, 2010:657) based on how other people view the firm, it “conveys legitimacy of corporate activities and conduct” of the firm and its employees (Ettenson & Knowles, 2008:20).

Despite a corporate brand being successful, a reputation that exhibits gaps may result in less of a sustainable competitive advantage over time (Vercic & Vercic, 2007). It is with this in mind, that it is possible for a firm’s employees to differentiate their organisation from its competitors, “since the public increasingly want to know about the companies that stand behind the brands and products presented to them” (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001:101) and not just the brand itself.

A recent definition of corporate reputation is that of “a global, temporally stable, evaluative judgement about a firm that is shared by multiple constituencies” (Highhouse, Broadfoot, Yugo & Devendorf, 2009:783; Helm 2010:657). This definition takes into account the many stakeholders that are involved in the development and maintenance of a corporate reputation, such that it is an aggregate of internal and external perceptions of the firm (Vercic & Vercic, 2007).

Corporate reputation is said to be based on a firm’s actions and external communications, especially in the way they communicate to, and amongst, their various stakeholders (Fombrun, Gardberg & Sever, 2000).

There are many stakeholders in a business; however the employee is a primary stakeholder playing a significant role in developing and maintaining the corporate reputation of a business (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Helm, 2010).

2.2 How is a good corporate reputation formed?

Kennedy (1977) was one of the first researchers to conduct an empirical study to determine how external stakeholder's perceptions of the organisation are impacted by employee's actions. Davies, Chun, Vinhas da Silva and Roper (2003:23) expanded this statement by concluding that the reputation of the firm "is driven by the way customer facing employees perceive the organisation."

Through external stakeholder's interactions with internal employees, the employee's perception of the corporate reputation provides a platform for the external stakeholders to form their own perceptions around the reputation of the firm (Kennedy, 1977). Helm (2010) continues this trend by commenting on how internal employees regard the firm plays a key role in how other stakeholders perceive the organisation.

Not only does the employee's perception have an impact on corporate reputation, Gotsi and Wilson (2001:101) also state that "staff and their behaviour represent the reality of the organisation to the customers", and incongruence between the external communication campaigns of the company and employee behaviour or reported behaviour in the public domain may lead to damage in the corporate reputation of the firm (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). Employees interact with customers and other stakeholders in the public domain and so offer their personal opinions on the company's internal activities. Aula, (2010:38) stated that reputation should be understood as "interpretations among stakeholders of their stories, anecdotes and other discursive elements about the organisation". This makes the employee a strong element that could either enhance or destroy the corporate reputation of the firm.

It is for this reason that companies need to recognise and engage the synergistic role that stakeholders, in particular the employees, play in the managing the company's corporate reputation in the market (Cravens & Oliver, 2006).

Aula (2010:46) reinforces the importance of corporate reputation as a “valuable, but highly fragile corporate asset”. Close attention needs to be given to the way in which this asset is nurtured, managed and developed.

The corporate reputation of a business is a fragile corporate asset that is perceived by stakeholders to be the reality of the business. Stakeholder interactions with company employees in the public environment have an impact on how they perceive the internal workings of the business and their overall perception of the legitimacy and conduct of the firm’s activities in which they have an interest.

2.3 Reputations impact on business

A good corporate reputation has many benefits for the business and its stakeholders, which makes nurturing it an attractive exercise. It may attract affluent consumers, talented workers and generous investors to the company (Alniacik, Cigerium, Akcin & Bayram, 2011). Davies, Chun and Kamins (2010) also advance the point that having a strong corporate reputation can be a source of competitive advantage, which when combined with the right people, is very difficult to imitate (Alniacik, Cigerium, Akcin & Bayram, 2011; Davies, Chun & Kamins, 2010; Fombrun, 1996).

A positive reputation also leads to lower staff turnover rates (Davies, Chun & Kamins, 2010; Alniacik, Cigerium, Akcin & Bayram, 2011) and attracts the right sort of employees to the business (Alniacik, Cigerium, Akcin & Bayram, 2011).

A positive reputation is an important driver of customer loyalty (Welsh, Mitchell, Jackson & Beatty, 2009), which in turn leads to repeat purchases from those customers. These loyal customers may also be willing to pay a premium for the service or product, which in turn can enable a more attractive return for investors in the business (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Davies, Chun & Kamins, 2010)

In some instances a good reputation may become “a precondition for people’s willingness to do business with a company” (Ettenson & Knowles, 2008:20). It is with this in mind that Gray and Helm (2009) point out that even a negative reputation plays an important role in stakeholders’ perceptions as they may use the information as a

risk reducing strategy and refrain from doing business with the firm altogether. Reputation is also considered to be a “stabilising factor” which can be used by future stakeholders to reduce the risk in determining companies that exhibit “uncooperative behaviour” (Tennie, Frith & Frith, 2010).

Reputation may also play a significant role in the goals and strategies of an organisation. A positive corporate reputation can be an effective way to enable market expansion strategies, as a strong good reputation has been shown to signal quality which reduces uncertainty for customers’ first time purchases (Frombrun, 1996).

Studies conducted in the labour market context examine how individual potential employees evaluate companies during the application process. These studies indicate that potential employees use the reputation of potential employers to reduce uncertainty (Cable & Turban, 2003). Helm (2010) indicates that a good reputation also assists in retaining employees and not just attracting them.

Possibly the most important advantage of having a good reputation is that it can lead to superior profit for a firm (Roberts & Dowling, 2002). Reputational risk generally refers to the potential threats or actual damage to the stakeholder perception of an organisation (Scott & Welsham, 2005). Reputational risk or loss of a good reputation can lead to a loss in competitiveness in the market (Aula, 2010). The company also runs the risk of losing its local positioning, along with the trust and “loyalty of stakeholders, media relations, and the legitimacy of operations” (Aula, 2010:44).

An example of this is the article written by the former Goldman Sachs executive director and head of the firm’s United States equity derivatives business in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, Mr Greg Smith, entitled “Why I Am Leaving Goldman Sachs” (Smith, 2012). In this article Smith discusses his views on the company culture and environment, describing it as “toxic and destructive”. Smith (2012) also mentions that the company “rips off its clients and calls them Muppets”. Shares of Goldman Sachs plummeted 3.4%; a £1.3 billion backlash from stakeholders in response to their perception of the internal workings of the business (Bates, Tomlinson & Greenhill, 2012).

In more severe cases a company may cease to exist through reputation damage. A well-documented company scandal case is that of Arthur Anderson's involvement in the ENRON collapse (Nelson, Price & Rountree, 2008).

In conclusion, a good corporate reputation has a significant impact on the success of a business, from its share price, to the price it charges for its products and services, to its ability to attract and retain high calibre employees. These benefits justify significant expenditure on nurturing this intangible asset. An organisation that targets its strategies to minimise the risk on corporate reputation will benefit from being able to attract the best employees, customers and investors in the market.

2.4 Employees role in corporate reputation

Harris and de Chernatony (2001) and Helm (2010) all state that employees play a significant role in shaping external stakeholders perception of the firm. Employees are the face of the business; in particular for those companies in the service industry, with Hansen, Samuelsen and Silseth (2008) finding a positive correlation of 0.55 between corporate reputation and customer value in a service environment. One key strategy to achieve the goal of building a favourable corporate reputation is through engaging with the company's employees to safeguard the corporate reputation (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001; Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Helm 2010) and drive value in the business.

Davies, Chun, Vinhas da Silva and Roper (2003:23) stated that the reputation of a firm may be "driven by the way customer facing employees perceive the organisation". Fisher-Buttinger and Vallaster, (2008) stressed the importance of employees in their role as corporate ambassadors who safeguard corporate reputation to adopt certain attitudes and behaviours which show the company in a good light. Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng (2010) theorised that the final link in the chain to corporate reputation is the employees, as they have the ability to make or break the brand.

Gotsi and Willson (2001) restated that it is the combined behaviour of all business units, departments, and employees that create a company's reputation and it is therefore the responsibility of each one to protect and enhance it.

However, not all employees understand that this should be the case as their understanding of their impact on corporate reputation may be questionable (Helm, 2010).

It is important that companies look at developing their employees as “Brand Ambassadors” (Alsop, 2011:50; Gotsi & Wilson, 2010:100) to ensure awareness and buy in to corporate reputation building. Employee word of mouth can be extremely powerful (Alsop, 2011). A referral from an employee related to a company’s corporate reputation was seen to be credible by 84% of respondents, compared with 70% for media coverage. Alsop (2011) finds that only an individual’s own personal experiences with a company would be more trusted than the employee’s word of mouth comments.

In conclusion, next to a customer’s own experience with a company, the customer will accept and develop his own perception of the reputation of a business based on his experience of, and information received from, employees, who are in turn influenced by their relationship with the organisation.

Companies need to build a brand ambassador culture that ensures that employees exhibit the values and actions of the company. This would in turn enhance the reputation of the business in the customer’s eyes and create customer value for the company.

2.5 Employers role in corporate reputation

The public collapse of two major corporation’s reputation through employee behaviour, such as Enron (Nelson, Price and Rountree, 2008) and Goldman Sachs (Smith, 2012), has led to a trend in large companies’ reputations being in a steady decline. This trend is unfavourable, and “in countering this development, building and safeguarding a favourable corporate reputation is an important managerial goal” (Ettenson & Knowles, 2008).

The King III code in good corporate governance points out the importance of identifying and managing risk to the business through a process of prioritisation, ranking, and then the development of plans to mitigate the risk to the business (King III Report, 2009).

The above planning to mitigate risk should be the responsibility of the board of directors (Dowling, 2006); however, reputation experts say that the management and protection of corporate reputation is primarily the responsibility of the CEO and is shared with other executive managers. Dowling (2006) also stated that reputation experts say that the employee is ultimately responsible for the carriage of the company's reputation, under the direction of the CEO.

Dowling (2006) identified three common themes from the corporate reputational risk literature as to how corporate reputation can be managed by the company:

- The basis of a firm's reputation comes from the inside of the company, as a result of a solid business model, values and culture.
- The stakeholder's relationship with the company affects their individual perception of the company.
- Corporate behaviour is ultimately more of a driver of corporate reputation than public relations and marketing.

A company board can manage and reduce the reputational risk of the business through ensuring the above factors are on the board agenda and filtered down through the rest of the business.

In conclusion, the intangible nature of the reputational risk of a business makes it difficult to quantify in financial terms and so less likely to be on the board agenda. The King III code identifies governance as a key risk in the business environment and a factor that may have a significant impact on the reputation on a business.

The sustained reputation of a business is reliant on the internal business practices being sound and having strong direction from the top. Governance and other behaviours in the business inform the stakeholder's perception of the business. Board members need to be aware of where the risk factors are and how to mitigate these factors should there be a breach.

2.6 The awareness of impact of corporate reputation

Helm (2010:658) describes the term “Internal Reputation Building - which encompasses all the activities or behaviours employees’ exhibit in order to contribute to the formation of corporate reputation”. She goes on to indicate that any activity that an employee undertakes or communicates in the presence of an external stakeholder has an impact on the corporate reputation, whether it is directly or indirectly, voluntarily or involuntary related (Helm, 2010).

It is important to determine the relationship between the awareness of the impact of an employee’s behaviour, and their likelihood of intentionally performing that behaviour. This would be an indicator of whether their behaviour impacting on reputation was a deliberate move to damage the corporate reputation or just a way to relieve frustration experienced in the working environment.

2.7 Internal communication’s role in corporate reputation

The internal communication that a company invests in has a strong impact on various aspects of employees’ perceptions and actions. Sharma and Kamalanabhan (2012) concluded in their meta-analysis from various authors (see appendix 3: Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012) on the literature of internal corporate communications of a business, that an effective campaign can influence many factors. These factors include, but are not limited to, instilling a feeling of shared vision, stakeholder awareness, commitment and sustainability of the business. They also conclude that delivery of brand performance can be enhanced through an effective internal communication strategy.

More promising for the effect on corporate reputation is that it can impact employee behaviour and attitudes of the employees to the company. Sharma and Kamalanabhan (2012) also stated that an Internal Corporate Communication campaign can lead to a “mutual understanding between internal stakeholders and influencing behaviour and attitude”.

In conclusion, an internal corporate communication strategy can assist managers in ensuring employees buy in to the corporate vision of the business. By developing mutual understanding on what is important in a business through internal communication, employees awareness of their impact on corporate reputation may be enhanced.

2.8 Corporate culture

Kwok, Au and Ho (2005:457) stated that social norms, defined as the “rules of conduct established by members of a group to maintain behavioural consistency”, provide the framework in which individuals act in the social and work environment. These norms are what guides new employees to determine what is acceptable and the expected behaviours in a given situation.

- Perception of integrity of others

Social learning theory states that individuals learn behaviours vicariously through watching others’ behaviours and the resultant consequences (Bandura, 1971; Davis & Luthans, 1980). So posting on social media will be relative to what other employees post on their social media pages.

- People conform to norms involuntarily (Kwok, Au and Ho (2005:458)).

If there are no formal regulations or company policies in place, individuals will conform to the norms due to the informal punishments, such as gossip and ostracism, which may occur as the result of the employee not conforming to the norms.

- People who are more likely to do it as part of a group are least likely to be responsible for their behaviours as it is defused within the group (Hamilton & Saunders, 1995).

For example, comments made by a colleague on social media may result in a debate over working conditions or the standard of management in the company. As many employees are involved in the online conversation, responsibility for its impact may be seen as everyone's, and so the individual may feel that they are "conforming to social pressure or obeying organisational deviant norms" (Kwok, Au & Ho, 2005:458).

Jensen, Opland and Ryan (2010:555) and Kwok, Au and Ho (2005:456) defined the term "counterproductive behaviours" which are "employee deviant behaviours that violate the norms and values of organisations". These actions often bring harm to the company and its employees.

Supervisor formal normative control has been shown to have a significant effect on mediating employee counterproductive behaviours in the workplace, but this is not the same results as seen with a colleague's informal normative control (Kwok, Au & Ho, 2005:456). Chapman (1989) states that if there is a high congruency between an individual's personal values and the core organisational norms, the employee will identify with the group and be guided by its norms and values. So if it is common place for longer tenure employees to express reputational risk driving comments on social media, it will not be seen as unacceptable for new employees to do so.

Kwok, Au and Ho (2005) point out in their empirical research that as the number of staff in an organisation increases, the strength of the formal normative control (supervisor control) will increase and the strength of the informal control decreases. This is an indication that the larger the organisation, the greater the impact of supervisory behaviour becomes and the lower the influence of social norms. A corporate company's supervisor's impact on behaviour becomes more apparent as the size of the organisation increases, and so individuals in larger organisations may be less likely to post reputational risk driving comments in the social domain.

In conclusion, the culture and size of business may have an impact on what employees consider to be acceptable behaviour in the public domain. Individual perceptions on what is appropriate, unless controlled by policies, are most likely to be based on what other individuals in the business do. The larger a business, the more likely supervisor control of behaviour will replace social norms.

2.9 Laws governing employee behaviour outside the workplace

In the United States, Miller (2011) published a journal article discussing the implications of restricting an employee's ability to write comments and post pictures, indicating a particular type of activity on social media, and asked if this was an infringement on their personal rights to freedom of speech. The article also detailed the Massachusetts Association of School Committees implementation of a policy in 2011 to monitor teacher's social media activities to determine if they post any inappropriate materials online (Miller, 2011). There have been concerns over the infringement this may have on the rights of the teachers to freedom of speech (Miller, 2011)

Requests from US companies during the interview process for prospective employees to hand over their Facebook login details and personal email passwords have been strongly condemned by New York senators. Blumenthal and Schumer (2012), in their March 2012 letter to Congress, requested a change in legislation to prevent future employers from requesting this infringement on personal rights. They appealed to the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the US Department of Justice (DOJ) to fill in the missing legislation in the current law system to protect employee's privacy (Blumenthal & Schumer, 2012).

In the South African constitution there are two sections which refer to freedom of speech; sections 15 and 16. Section 15 of the Constitution of South Africa states that everyone has the right to "freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion", and section 16 indicates the right to freedom of expression - in particular the "freedom of the press and other media" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996:1429).

Moyo (2012) described recent rulings in South Africa where the CCMA upheld the dismissal of two employees in separate incidences for comments made on Facebook regarding the employer and their personal activities at work. It was ruled that even though these individuals posted them on their personal profile, they had not set sufficient privacy settings on their account and so it became public information. It is not

legal in South Africa to monitor an employee's personal social media activity unless they give permission when joining the company by signing a document (Moyo, 2012).

Everett (2011) stated that a precedent has been set covering social media law in South African as a result of the 2011 CCMA ruling of Sedick and Another / Krisray (Pty) Ltd [2011] 8 BALR 879 (CCMA). The Commissioner's findings were that it is possible for The Regulation of Interception of Communications and Provision of Communication-related Information Act 70 of 2002 (The Government Gazette, 2002) to be exercised in that it defines "interception" of the content by the employer. However, it is still questionable as to whether accessing an Internet site can be regarded as interception of communication (Everett, 2011). The Commissioner declared that Facebook pages were in the public domain unless privacy settings are in place enforcing the right to privacy and enforcing Act 70 protections.

There are other factors that come into effect as well, such as the intent of the employee when making derogatory and demeaning remarks about the employer. If actual damage to the employer's reputation is assumed and not necessarily proven, the court may still rule in favour of the company (Rheeder, n.d.)

South African Employment Law also covers issues related to these cases with regards to misconduct committed outside of the workplace (Labour Relations Act, 1995). Dismissal for actions unrelated to the working environment is not permissible; however, if it can be proven that it has a probable impact on the business, a dismissal may be upheld.

Information on changes in the laws and regulations governing the South African context on social media is hard to find; however, De Lanerolle (2011) has suggested some changes in the legislation governing broadcasting and telecommunications in response to the development of converging technologies.

De Lanerolle (2011) describes how converging technologies such as the Internet are replacing the one-on-one relationships of the past and changing the way in which information is broadcasted and shared. He points out that technological convergence enables any "content" such as "information, entertainment, educational material, business data etc. in the form of text, sound, video or pictures or communications [such

as] voice, text or video to be distributed via whatever is the cheapest, or most efficient route” (De Lanerolle, 2011:3). This makes control of the information and audience difficult to manage.

Van Cuilenburg & McQuial (2003) stated that policy and lawmakers need to decide on legislation that falls in line with public interest theory which states that the “role of state intervention and regulation is to improve economic, social and/or political welfare”. Grimmelmann (2009) reports that over a hundred million people have posted personally sensitive information on Facebook, which has resulted in loss of jobs, personal reputations and embarrassing secrets being shared with a greater number of individuals than they intended.

Facebook does have technical controls in place which enable users to switch on privacy settings to keep certain details from being shared through various pathways. However, Facebook still has severe privacy problems, even though they have designed and implemented a “comprehensive privacy-protection architecture” (Grimmelmann, 2009:4). Facebook users are more likely to deactivate the privacy control settings if they interfere with their sharing of content on the sites. Grimmelmann (2009) notes that not everything posted on Facebook is public and individuals do not lose the right to privacy on all content posted on Facebook, but this needs to be user controlled.

Grimmelmann (2009) strongly suggests that education on the use of privacy controls on social networking sites needs to be targeted at the users in the business. The individuals that post content and who are active on the site should be engaged in culturally appropriate ways to explain facts on social network site privacy.

In conclusion, not all comments on Facebook are private; this is determined by the privacy settings that an individual user sets on their profile. Employee opinions in the social media environment can cause reputational damage and their actions may be deemed a dismissible offence if the remarks or actions have brought the reputation of the business into disrepute. The main issue is that there are low education levels around the implications of these actions from the employees side and the case laws regarding these actions are relatively new and largely unproven, with only limited high profile cases setting the precedent.

2.10 Right to privacy

The right to privacy is key basic human right in accordance with Section 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, (1996) which states that “Everyone has the right to privacy, which includes the right not to have the privacy of their communications infringed” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996:1249).

Everett (2011) indicated in the 2011 CCMA ruling of Sedick & Another / Krisray (Pty) Ltd [2011] 8 BALR 879 (CCMA) that the employees felt that their communications were private and that their communications being intercepted by their manager who read their private Facebook comments was an infringement of their privacy .

Should an employee feel that their right to privacy has been infringed, Everett (2011) describes a two-stage process to establish a claim of the employee against the employer for the use of social media posts in dismissal cases:

- The employee has to prove a subjective expectation of privacy that was also considered to be “objectively reasonable” or a “legitimate expectation” of privacy (Everett, 2011, Slide 16).
- Secondly, if there is an infringement, that the infringement was not justifiable in terms of section 36 of the Constitution which is around the limitation of rights and its effect on “human dignity, equality and freedom” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996:1261).

Everett (2011) also stated that if the indiscretion was reported by “a friend” to the employer in the form of hearsay or real evidence, it could be admissible if the witness agreed to testify what they saw posted.

In conclusion, laws governing the privacy and rights of individuals and/or companies are not currently geared to manage the converging technologies of the Internet and social media. The legal landscape is still open to interpretation and could result in lengthy court cases. Without the necessary internal policies governing how employees

behave in the public domain regarding corporate issues, there exists a significant opportunity for reputational damage.

2.11 Connections in communications

The connections individuals make in today's society have been greatly influenced by the new wave of social media and technology. Vallor (2011) stated that pervasive technologies have changed the most basic ways in which individuals communicate and bond with others. This has the potential to impact on the moral lives and characters of those who choose this method of connecting with others (Vallor, 2011).

These connections are forming a more significant role in the lives of individuals in multiple social domains, such as work, school, family, friendships and civic life, and it is for this reason that they may have a greater potential to shape moral character and habitual practices of individuals that use them (Vallor, 2011). Vallor (2011) also stated that due to the incremental nature of change in the ways these different social connections affect our moral character, the changes may go unnoticed by stakeholders until there is an unavoidable consequence of this process.

Employees share various bits of information with their social circle online, such as births, a promotion, and the attainment of a personal goal. But they also share negative aspects of their days and may post statements regarding a hangover or a particularly bad day at the office to receive empathy from their social circle (Vallor, 2011).

2.12 Violation of the psychological contract

One of the main themes in the current media of employees that have turned to social media to express their feelings and opinions about their employers is that of a breach in the psychological contract with the employer. The psychological contract was defined by Rousseau, (1989:125) in his seminal work as "an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement". In other words, an employee believes there to be an unwritten agreement with the employer as to a certain level of reciprocity. If the employee feels that the employer has not upheld

what he believes to be in the contract, the employer would be in breach of the psychological contract and the employee would feel the need for a remedy (Pate, Martin & McGoldrick, 2003).

Violation of the psychological contract by an employer may illicit a more intense response than would normally be the case for an everyday situation (Pate, Martin & McGoldrick, 2003). When an action calls into question the issue of respect, or code of conduct, which the employee does not agree with, it becomes personal to the employee (Rousseau, 1989).

The literature details various types of psychological contracts; however, two main types have been identified as core psychological contracts: transactional and relational (Rousseau & Parks, 1993). Transactional contracts refer to obligations that cover monetary or materialistic aspects of the relationship, such as salary or working conditions. They are also more specific to short-term employment and the short term employer (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005). Relational contracts, on the other hand, are focused on more long-term exchanges that are key in maintaining the employee-employer relationship. Relational contracts are less specific than transactional contracts. They form the bases of personal relationships, trust and meaningfulness of the work the individual is hired to perform (Zhao, Glibkowski & Bravo, 2007).

Age has been shown to have an effect on the way in which an individual reacts to a particular situation, (De Lange, MatthijsBal, Van der Heijden, De Jong & Schaufeli, 2011), especially when it involves an emotional issue (Orgeta, 2009).

Older individuals have been shown to be able to modulate negative affect, which enables them to exert more emotional control in their reaction to situations of psychological contract breach. Bal and Smit (2012) found that psychological breach in younger workers is related to more negative effects.

Research conducted by Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) showed that employees often engage in counterproductive work behaviours when they feel that they have been a target of abusive supervision; an example of which may be sexual harassment in the workplace. Bowling and Michel (2011) stated that this form of retaliation is consistent with Gouldner's (1960) principle of reciprocity. This indicates that those who are

affected by negative acts may respond by engaging in negative acts that are directed at the perpetrator or the employee's supervisor in this case.

Mitchell and Ambrose (2007) also showed that employees may retaliate through counterproductive work behaviours that impact the organisation in response to the abusive supervision and not just the manager who was responsible for the breach in psychological contract.

In conclusion, relational breaches in the psychological contract may determine what behaviour in the public domain is intentional and what is not intentional. A psychological contract breach may result in individuals engaging in negative acts directed at the supervisor who they feel has breached the contact, or their actions may be directed at the organisation that employs that supervisor.

2.13 Influences that drive behaviour of social media

Rhee, Sanders and Simpson (2010) point out that one of the main motivations for web-based contributions may be a disconnect in the individual ego and virtual ego. The ego determines the persona that an individual projects to different groups of people during interactions with these groups.

The offline ego is flexible in that it offers different personas depending on the specific group of people that the individual is interacting with, which may be as a result of the audience effect (Tennie, Frith & Frith, 2010).

However, the online virtual ego projects the same persona to everyone and is not dependant on who is online. This overarching theory of separate identities may lead to disconnect in the behaviour of employees online versus what they would consider acceptable to do in the real world (Rhee, Sanders & Simpson, 2010). What is most striking in this research is that Rhee, Sanders and Simpson (2010) conclude that individuals within a large base, whose behaviour is normally deemed to be “particularly autonomous and conscientious in real life”, may exhibit “more immature and impulsive behaviours in online environments” (Rhee, Sanders & Simpson, 2010:156) such as criticising a manager or displaying poor judgement in placing photos of the individual in

a compromising position. This sort of disconnect may lead to making the managing the level of information shared publically more difficult for managers to define.

Grimmelmann (2009) discussed the following five misconceptions that individuals may have when posting content on social media sites with regards to the privacy of the information that they share:

- If everyone is doing it, it should be fine, and with Facebook reaching just over 5.33 million users in South Africa (WorldWideWorx, 2012) the individual may feel that their friends know something they do not.
- Social media contributors may feel content that what they place on social media will not be picked up due to the number of content producers online, and so it is relatively anonymous.
- There may be a feeling of a false sense of being alone and so not aware of the audience that they are publishing the content to. Individuals rely on social and architectural clues to assume their audience in the physical world, but these are absent in the online world.
- Individuals may assume that the online world is populated with individuals like them.
- Perhaps the most important aspect relating to employee behaviour in the social media space from Grimmelmann's (2009) paper is that of assuming individuals in the online space know what information is suitable to be passed on. In the physical environment social signals are often communicated through facial expressions and touches on the arms to indicate the sensitive nature and signal confidentiality of comments.

In conclusion, there are many factors and misconceptions that drive social media behaviour in the online domain. Actions and behaviours in the physical world may not necessarily be an indication on how that individual behaves in the online world. Misconceptions of privacy, and lack of insight into others online, may lead individuals to make comments or post behaviours that they would normally prefer to remain private.

2.14 Social media as a driver of corporate reputational risk

Social media can result in new expectations or beliefs about an organisation based on information from a single source, and this may not necessarily be a reputable source (Aula, 2010). These expectations may be around ethical business practices, or the transparency of the operations within the company (Aula, 2010). Reactions to claims posted in the social media environment can also have a significant impact on the reputation of the business (Aula, 2010).

Aula (2010) pointed out that customers in the social media environment create and search for information on a company to gain insight and develop a perception of the company. Once they have built their perception or picture, they share it on their social media site, which then becomes the collected truth for the customer base they interact with. Social media tools are said to be the most important aspect for public relations by European PR practitioners, as they perceive online communities or social networks to be the main driver of this trend (Verhoevena, Tenchb, Zeffassc, Morenod & Verčič, 2012).

Companies that comprise of individuals in the workplace who are able to share information with the outside world right from their office desk, need to find a way to manage the information that is placed in the public domain through risk management strategies.

Verhoevena, Tenchb, Zeffassc, Morenod and Verčič (2012) discovered that policies on digital and social media have not readily been implemented in many European organisations. In their empirical study, only 29.3% of respondents had social media guidelines directed at offering guidance for communicating online in forums such as blogs and Twitter; however, 31.3% indicated that they planned to implement a policy the following year.

Monitoring of social media sites was also quite low, with 27.9% have implemented tools for monitoring stakeholder communications, and 26.3% looking to implement such in the following year. They also looked at training programmes, reporting a total of 48% that either had a programme in place or were planning to implement one in the coming year (Verhoevena, Tenchb, Zerfassc, Morenod & Verčič, 2012).

2.15 Conclusion

A good corporate reputation has a significant impact on the success of a business, from its share price, the profit it receives for its products and services, to its ability to attract and retain high calibre employees. Stakeholder interactions with company employees in the public environment have an impact on how they perceive the internal workings of the business, their overall perception of the legitimacy, and conduct of the firm's activities in which they have an interest.

Next to a customer's own experience with a company, the customer will accept and develop his own perception of the reputation of a business based on his experience of information received from employees, who are in turn influenced by their relationship with the organisation. It is important that managers ensure that employees buy in to the corporate vision of the business, and develop an awareness of how their actions and behaviours impact on corporate reputation.

The culture and size of the business may have an impact on what employees consider to be acceptable behaviour in the public domain. Individual perceptions on what is appropriate, unless controlled by policies, are most likely to be based on what other individuals in the business do.

Relational breaches in the psychological contract may determine what behaviour in the public domain is intentional and what is not intentional. Psychological contract breaches may result with individuals engaging in negative acts directed at the supervisor who they feel has breached the contact, or their actions may be directed at the organisation that employs that supervisor. Board members need to be aware of where the risk factors are, and how to mitigate these factors should there be a breach.

Laws governing the privacy and rights of individuals and/or companies are not currently geared to manage the converging technologies of the Internet and social media. The legal landscape is still open to interpretation and could result in lengthy court cases due to misinterpretation of the law. Without the necessary internal policies governing how employees behave in the public domain regarding corporate issues, there exists a significant opportunity for reputational damage.

Due to little research conducted on how to go about managing online reputational risk (Aula, 2010), companies continue to shy away from reputational risk management strategies. There is a need for further research into online reputational risk to quantify to what extent management and employees' opinions differ as to what constitutes appropriate behaviour to post information in the social domain that may impact on corporate reputational risk.

Chapter 3: Research questions and hypotheses

3.1 Introduction

The literature has shown that a good corporate reputation has significant benefits for a firm, such as attracting affluent consumers, talented workers and generous investors to the company (Alniacik, Cigerium, Akcin & Bayram, 2011). A good corporate reputation is built through the stakeholders' interpretations of others on stories, anecdotes and discursive elements around the company (Aula, 2010:38).

Next to a customer's own experience with a company, the customer will accept and develop his own perception of the reputation of a business, based on his experience of and information received from employees, who are in turn influenced by their relationship with the organisation (Alsop, 2011).

The rapid growth in both the volume and types of social media accessible to employees has enabled them to express their opinions in much wider forums. These vast forums have the effect of amplifying their behaviour. An employee who has a low level of awareness of how behaviours impact corporate reputation, and access to large online communities, could potentially expose the business to reputational risk. Due to the lack of research in the field of managing online reputational risk, companies have shied away from reputational risk management strategies.

The scope of this research is the focus of what managers and employees view as acceptable behaviour to make known in the public domain that may have an impact on corporate reputation. The study specifically examines social media as the tool which employees use to publish information; however it is not limited to just social media. Other print media, along with word of mouth, are also relevant to this study as it is a form of communication between the individual and the stakeholders that can lead to a change in the perception of corporate reputation.

Out of the scope of this study are those behaviours which can be constituted as whistle blowing where large scale damage is seen to be the main and only goal of revealing the behaviour in the public. The study also did not take into account the personal reputation of the individual in their private capacity, nor the impact their behaviour may have on their future career.

3.2 Research questions

- 1. Are managers more aware than individual contributor employees of how their behaviour and comments in the public domain affect corporate reputation?**

This question has been chosen to understand if there is a difference in opinion between managers and individual employees on their understanding of how their personal actions may impact the corporate reputation of a business. The questions identify if they understand that they are a primary stakeholder in the maintenance of the reputation of the company they work for, and if they believe their personal actions can have an effect on the reputation of the business.

- 2. How do the views of managers differ from those of employees as to what is acceptable behaviour in the public domain that may have an impact on corporate reputation?**

Helm (2010) examined the awareness of all employees in the business in relation to their impact on reputation; however, differences in the awareness of managers and employees may lead to a disconnect in the understanding of what is important for corporate reputational building and safe guarding. This question identified specific topics and asked how acceptable managers and employees felt them to be appropriate to place in the public domain.

3. Does a breach in the employee-employer psychological contract affect the level of information an employee feels is acceptable to share publically?

Psychological contract breach has been shown to lead to counter-productive work behaviours directed at either the manager or the organisation (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007).

This question was posed to understand how a breach in the psychological contract affects the employee's decision to post information in the social domain.

4. Do employees feel that they have the right to freedom of opinion and behaviour in their personal time that may still have an impact on corporate reputation? Or is company regulation of this perceived to be infringing on their personal rights?

Section 14 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, (1996) states that "Everyone has the right to privacy, which includes the right not to have the privacy of their communications infringed" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996, p, 1249). Some individuals consider their Facebook and other social media sites as private communication with their personal network; however, some US companies have asked for profile login details in order to monitor employees' online social communications (Blumenthal & Schumer, 2012). This question serves to gain an understanding of how South African employees and managers feel about their employers monitoring their social media activities.

Together these questions aimed to provide direction for future management risk analysis, decisions and communication strategies to guide employees on what behaviour is considered acceptable and its resultant impact on corporate reputation. In particular, the redefining of outdated policies which may not take into account the recent changes in the social media landscape are discussed.

3.3 Restated hypotheses

- H1: Managers are more aware than individual contributors of how their behaviour and comments impact corporate reputation.
- H2: Managers and employees have a difference in opinion as to what is acceptable to post in the public domain that may impact on corporate reputation.
- H3: A breach in the employee-employer psychological contract results in an increase in employees willingness to post sensitive information in the public domain.
- H4: Employees feel that being prohibited from posting certain information in the public domain is an infringement on their personal rights.

Chapter 4: Research methodology and design

4.1 Introduction

This study was conducted using the online survey tool www.freesurveyonline.com and distributed first to a convenience sample and then a snowballing technique via email. Ten medical companies who were members of SAMED (South African Medical Devices Association), relying on corporate reputation as a competitive advantage, were selected for the survey. A minimum of 30 employees in the South African business was a qualifying criterion for entry into the survey.

This was a descriptive study that used quantitative data obtain from the survey to test the hypotheses set out in Chapter 3. The survey was conducted using scenarios based around personal and work-related issues posted in the social media environment. Respondents were requested to respond using Likert scales ranging from 1–strongly disagree, to 5–strongly agree to determine the level of agreement of the respondent to each scenario.

4.2 Technique selection

Survey type studies enable the collection of data from a large sample of individuals while keeping the costs reasonable (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:116). Sample size and respondent rates are key elements in determining the validity and quality of the research conducted, so by ensuring a large enough sample, the quality of the data collected can be increased. For this study the sample used was in various locations across South Africa in 10 different companies, so the use of an online survey through www.freesurveyonline.com where the individuals could complete the survey simultaneously and in their own time made this technique appropriate for the study. It is also an appropriate medium choice due to the nature of the research being online. Individuals who use social media were assumed to be computer-savvy which may have resulted in an increase in the response rate.

This form of research instrument has been used extensively in business research as a data collection tool (Saunders & Lewis, 2012; Helm, 2010; Alniacik, Cigerium, Akcin & Bayram, 2011). Descriptive and survey type studies are a good choice for research looking to define “who?”, “what? “,”where?”, “how much?” and “how many?” questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:116, Zikmund, 2003:55). In this study the survey provided data that enabled a conclusion to be drawn on differences in opinions of manager vs. Employees; i.e. “how much” they agree with a particular statement being suitable to be posted in the public domain.

Surveys also provide responses in a standardised format, and this makes comparisons and statistical data analysis on the answers a simpler process to ensure more accurate results (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:116). A further advantage in using a survey technique for this particular study is its ability to be collected in a short period of time (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:116). The data can be collected congruently and within a set time frame, making it suitable for the limited time available to collect data for the MBA research project.

A Likert scale version of a survey technique was used to gather primary data from the sample. The fact that the Likert scale enables respondents to offer a subjective response of their attitude and opinions (Chin, Johnson & Schwarz, 2008) on a scales of 1-5, 7 or 11, makes it appropriate to use for this study to determine the difference in the level of agreement that managers and employees perceive to be acceptable. This was done by offering the respondent various scenarios and providing a scale as to whether they 1- strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree (Chin, Johnson & Schwarz, 2008).

A possible alternative to a Likert scale for this phase of the study would be a Semantic Differential scale. The researcher decided against this scale due to the possible impact of the increased need for “cognitive demands” and the possible risk of “random errors in measurement” (Chin, Johnson & Schwarz, 2008). Using a Likert scale is appropriate due to the fact that the study is interested in the extent to which the employee or manager agrees with the statement in the surveys (Chin, Johnson & Schwarz, 2008)

4.3 Method

The study took place in two phases:

- **Phase 1-** Test phase, this phase of the study was used to test the ability of the research instrument for respondent understanding of the questions and to determine the effectiveness of the instrument in testing for the hypotheses.

There was also an option for the respondents to add to the survey scenarios to ensure completeness of the scenarios covered in the final survey.

- **Phase 2-** Online Likert scale survey using scenarios to obtain the responses with the use of www.freesurveysonline.com. (Appendix 2: Questionnaire)

This was a cross-sectional study where all data was collected in a single period in time offering a “snapshot” (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:123) of the views of the various groups of employees and managers on what they felt to be appropriate. Collection of data was done from various groups of employees, male, female, managers and individual contributor employees of various age groups. This snapshot may provide a baseline for future research on how views change as the corporate landscape changes over time.

4.3.1 *Universe*

The universe for the purpose of this study was all managers and employees who work in the business environment.

4.3.2 *Population*

The population was defined as the complete set of group members that are within the scope of the study (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:110).

For the purpose of this study, all employees and managers who were employed by a corporate company, who rely on their corporate reputation as a competitive advantage and with a minimum number of 30 employees were included in the population.

This population is an appropriate population to study as it consists of many large companies who rely on their corporate reputation and employees to ensure business success. It was discussed in the literature review how the benefits of corporate reputation can have many advantages for a firm's success. Corporate organisations have experienced business success which has resulted in them reaching this stature. In the literature review it was pointed out that as a company's size increases, behavioural controls move from societal norms to more of a supervisor managed formal control mechanism (Kwok, Au & Ho, 2005). Using companies of 30 or more employees would indicate a particular size of a company and assume a certain level of supervisor control in place in these companies.

4.3.3 *Sample*

A sample is a "subgroup of the whole population" that is representative of the population (Saunders and Lewis, 2012 pp. 132). For phase 1, the test phase, a non-probability convenience sample of four managers and ten employees from three companies were used to test the understanding and validity of the questionnaire (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Although not a well-respected method of collecting data for research purposes (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:140), a convenience sampling technique provided sufficient access to respondents in the population to enable effective data collection and analysis.

This technique however has some limitations. Convenience sampling is "using" respondents that are easily available to the researcher in order to gain the data needed for the research (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:140) and this may lead to information that is not necessary relevant to the research due to the often homogenous characteristics of the group. This could lead to sampling errors in that not the entire population was selected before the sample was drawn (Lee, Benoit-Bryan & Johnson, 2011).

For Phase 2 of the study, a non-probability convenience sample was again used, combined with a snowballing technique to test the hypotheses.

The top 10 Multinational Medical Device Companies by estimated turnover, who were members of the South African Medical Device Industry Association (SAMEDI, 2012) and had an employee base greater than 30 employees in the South Africa subsidiary of the company, formed the base of the sample. These large medical companies rely on their corporate reputation and employees to ensure business success. It was discussed in the literature review how the benefits of corporate reputation can have many advantages for a firm's success.

A snowballing technique is defined by Sanders and Lewis (2012) as when the initial sample of respondents pass on the questionnaire to more suitable respondents to increase the sample size. The snowballing technique was appropriate as it enabled access to relevant employees through the Human Resources Manager inside the organisation, and not just employees known to the researcher.

The total sample to which the questionnaire was sent out to comprised of 250. This sample size was appropriate in that the larger the sample, the more representative the results will be of the population and the more likely sufficient responses were obtained for statistical analysis. A minimum number of 30 respondents per groups were needed to ensure the use of significant statistical analysis, as the larger the respondent rate of the group the more representative of the population the results will be (Lee, Benoit-Bryan & Johnson, 2011).

4.3.4 Data collection instrument

The data collection tool was in the form of an online survey using www.freeonlinesurevys.com. The front page of the questionnaire detailed the reason for the research, along with a consent statement. It was stated in the declaration that the respondent had the opportunity to exit from the survey at any time during the process. All responses were anonymous in an attempt to encourage truthful responses.

The survey consisted of the following sections:

- Section 1: Demographics.

Demographic questions posed in this section of the questionnaire were used in stratifying data during the analysis phase of the study. They included the criteria: gender, age, social media sites used, length of time active on social media, frequency of social media use, and whether they were a manager or an individual contributor employee.

For the purposes of this study, the term “manager” was defined as per the description given in the South African basic conditions of employment act of 1997 as “an employee who has the authority to hire, discipline and dismiss employees and to represent the employer internally and externally” (Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997:6). For this distinction to be made in the questionnaire, the question was asked if the employee had any direct reports, as this would be an indication that they had the authority to hire, discipline or dismiss an employee for poor conduct.

All other respondents that fell outside of the above definition were considered to be “employees” who do not have the power to hire, discipline or dismiss an employee. This part of the questionnaire was an important tool in the analysis as it formed the bases of comparison between the different groups of employees.

- Section 2 and 3: Topics in the public domain

Test for H2: Managers and employees have a difference in opinion as to what is acceptable to post in the public domain that may impact on corporate reputation.

This hypothesis was tested using two sections to the questionnaire. Section A was a list of issues and the second section, B, was in the form of scenarios around similar issues. Support on the reasoning for selecting scenarios is discussed in detail below. A Likert scale was used in both sections to determine to what extent the respondent agreed with the sharing of information around that topic in the social media domain.

The issues and scenarios were based around topics identified as being shared on social media sites by Vallor (2011) and other social media high profile cases detailed in the literature (Nelson, Price & Rountree, 2008; Miller, 2011; Moyo, 2011; Everett, 2011; Bates, Tomlinson & Greenhill, 2012). These included positive situations such as “birth of a child” and “an engagement or marriage”, as well as various negative situations such as: “A sore head from last night’s party”, “Disagreement with a manager” and “Sexual Harassment”.

- Section 3: Scenarios

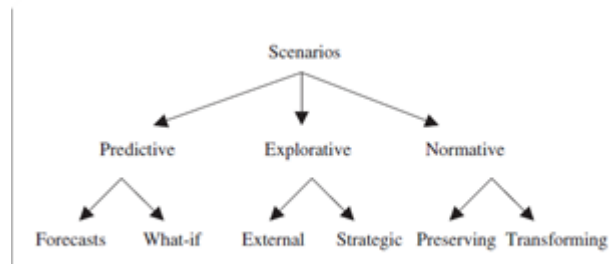
Test for H3: A breach in the employee-employer psychological contract results in employee’s willingness to post more sensitive information in the public domain.

Scenario testing has been used in the literature, in particular the field of “Future Studies” to test different outcomes to situations (Borjeson, Hojer, Dreborg, Ekvall & Finnveden, 2006). The authors classify scenarios into three main categories which are based around questions that the user may want to pose about the future. They are “What will happen?” referred to as predictive, “What can happen?” referred to as explorative, and “how can a specific target be reached?” referred to as normative scenarios (Borjeson, Hojer, Dreborg, Ekvall & Finnveden, 2006:725).

Within the above scenario categories, Borjeson, Hojer, Dreborg, Ekvall and Finnveden, (2006) further categorise the sections through different types of scenarios; one of which is the distinction between internal and external factors. Internal factors are identified by the ability of the actor in the scenario to control the outcomes of the situation, whereas external factors indicate those factors which are outside the influence of the actor.

Within the predictive scenario group, the external and internal factors divide this group into the “forecast” and “what-If” scenarios, as seen in Figure 4-1 below. The authors distinguish the “Predictive What-If scenario” from the “Predictive Forecast Scenario” due to the nature of the forecast scenario being that of an external factor (Borjeson, Hojer, Dreborg, Ekvall & Finnveden, 2006)

Figure 1: Scenario typology indicating three categories and six different types of scenarios (Borjeson, Hojer, Dreborg, Ekvall & Finnveden, 2006:725)



The questionnaire for this study was designed around the “Predictive What-if Scenario” which offers responses to the question “What will happened on the condition of some specified events?” (Borjeson, Hojer, Dreborg, Ekvall & Finnveden, 2006:726).

The authors point out that predictive scenarios are often used by planners, investors and decision makers who use predictive scenarios to make it possible to plan and adapt to challenges which may occur in the future (Borjeson, Hojer, Dreborg, Ekvall & Finnveden, 2006). By creating scenarios for the purpose of this study, the responses will offer insights into the reactions the individuals are likely to exhibit should the scenario occur in their workplace. This offers an opportunity for management to pre-plan proactive and reactive responses to limit the damage employees may have on the business should they post reputation damaging content in the public domain.

In this section of the questionnaire, scenarios were used to determine how much the respondent agreed with the use of social media in the reaction of the employee to a specific scenario. The question asked was “To what extent do you agree that it is acceptable for the following individuals to post their opinions on their personal social media pages?” The scenarios were designed around the third person, as Zhang (2010) points out that humans have a desire to be seen in a socially positive light and so will take the stand to self-protect themselves when faced with a situation that could affect their social stature. By offering the scenarios in the third person, the author attempted to obtain a more truthful response as to the how the respondent feels about the scenario in a non-confrontational way (Zhang, 2010).

The results of this questionnaire are to offer an indication of what the person will see as acceptable should they be in the situation in the future. This scenario analysis offers management information with which they can build a proactive training plan to discuss what is acceptable for the individual to make public.

- Section 4: Psychological contract breach

H4: Employees feel that being prohibited from posting certain information in the public domain is an infringement on their person rights.

A Likert scale was again used in this section where respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with four statements. These statements were around the posting of positive and negative comments on social media, their views on their manager monitoring their social media site, and if they felt this would be an infringement of their right to freedom of speech and privacy.

- Section 5: Awareness of their impact on corporate reputation (Helm, 2010)

H1: Managers are more aware than employees of how their behaviour and comments impact corporate reputation.

The test instrument used was a Likert scale instrument developed by Helm (2010) to determine the awareness of individuals of their impact on corporate reputation. It consists of a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1="strongly disagree" to 5="strongly agree" (Helm, 2010). Examples of the statements are "What I personally do is important for the reputation of my company" and "I know how I can influence my company's reputation"

4.4 Data collection process

For the test phase: A convenience sample of four managers and ten employees from three companies identified were contacted first via email, telephonically, or face to face to explain the reasons for the study and request their consent to be part of the test

phase. Links to the questionnaire were then emailed to them for their response. Follow up short interviews were conducted on the phone and in person to determine if the questions were understandable and if they felt that any specific scenario should be included in the final questionnaire. No new scenarios were added; however, word changes were made to make understanding of the scenarios easier.

For Phase 2: www.freeonlinesurvey.com was used to send questionnaires to the Human Resources Managers in each of the 10 companies who agreed to take part. The Human Resources Manager was then asked to forward the questionnaire to 10 managers and 15 employees each in their company, with a total of 250 surveys being sent out.

Post survey: On completion of the survey, Human Resource managers for the companies who participated in the survey were contacted to determine if they had a formal social media policy.

4.5 Data analysis

Data collected from the above test survey were analysed for validity and reliability via the follow up interviews with the test phase respondents on the suitability of the instrument for understanding. Validity is the extent to which the data collection method actually measures what it aims to measure, and to ensure that the research findings are really about what they aim to illustrate (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:127). Reliability is determined by the extent to which the collection methods and procedures produce consistent results (Saunders & Lewis, p, 2012).

Descriptive statistics were performed on the total respondent data along the lines of managers/employees, male/female, age and social media site subscribed to. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each statement, and the most absolute, positive and negative extreme differences were tabled. Before the hypotheses were tested, a normality test was conducted using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to assess whether the variables measuring feelings on what is acceptable to place in the public domain followed a normal distribution (Adler, 2010).

This test was chosen as it was necessary to test for normality to determine if a parametric or non-parametric test was to be used for the comparison groups.

The results indicated that the p-values for the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Tests were less than 0.05 for all the statements, and thus the variables did not follow a normal distribution. This led for the need for further analysis to be carried out using non-parametric methods. Seigal (1957:13) states that non-parametric or “distribution-free” statistical tests can be used when there are no assumptions made about the population; i.e. the data are not normally distributed. They can also be used with non-numerical data, using the ranks of the observations as the data to perform the test.

The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to assess whether there was a difference in the rating of the statements on the level of agreement on what is acceptable to place in the public domain by management against the rating of employees. The Mann-Whitney U test is also known as the Wilcoxon U-Test (Mann-Whitney) (Gardner, 2012). This test was used as it is the non-parametric counterpart of the t-test which can be used to compare the mean ranks of two different populations (Black, 2011).

It was pointed out by Black (2011) that the t- test should not be used for testing if the data are not normally distributed, or if the data are only ordinal in measurement. The Mann-Whitney U Test is conducted in different ways, depending on the sample size of the two groups. If $n_1, n_2 > 10$, the sample size is considered large and in this case the U is approximately normally distributed (Black, 2011). An average expected U value and standard deviation for a group of this size enabled the calculation of a Z score for the U value. The probability was then calculated of obtaining this Z score if there is no difference between the groups. (Black, 2011). The decision to reject or fail to reject the null hypotheses was then determined based on the p value of the above test using a significance level of 5%.

For hypothesis four, the data were reported in a frequency table which indicated the number of respondents at each level of agreement on the Likert scale. This was to enable the reporting of the percentage of the respondents who agreed or disagreed with the statement on opinions on infringement of personal rights to freedom of speech.

The one sample Wilcoxon U-Test (Mann-Whitney) was then used, as it is a non-parametric, one sample t-test equivalent to determine a difference in the data from a predefined population (Gardner, 2012). This test determined if the test group median differed from the hypothetical mean, which was three due to the use of the five point Likert scale.

4.6 Limitations of this research method

The survey method has limits to the quality of the data obtained due to possible bias in the survey findings. Examples of errors may be sampling and non-sampling errors. Sampling errors may occur when the entire population or universe is not selected. The impact can be reduced through choosing larger sample size (Lee, Benoit-Bryan & Johnson, 2011). An attempt to mitigate this was through the choice of the snowballing sample technique.

Non-sampling errors may occur as well, such as coverage error. This is possible when the sample frame used for the study is not really representative of the population and this then leads to selection bias, resulting in poor results that may generalise the findings (Lee, Benoit-Bryan & Johnson, 2011). Large multinational companies often have different corporate cultures so by increasing the sample size to 10 companies, as in this study, it reduced this risk of this error occurring. Specific criteria for the sample selection also attempted to mitigate this risk.

The last error pointed out by Lee, Benoit-Bryan and Johnson (2011) which may be of a concern when using a survey is that of non-response error. Albright, Winston and Zappe (2009) point out that this is the most serious type of non-sampling error, in that it occurs when a certain portion of the sample does not respond to the survey. This leads to a bias in the response data. Follow up emails and phone calls to the Human Resource Manager encouraged follow up emails from their side to encourage all portions of the sample to respond.

A disadvantage of the survey method for this study was that the responses did not carry additional details other than that asked in the survey questions (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:116). The number of questions should be limited as the risk of losing the

respondent during the process increases as the number of questions increase in the survey. This means that comprehensiveness of the survey study is very limited (Saunders & Lewis, 2012:116). To mitigate this disadvantage, the hypotheses selected were focused on a very narrow area of study, and statements and questions were specific to the situation being surveyed.

Words used in the scenarios may offer clues to the answers expected which may sway the respondents answer. Past historical experiences of the respondent may have an impact on how they view the scenario, i.e. by making the respondent biased towards a particular opinion due to comments about them on a social media page. This view is subjective and difficult to mitigate from a research instrument design point.

This study was only conducted within corporate medical companies in South Africa. Due to the significant reliance on corporate reputation for this sector of companies, there may be a higher level of awareness than in other companies of similar size in other industries. This may reduce the transference of the outcomes of this study to other smaller companies outside of this sector. This should be considered when the outcomes are used to drive further research.

4.7 In summary

This chapter detailed the research technique selection along with the methodology and test instrument used to gather data for this study, in order to test for the hypotheses set out in Chapter 3. The overview of the test instrument discussed the content and reasoning for each of the survey sections in the online questionnaire, as well as the reasoning for the use of scenarios as the main form of questioning. The statistical analyses conducted on the data were also discussed. Finally, limitations of the methodology were discussed.

The next chapter examines the results and statistical tests performed on the data.

Chapter 5: Results

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the methodology used to test the hypotheses set out in Chapter 3. In this chapter the results of the online survey, along with the statistical analyses performed on the data are illustrated. This data are analysed and discussed further in Chapter 6.

This research study aimed to determine if employees are aware that their actions in the public domain have an impact on corporate reputation. It also aimed to determine if there is a difference in understanding between managers and employees as to the types of behaviour that may have an impact on corporate reputation and what is seen to be acceptable in the public domain. The influence of psychological contract breach and its effect on willingness to post on social media was also explored. Lastly, this study examined how employees felt about their right to freedom of speech and opinion in the public domain, and whether they felt company policies on types of behaviour constitutes a breach of their personal rights.

These findings aimed to provide direction for future management decisions and communication strategies to guide employees on what behaviour is considered acceptable and its resultant impact on corporate reputation; in particular, the redefining of outdated policies which may not take into account the recent changes in the social media landscape.

Below is a summary of the responses to the online questionnaire.

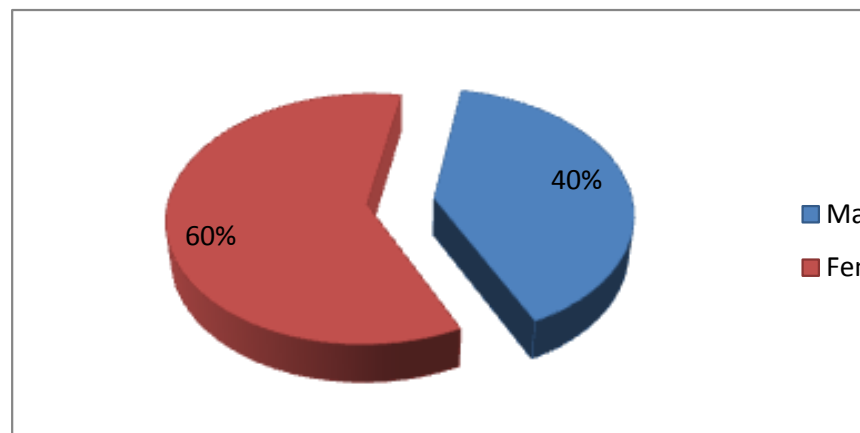
5.2 Respondent profile

Each of the 154 respondents was asked to complete a questionnaire on their level of agreement of certain comments and scenarios being posted on social media.

Ten respondents only answered the demographic questions and so were excluded from the analysis. Three of the remaining respondents did not complete the entire questionnaire, so only the sections answered were used for analysis. A total of 144 respondents' data was analysed in the opinion section of the results. Some 142 respondents' data was used for the section on psychological contract breach, and 141 for the awareness of impact on corporate reputation section. The response rate was calculated to be 58% of the total questionnaires sent out.

5.2.1 Gender

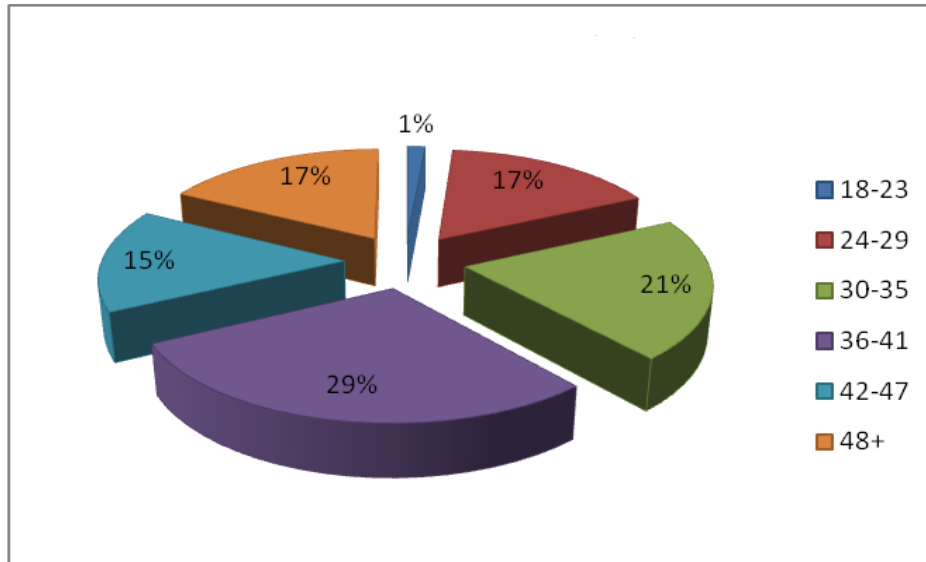
Figure 2: Gender of respondents



Sixty percent the total 145 respondents were female.

5.2.2 Age group of the respondents

Figure 3: Age of respondents

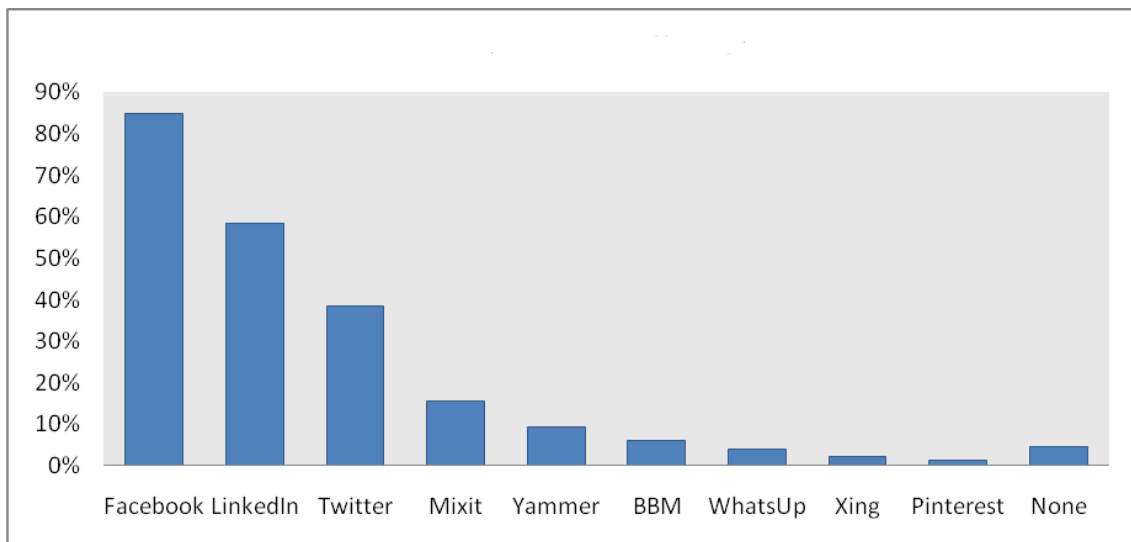


The age group with the highest number of respondents was in the 36-41 year old age group, with 29% of respondents, followed by the 30-35 year old age group with 21% of the respondents. Both the 24-29 age group and the 48+ age group each comprised 17% of the total respondents and 15% were from the 42-47 year old age group. The least amount of respondents were in the 18-23 year old age group with only 1% coming from this group.

5.2.3 Type and frequency of social media sites visited

There were a total of 337 active social media accounts being used by all the respondents. The below figure indicates the total accounts used. As some individuals have more than one account across different social media sites, the total is greater than the number of respondents. Some 99 of the respondents stated that they used more than one type of social media.

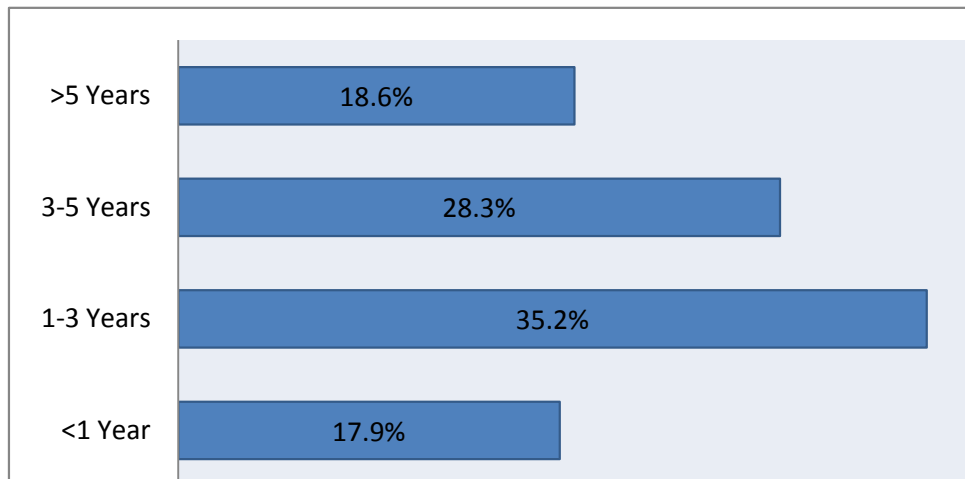
Figure 4: Social media sites used by respondents



The most popular social media site among the respondents was Facebook (85%), followed by LinkedIn at 58%, then Twitter at 38%. There were small proportions (5%) that were not using any social network. The results are illustrated above in Figure 5-3.

5.2.4 Length of time active on social media

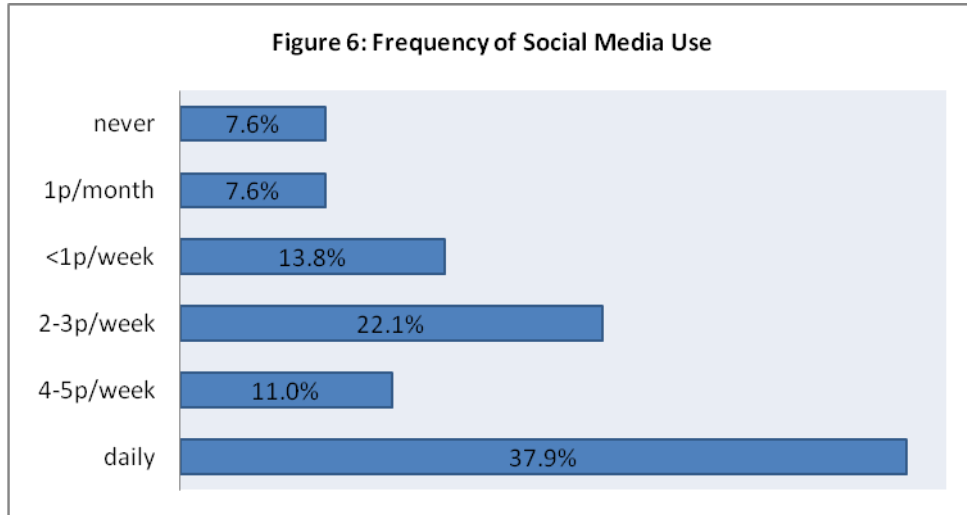
Figure 5: Length of time respondents have actively been using social media sites



Just fewer than 47% of respondents were active on social media for more than three years, and 18% of individuals have joined social media sites in the past 12 months.

5.2.5 Frequency of Social media use

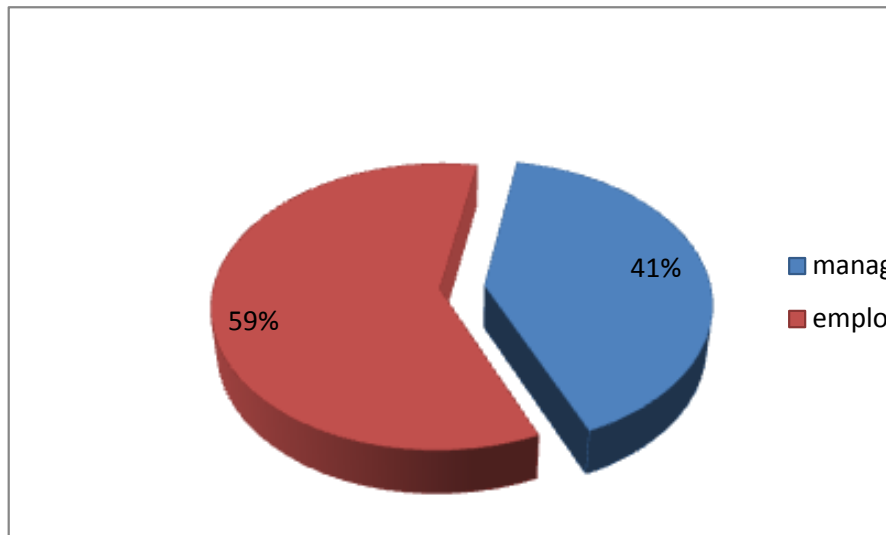
Figure 6: Frequency of social media use



Slightly more than 50% of the respondents visit social media sites four or more times per week, with 37% visiting their accounts daily.

5.2.6 Current role

Figure 7: Current role



A total of 41 % of respondents were managers with at least one direct report. For the purposes of this study, the term “manager” was defined as per the description given in the South African Basic Conditions Of Employment Act of 1997 as “an employee who has the authority to hire, discipline and dismiss employees and to represent the employer internally and externally” (Basic Conditions Of Employment Act, 1997:6).

All other employees falling outside of the above definition were considered to be an “individual contributor” or “employee”.

5.3 Hypothesis 1

H 1: Managers are more aware than employees of how their behaviour and comments impact corporate reputation.

The null hypothesis stated there was no difference in the awareness between managers and employees of how their behaviour and comments impacted corporate reputation.

5.3.1 General

The respondents were asked to express their awareness of their impact on corporate reputation on the Likert scale. The Likert scale ranged from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree.

Test for normality

Before the hypothesis was tested, a normality test was conducted to assess whether the variables measuring awareness on how individual behaviours and comments impact corporate reputation followed a normal distribution. The test used was the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and it enables the user to compare two samples, in this case the test sample to a normal distribution set (Gardener, 2012). This technique was chosen as it was necessary to test for normality to determine if a parametric or non-parametric test was to be used for the comparison groups.

Seigal (1957) states that a non-parametric statistical test should be used when no assumptions can be made about the distribution of the sample; i.e. that it does not follow a normal distribution. The One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was used as a means for testing whether the set of observations are from the normal population by being compared to values from a table (Lilliefors, 1967).

The results for the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test on statements that measure awareness on how individual behaviour and comments impact corporate reputation

	N	Normal Parameters		Most Extreme Differences			Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	P Value
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Absolute	Positive	Negative		
Every employee of a company can contribute to its reputation.	141	4.553	0.659	0.375	0.249	-0.375	4.455	0.000
I know how I can influence my company's reputation.	141	4.248	0.776	0.247	0.214	-0.247	2.931	0.000
What I personally do is important for the reputation of my company.	141	4.050	0.959	0.288	0.173	-0.288	3.418	0.000
I personally feel like an ambassador of my company.	141	4.248	0.748	0.247	0.226	-0.247	2.931	0.000
I personally feel responsible for my company's reputation.	141	4.007	0.914	0.234	0.163	-0.234	2.784	0.000

The p-values for the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Tests were all less than 0.05 for all the statements and indicate that the variables do not follow a normal distribution. Thus further analysis was carried out using non-parametric methods (Seigal, 1957).

5.3.2 According to current role (manager vs. employee)

The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to assess whether there was a difference in the rating of the statements on awareness of how individual behaviour and comments impact corporate reputation by management verses employees. This test was used as it is the non-parametric counterpart of the t-test which can be used to compare the medians of two different populations when the data is not normally distributed (Black, 2011).

H0: The null hypothesis was that the medians of the statements are equal for both employees and management.

H1: The alternative hypothesis was that the management and employees had different medians.

The results for the Mann-Whitney U Test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mann-Whitney U Test: Comparison of the mean rank values on statements on awareness on how individual behaviour and comments impact corporate reputation by current role (manager vs. employee)

	Current Role	N	Mean Rank Analysis		
			Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	
Every employee of a company can contribute to its reputation.	A Manager with at least one direct report	58	75.90	4402.00	
	An employee with no direct reports	83	67.58	5609.00	
	Total	141			
I know how I can influence my company's reputation.	A Manager with at least one direct report	58	73.54	4265.50	
	An employee with no direct reports	83	69.22	5745.50	
	Total	141			
What I personally do is important for the reputation of my company.	A Manager with at least one direct report	58	75.85	4399.50	
	An employee with no direct reports	83	67.61	5611.50	
	Total	141			
I personally feel like an ambassador of my company.	A Manager with at least one direct report	58	76.34	4428.00	
	An employee with no direct reports	83	67.27	5583.00	
	Total	141			
I personally feel responsible for my company's reputation.	A Manager with at least one direct report	58	75.35	4370.50	
	An employee with no direct reports	83	67.96	5640.50	
	Total	141			
		Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	P-value
Test Statistics	Every employee of a company can contribute to its reputation.	2123	5609	-1.398	0.162
	I know how I can influence my company's reputation.	2259.5	5745.5	-0.678	0.498
	What I personally do is important for the reputation of my company.	2125.5	5611.5	-1.273	0.203
	I personally feel like an ambassador of my company.	2097	5583	-1.422	0.155
	I personally feel responsible for my company's reputation.	2154.5	5640.5	-1.121	0.262

The results indicate that there was no significant difference between the scores of management from those of employees in all the statements since the p-values are all greater than 0.05 (the significance level). The evidence fails to reject the null hypothesis. It can thus be concluded that both managers and employees are equally aware of how their individual behaviour and comments impacts corporate reputation.

5.4 Hypothesis 2

H2: Managers and employees have a difference in opinion as to what is acceptable to post in the public domain that may impact on corporate reputation.

The null hypothesis stated that there were no differences between managers and employees' opinions as to what is acceptable to post in the public domain that may impact on corporate reputation.

5.4.1 General

This hypothesis was tested using two sections of the online questionnaire:

Section A: The respondents were asked to rate the acceptability of placing each of the topics listed in Table 3 below on social media. The rating was on the Likert scale ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree.

H0: The null hypothesis was that the medians of the statements are equal for both employees and management.

H2: The alternative hypothesis was that the management and employees had different medians.

Section B: To further clarify some of the topics in this section, scenarios were used to determine the difference in opinions of managers versus employees as to their level of agreement on what is acceptable to place in the public domain (Table 5). This was also tested using the five point Likert scale.

H0: The null hypothesis was that the medians of the statements are equal for both employees and management.

H1: The alternative hypothesis was that the management and employees had different medians.

5.4.2 Section A

Test for normality

Before the hypothesis was tested, a normality test was again conducted using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine whether the variables measuring feelings on what is acceptable to place in the public domain followed a normal distribution (Gardener, 2012). Seigal (1957) states that a non-parametric statistical test should be used when no assumptions can be made about the distribution of the sample; i.e. that it does not follow a normal distribution.

The results for the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for feelings on what is acceptable to place in the public domain

	N	R A N K	Normal Parameters		Most Extreme Differences			Kolmogorov- Smirnov Z	P Value
			Mean	Std. Deviation	Absolute	Positive	Negative		
Birth of a child	144	2	3.583	1.168	0.264	0.159	-0.264	3.173	0.000
A sore head from last night's party	144	5	2.097	1.099	0.237	0.237	-0.159	2.842	0.000
Engagement/marriage	144	1	3.986	0.893	0.312	0.223	-0.312	3.741	0.000
Illness	144	3	2.431	1.062	0.218	0.171	-0.218	2.616	0.000
Encounter with the law	144	6	1.938	0.991	0.258	0.258	-0.172	3.102	0.000
Pictures showing yourself at a friend's bachelors/hen night party	144	4	2.306	1.166	0.223	0.223	-0.183	2.672	0.000
Disagreement with a manager	144	10	1.264	0.648	0.471	0.471	-0.342	5.648	0.000
Sexual harassment	144	8	1.646	1.080	0.399	0.399	-0.275	4.783	0.000
Poor working conditions	144	7	1.729	1.053	0.332	0.332	-0.244	3.986	0.000
Your manager did not keep a verbal agreement to give you a raise	144	9	1.465	0.884	0.423	0.423	-0.299	5.074	0.000

The p-values for the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Tests were less than 0.05 for all the statements and thus the variables do not follow a normal distribution. It was therefore necessary to perform further analyses through the use of non-parametric methods.

5.4.3 According to current role (manager or employee)

The Mann-Whitney U Test was again used to assess whether there was a difference in the rating of the statements on the feelings on what is acceptable to place in the public domain by management verses employees. This test was chosen due to the hypothesis stating that there was a difference in the medians of the two non-normally distributed groups and the fact that the data did not follow a normal distribution (Black, 2011).

HO: The null hypothesis was that the medians of the statements are equal for both employees and management.

H2: The alternative hypothesis was that the management and employees had different medians.

The results of the Mann- Whitney U test are set out in table 4 below.

Table 4: Mann-Whitney U Test: Comparison of the mean rank values by current role for the manager verses the employee

Ranks				
	Current Role	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Birth of a child	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	74.86	4417.00
	An employee with no direct reports	85	70.86	6023.00
	Total	144		
A sore head from last night's party	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	64.19	3787.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	78.26	6652.50
	Total	144		
Engagement/marriage	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	68.69	4052.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	75.15	6387.50
	Total	144		
Illness	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	64.54	3808.00
	An employee with no direct reports	85	78.02	6632.00
	Total	144		
Encounter with the law	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	62.84	3707.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	79.21	6732.50
	Total	144		
Pictures showing yourself at a friend's bachelors/hen night party	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	65.12	3842.00
	An employee with no direct reports	85	77.62	6598.00
	Total	144		
Disagreement with a manager	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	67.13	3960.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	76.23	6479.50
	Total	144		
Sexual harassment	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	63.30	3734.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	78.89	6705.50
	Total	144		
Poor working conditions	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	64.45	3802.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	78.09	6637.50
	Total	144		
Your manager did not keep a verbal agreement to give you a raise	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	65.87	3886.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	77.10	6553.50
	Total	144		

Table 5: Mann-Whitney U Test: Significance levels of the comparison of the mean rank values by current role for the manager verses the employee.

	R A N K		Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	P value
Test Statistics	2	Birth of a child	2368	6023	-0.597	0.550
	5	A sore head from last night's party	2017.5	3787.5	-2.087	0.037
	1	Engagement/marriage	2282.5	4052.5	-1.006	0.314
	3	Illness	2038	3808	-1.997	0.046
	6	Encounter with the law	1937.5	3707.5	-2.458	0.014
	4	Pictures showing yourself at a friend's bachelors/hen night party	2072	3842	-1.841	0.066
	10	Disagreement with a manager	2190.5	3960.5	-1.897	0.058
	8	Sexual harassment	1964.5	3734.5	-2.655	0.008
	7	Poor working conditions	2032.5	3802.5	-2.165	0.030
	9	Your manager did not keep a verbal agreement to give you a raise	2116.5	3886.5	-2.018	0.044

The results indicate that there is a significant difference between the scores of management from those of employees in the following statements:

- “A sore head from last night’s party”, (Mean Rank for Management = 64.19 and 78.26 for employees, $U = 3787.5$, $p < 0.05$).
- “Illness”, (Mean Rank for Management = 64.54 and 78.02 for employees, $U = 3808$, $p < 0.05$).
- “Encounter with the law”, (Mean Rank for Management = 62.84 and 79.21 for employees, $U = 3734.5$, $p < 0.05$).
- “Sexual harassment”, (Mean Rank for Management = 63.30 and 78.89 for employees, $U = 3787.5$, $p < 0.05$).
- “Poor working conditions”, (Mean Rank for Management = 64.45 and 78.09 for employees, $U = 3802.5$, $p < 0.05$), and
- “Your manager did not keep a verbal agreement to give you a raise”, (Mean Rank for Management = 65.87 and 77.10 for employees, $U = 3886.5$, $p < 0.05$).
- Employees agree more with the above statements when compared to the managers.

There is evidence to reject the null hypothesis for the topics:

- “A sore head from last night’s party”,
- “Illness”,
- “Encounter with the law”,
- “Sexual harassment”,
- “Poor working conditions”
- “Your manager did not keep a verbal agreement to give you a raise”.

The evidence fails to reject the null hypothesis for the rest of the topics:

No significant difference was found on the below topics since the p-values of the Mann-Whitney U were greater than 0.05 (the significance level).

- “Birth of a child”,
- “Engagement/marriage”,
- “Pictures showing yourself at a friend’s bachelors/hen night party”, and
- “Disagreement with a manager”.

5.4.4 Section B

Test for normality

Before the hypothesis was tested, the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was again used to test for normality and to assess whether the variables measuring the opinions on scenarios regarding posts social media are acceptable to place in the public domain follow a normal distribution (Gardener, 2012).

The results for the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for Opinions on posting comments on social media around work related scenarios

	N	Normal Parameters		Most Extreme Differences			Kolmogoro v-Smirnov Z	P Value
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Absolute	Positive	Negative		
Brian had a bad day at work and was reprimanded by his manager for poor performance in a meeting. He feels annoyed and shares his heated opinion of his manager's management style in an unflattering post on Facebook.	144	1.299	0.659	0.466	0.466	-0.325	5.596	0.000
Jane comes to work with a hangover. She posts on social media how her head hurts and how she can't wait for the work day to end so she can go home and to bed.	144	1.646	0.823	0.339	0.339	-0.216	4.070	0.000
Naomi has a disagreement with a colleague over how the budget for the upcoming corporate fun day should be spent. She posts that she feels she works in a "place full of idiots" to her Facebook friends	144	1.410	0.723	0.423	0.423	-0.286	5.073	0.000
Heathers job often requires she spend longs hours at the office working with her manager. He has made sexual advances which have made her feel very uncomfortable. She posts on social media that she feels threatened by the managers advances identifying him by name	144	1.549	0.995	0.404	0.404	-0.291	4.844	0.000
The photo copy machine in marketing has stopped working again for the 4th time this month. Gemma posts on her personal social media site that "nothing works in this place and no one seems to care if it does anyway"	144	1.611	0.820	0.327	0.327	-0.228	3.929	0.000

The p-values for the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Tests were less than 0.05 for all the statements and thus the variables do not follow a normal distribution. Thus further analysis was carried out using non-parametric methods (Seigal, 1957).

5.4.5 According to current role (manager or employee)

The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to assess whether there was a difference in the rating of the statements on the opinions of respondents on posting comments on social media around work related scenarios for the manager verses employee. Due to the non-normally distributed nature of the sample data, this non-parametric test is needed at the t-test requires a normally distributed sample to be accurate (Black, 2011).

H0: The null hypothesis was that the medians of the statements are equal for both employees and management.

H1: The alternative hypothesis was that the management and employees had different medians.

Table 7: Mann-Whitney U Test: Comparison of the mean rank values on opinions of respondents on posting comments on social media around work related scenarios for manager verses employee

Ranks				
	Current Role	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Brian had a bad day at work and was reprimanded by his manager for poor performance in a meeting. He feels annoyed and shares his heated opinion of his manager's management style in an unflattering post on Facebook.	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	64.31	3794.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	78.18	6645.50
	Total	144		
Jane comes to work with a hangover. She posts on social media how her head hurts and how she can't wait for the work day to end so she can go home and to bed.	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	63.79	3763.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	78.55	6676.50
	Total	144		
Naomi has a disagreement with a colleague over how the budget for the upcoming corporate fun day should be spent. She posts that she feels she works in a "place full of idiots" to her Facebook friends	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	62.52	3688.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	79.43	6751.50
	Total	144		
Heathers job often requires she spend longs hours at the office working with her manager. He has made sexual advances which have made her very feel uncomfortable. She posts on social media that she feels be threatened by the managers advances identifying	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	63.01	3717.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	79.09	6722.50
	Total	144		
The photo copy machine in marketing has stopped working again for the 4th time this month. Gemma posts on her personal social media site that "nothing works in this place and no one seems to care if it does anyway"	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	60.72	3582.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	80.68	6857.50
	Total	144		

Table 8: Mann-Whitney U Test: Significance levels of the comparison of the mean rank values on opinions of respondents on posting comments on social media around work related scenarios for manager verses employee

		Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	P Value
Test Statistics	Brian had a bad day at work and was reprimanded by his manager for poor performance in a meeting. He feels annoyed and shares his heated opinion of his manager's management style in an unflattering post on Facebook.	2024.5	3794.5	-2.772	0.006
	Jane comes to work with a hangover. She posts on social media how her head hurts and how she can't wait for the work day to end so she can go home and to bed.	1993.5	3763.5	-2.326	0.020
	Naomi has a disagreement with a colleague over how the budget for the upcoming corporate fun day should be spent. She posts that she feels she works in a "place full of idiots" to her Facebook friends	1918.5	3688.5	-2.998	0.003
	Heathers job often requires she spend longs hours at the office working with her manager. He has made sexual advances which have made her very feel uncomfortable. She posts on social media that she feels be threatened by the managers advances identifying	1947.5	3717.5	-2.799	0.005
	The photo copy machine in marketing has stopped working again for the 4th time this month. Gemma posts on her personal social media site that "nothing works in this place and no one seems to care if it does anyway"	1812.5	3582.5	-3.166	0.002

The results indicate that there is a significant difference between the scores of management from those of employees in all the statements since the p-values are all less than 0.05 (the significance level). It can be noted from the mean ranks, that all the mean ranks for employees were higher than those for management. Thus the employees tend to agree more with the statements than management. There is evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

5.5 Hypothesis 3

H3: A breach in the employee-employer psychological contract results in employee's willingness to post more sensitive information in the public domain.

The null hypothesis states that there is no difference in the employee's willingness to post more sensitive information in the public domain in the case of a breach in the employee-employer psychological contract.

5.5.1 General

For each of the psychological contract breach scenarios in hypothesis three, respondents were asked to indicate on the Likert scale their level of agreement with the individual's actions of posting their comments on their personal social media pages in response to an implied psychological contract breach with their employer.

Test for normality

Before the hypothesis was tested, a normality test was conducted to assess whether the variables measuring the psychological contract breach followed a normal distribution. Seigal (1957) states that a non-parametric test needs to be used if the data does not follow a normal distribution. The results for the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test enable two distributions to be compared to determine if the distribution is normal in nature (Gardner, 2012). The results of this test are presented in Table 9.

Table 9: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test statements on the opinions on posting comments on social media around work related scenarios in the presence of an implied psychological contract breach.

	N	Normal Parameters		Most Extreme Differences			Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	P Value
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Absolute	Positive	Negative		
Chris was promised a raise, but now it has been declined with no response to the reason why. He posts on his social media site that he thinks the company is going under as they can't afford to give him his deserved raise.	144	1.382	0.739	0.427	0.427	-0.303	5.120	0.000
When Linda starts a new job she asks for study leave to enable her to complete her studies. After a few months her manager insists she attend a meeting which falls on one of the dates she needs to be in class. Linda reacts by posting on her personal social media page that now she will be behind schedule in her studies and that her company doesn't stick to their promises.	144	1.646	0.942	0.337	0.337	-0.247	4.042	0.000
Max becomes aware of a top manager in his company who embellished large sums of money from the business resulting in the yearly employee bonus- including his, not being paid. He takes to his personal social media page to express his anger in the mismanagement and theft in the business.	144	1.535	0.908	0.375	0.375	-0.278	4.498	0.000
Samantha started a new job at a small promotions company owned by a friend. She was under the impression she was going to handle the sales side of the business, but is now doing administrative work which she loathes. She tweets that this is the most boring company she has ever worked for and they don't follow through on agreements.	144	1.549	0.801	0.358	0.358	-0.247	4.291	0.000

The p-values for the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Tests were all less than 0.05 for all the statements and thus the variables do not follow a normal distribution. Thus further analysis was carried out using non-parametric methods.

5.5.2 According to current role (manager vs. employee)

The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to assess whether there was a difference in the rating of the statements on psychological contract breach of management against the rating of employees. This parametric test is the right choice for this data as they do not follow a normal distribution and so require a non-parametric test to assess the hypothesis (Black, 2011).

H0: The null hypothesis was that the medians of the statements are equal for both employees and management.

H1: The alternative hypothesis was that the management and employees had different medians.

The results of the test are presented in table 10.

Table 10: Mann-Whitney U Test: Comparison of the mean rank values of statements on the opinions of posting comments on social media around work related scenarios in the presence of an implied psychological contract breach for the manager verse employee

Ranks				
	Current Role	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Chris was promised a raise, but now it has been declined with no response to the reason why. He posts on his social media site that he thinks the company is going under as they can't afford to give him his deserved raise.	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	66.53	3925.00
	An employee with no direct reports	85	76.65	6515.00
	Total	144		
When Linda starts a new job she asks for study leave to enable her to complete her studies. After a few months her manager insists she attend a meeting which falls on one of the dates she needs to be in class. Linda reacts by posting on her personal social media page that now she will be behind schedule in her studies and that her company doesn't stick to their promises.	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	65.43	3860.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	77.41	6579.50
	Total	144		
Max becomes aware of a top manager in his company who embellished large sums of money from the business resulting in the yearly employee bonus-including his, not being paid. He takes to his personal social media page to express his anger in the mismanagement and theft in the business.	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	66.65	3932.50
	An employee with no direct reports	85	76.56	6507.50
	Total	144		
Samantha started a new job at a small promotions company owned by a friend. She was under the impression she was going to handle the sales side of the business, but is now doing administrative work which she loathes. She tweets that this is the most boring company she has ever worked for and they don't follow through on agreements.	A Manager with at least one direct report	59	65.69	3876.00
	An employee with no direct reports	85	77.22	6564.00
	Total	144		

Table 11: Mann-Whitney U Test: Significance levels of the comparison of the mean rank values of statements on the opinions of posting comments on social media around work related scenarios in the presence of an implied psychological contract breach for the manager verse employee

		Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	P value
Test Statistics	Chris was promised a raise, but now it has been declined with no response to the reason why. He posts on his social media site that he thinks the company is going under as they can't afford to give him his deserved raise.	2155	3925	-1.841	0.066
	When Linda starts a new job she asks for study leave to enable her to complete her studies. After a few months her manager insists she attend a meeting which falls on one of the dates she needs to be in class. Linda reacts by posting on her personal social media page that now she will be behind schedule in her studies and that her company doesn't stick to their promises.	2090.5	3860.5	-1.917	0.055
	Max becomes aware of a top manager in his company who embellished large sums of money from the business resulting in the yearly employee bonus- including his, not being paid. He takes to his personal social media page to express his anger in the mismanagement and theft in the business.	2162.5	3932.5	-1.665	0.096
	Samantha started a new job at a small promotions company owned by a friend. She was under the impression she was going to handle the sales side of the business, but is now doing administrative work which she loathes. She tweets that this is the most boring company she has ever worked for and they don't follow through on agreements.	2106	3876	-1.876	0.061

The results indicate that there is no significant difference between the scores of management from those of employees in all the statements since the p-values are all greater than 0.05 (the significance level). The evidence fails to reject the null hypothesis.

It can thus be concluded that the views of the management and employees do not differ when it comes to willingness to post sensitive information in the public domain in situations of breach of the employee-employer psychological contract.

5.6 Hypothesis 4

H4: Employees feel that being prohibited from posting certain information in the public domain is an infringement on their personal rights to the freedom of opinion and expression.

The null hypothesis states that employees do not feel that being prohibited from posting certain information in the public domain is an infringement on their personal rights to the freedom of opinion and expression.

5.6.1 General

For each of the following “personal rights to freedom of speech” statements respondents were asked to express their level of agreement about the individual’s right to post their feelings on their personal social media pages. This was done using the Likert scale ranging from 1 –strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree.

The data was reported in a frequency table which indicates the number of respondents at each level of agreement on the Likert scale. This was to enable the reporting of the percentage of the respondents who agreed or disagreed with the statement on opinions on infringement of personal rights to freedom of speech. The mean and standard deviations of the responses are detailed in Table 12.

Test for normality

Before the hypothesis was tested, the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was again used to test for normality and to assess whether the variables measuring the opinions on infringement of personal rights to freedom of speech followed a normal distribution (Gardener, 2012).

The results for the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test are presented in Table 12.

Table 12: One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test statements on opinions on infringement of personal rights to freedom of speech

	N	Normal Parameters		Most Extreme Differences			Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	P Value
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Absolute	Positive	Negative		
I feel I have the right to post my personal positive opinions of my manager or employees on my personal Facebook profile	142	2.099	1.222	0.252	0.252	-0.184	3.006	0.000
I feel I have the right to post my personal negative opinions of my manager or employees on my personal Facebook profile	142	1.549	0.804	0.358	0.358	-0.247	4.271	0.000
I feel I have the right to expose illegal or immoral activities in the workplace on my Facebook or online social media page.	142	1.613	0.937	0.356	0.356	-0.257	4.244	0.000
I feel that my personal opinion on my Facebook profile should not be a topic for discussion with my manager or employees	142	2.810	1.506	0.198	0.198	-0.187	2.354	0.000
I would view company censorship of what I post on my personal social media page as an infringement on my personal rights.	142	2.880	1.466	0.163	0.163	-0.158	1.937	0.001

The p-values for the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Tests were all less than 0.05 for all the statements and thus the variables do not follow a normal distribution. Thus further analysis was carried out using non-parametric methods (Black, 2011).

5.6.2 *Test for significance from the median*

The one sample Wilcoxon U-Test (Mann-Whitney) was then used, as it is a non-parametric one sample t-test to determine a difference in the data from a predefined population (Gardner, 2012).

H0: The null hypothesis was that the medians of the statements are equal for both test group and the known population.

H1: The alternative hypothesis was that the test group and known population had different medians.

The results of the one sample Wilcoxon U-Test are presented in Table 13:

Table 13: One sample Wilcoxon U-Test for statements on opinions on infringement of personal rights to freedom of speech

	N	Scale Rating					Observed Median	Standard error	Standardised Test Statistic	P Value
		1	2	3	4	5				
Personal positive opinions about manager or employees on social media.	142	44%	25%	14%	13%	4%	2.00	378.626	-7.126	0.000
Personal negative opinions about manager or employees on social media.	142	61%	28%	7%	4%	0%	1.00	422.577	-10.053	0.000
Exposing illegal or immoral activities in the workplace on social media	142	61%	25%	6%	7%	1%	1.00	426.822	-9.690	0.000
Personal opinion on social media not a topic for discussion with manager or employees	142	28%	21%	11%	22%	18%	3.00	402.498	-1.605	0.108
Viewing company censorship of postings on personal social media website as infringements of personal rights.	142	25.3%	18.3%	18.3%	19%	19%	3.00	351.359	-1.050	0.294

There is evidence to reject the null hypothesis on three of the five statements on rights to freedom of speech. The results indicate that there is a significant difference in the test group medians on the topics of posting both negative and positive comments around opinions of their manager or employees on their personal social media site and the exposing of illegal or immoral activities on social media. The assumed median used for the test was the neutral rating on the Likert scale of three. The median is significantly different from the midpoint of the scale (3) since the p-values of 0.000 are less than 0.05 (significance level). This means that most respondents disagreed with the statements.

There is evidence to accept the null hypotheses for individuals' feelings regarding their Facebook profile being a discussion with their manager and their view of censorship of their personal postings as an infringement of their personal rights. The median is not significantly different from the midpoint of the scale (3) since the p-values of 0.108 and 0.294 are greater than 0.05 (significance level). This means that most respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

5.7 Companies with social media policies

Table 14: Table indicating the number of companies in the survey who had a social media policy document

Total companies	No of companies that have an existing social media policy in place	%
10	2	20%

Only two companies surveyed had a specific social media policy that referred to the media by name. Although this is a small sample size, this is in contrast to the 29.3% reported in the study by Verhoevena, Tenchb, Zeffassc, Morenod, Ver~ci~ (2012), indicating that South Africa may not have as many company regulations in place as the European countries.

5.8 Conclusion

Hypothesis 1 stated that that managers are more aware than employees of how their behaviour and comments impact corporate reputation. The evidence failed to reject the null hypothesis and so there is no evidence to suggest that managers are more aware of their impact on corporate reputation than employees.

Hypothesis 2 stated that managers and employees have a difference in opinion as to what is acceptable to post in the public domain that may impact on corporate reputation. There is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis in this case, indicating that levels of agreement on certain topics are different between managers and employees.

Hypothesis 3 stated that a breach in the employee-employer psychological contract results in employees' willingness to post more sensitive information in the public domain. The evidence fails to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that managers and employees have similar opinions on the statements around psychological contract breach being unacceptable to post in the social domain.

Hypothesis four stated that employees feel that being prohibited from posting certain information in the public domain is an infringement on their personal rights to the freedom of opinion and expression. Within the employee and manager group, most respondents found it unacceptable to post either negative or positive comments around opinions of their manager or employees on their personal social media site. The exposing of illegal or immoral activities on social media was also found to be unacceptable. However, both managers and employees felt undecided about the individual's Facebook profile being discussed with their manager and whether policies governing their personal postings on social media constituted an infringement on their personal rights.

South African companies in the survey had a lower percentage than European companies of social media policies (20% versus 29.3%) in place offering direction on employee comments and behaviour in the social media environment.

This chapter examined the results from the survey. The next chapter offers analyses and interpretations of the results to provide insight into the research questions in Chapter 3.

Chapter 6: Discussion and analysis

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the results of the online survey were stated and statistical analyses was performed to determine a difference in the level of agreement between managers and employees on statements regarding posting comments on social media sites. The purpose of this chapter is to interpret these results and draw conclusions that offer insight into the hypotheses stated in Chapter 3. This chapter consists of six parts which examine a review the demographics of the respondents, each of the four hypotheses, and then the final question regarding company social media policies is explored.

The aim of this study was to determine if employees are aware that their actions in the public domain have an impact on the corporate reputation of a business. It also aimed to determine if there was a difference in understanding between managers and employees as to the types of behaviour that may have an impact on corporate reputation and what is seen to be acceptable in the public domain. The study examined psychological contract breach and if it affects the level of agreement between manager and employees to comments being placed on social media. Lastly this study examined how employees felt about their right to freedom of speech and opinion in the public domain, and whether they felt company policies on types of behaviour constitutes a breach in their personal rights to freedom of speech and privacy.

These findings aim to provide direction for future management decisions and communication strategies to guide employees on what behaviour is considered acceptable and its resultant impact on corporate reputation; in particular the redefining of outdated media policies which may not take into account the recent changes in the social landscape such as the Internet and social media.

6.2 Demographics

Each of 154 respondents was asked to complete a questionnaire on their level of agreement of certain comments and scenarios being posted on social media. Ten respondents only answered the demographic questions and so were excluded from the analysis. Three of the remaining respondents did not complete the entire questionnaire, so only the sections answered were used for analysis. A total of 144 respondent's data were analysed in the opinion section of the results. Some 142 respondents' data were used for the section on psychological contract breach and 141 for the awareness of impact on corporate reputation section.

Sufficient responses were received to perform statistical analyses on the data. All respondents were from identified companies operating in South Africa who rely on corporate reputation as a competitive advantage. In the case of multinational companies, all respondents were from the South African operation of the business.

The highest number of responses came from females; i.e. of 60% of all respondents (Figure 2). This could be due to the uneven distribution of woman in the companies that were surveyed and may lead to some bias in the responses to the scenarios; in particular the responses for the scenarios that included a female character and sensitive issues such as sexual harassment in the workplace.

The respondent age profile was widespread. The largest group of respondents came from the 30-41 years age group, making up half (50%) of the total responses (Figure 3). It could be assumed that due to the highly skilled environment that the survey was conducted, a high percentage of employees in this environment have at least an undergraduate degree, increasing the average age of employees within the companies. In this study the younger age group of 18-23 was only 1%, and so not effectively represented, and this may limit the transference of the outcomes of this study to other industries outside of the industry surveyed that may have an overall younger workforce.

A large portion of the respondents, 99 in total, indicated that they were active on more than one social media site (Figure 4). The different personalities of the different social media sites offer the member different benefits to subscribe to these sites. It was discussed in the literature review that individuals have only one personality (ego) online that is broadcast to the online media versus the off line ego which can be altered by the individual to the audience they are interacting with (Tennie, Frith & Frith, 2010; Rhee, Sanders & Simpson, 2010). By managing an individual's online personalities via different social media sites, employees and managers are able to determine who sees which elements of the individual personalities. It is possible for employees to have a Facebook profile for personal friends and family and have a LinkedIn account for their professional career where they manage their online personality through the networks they form.

Social media is relatively new amongst the respondents, with only 19% of respondents using it for more than five years (Figure 5). Just under a fifth (18%) of respondents signed up in the past year; leaving the remaining respondents (63%) with 1-5 years' experience in using social media. Employers may be surprised to see that 38% of their employees are accessing social media on a daily basis (Figure 6). Some 71% of all managers and employees are accessing social media at least 2-3 times per week. The literature has shown that people often post what is on their minds (Vallor, 2011) and if a frustration at work is what they are thinking about when logging into their Facebook account they may post comments about the situation. This makes it important for employers to be aware that their employees are contributing to online communities and this may be done sitting at their desks during working hours.

A large proportion (59%) of respondents comprised employees without direct reports (Figure 7). The remaining 40% were managers who had at least one direct report. This criterion was selected as managers are responsible for the actions of their employees and so are held responsible for not only their own actions, but the actions of their employees. By comparing what managers and employees felt to be appropriate, this would indicate either a disconnect or an alignment of the two groups in understanding what is acceptable in the public domain.

6.3 Discussion of hypothesis 1

H 1: Managers are more aware than individual contributors of how their behaviour and comments impact corporate reputation.

6.3.1 General

The awareness of an individual of their impact on corporate reputation may affect the way in which he/she conducts herself in the public environment. Helm (2010) indicates that any activity that an employee undertakes or communicates in the presence of an external stakeholder has an impact on the corporate reputation, whether it is directly or indirectly, voluntarily or involuntary related. So an individual's awareness of their impact aids companies in building brand ambassadors for their reputation through ensuring their employees are aware of their actions. Sharma and Kamalanabhan (2012) conclude that the best way to do this is through an internal communication campaign to ensure employees are aware of their impact.

Managers and employees who responded to the study, on average, agreed with all the statements around their impact on the corporate reputation of the business (Table 1, $m= 4.007-4.553$). This finding is a positive indication that all respondents within the 10 companies surveyed are aware that employees in general can have an impact on the reputation of the business and that it is not just a management role to ensure this intangible asset is nurtured. Employees understand that their impact on corporate reputation is a key element in the building the reputation of the business, as Aula (2010:38) states that reputation should be understood as "interpretations among stakeholders of their stories, anecdotes and other discursive elements about the organisation".

Both managers and employees understood, through strongly agreeing, that they can influence their company's reputation (Table 1: $m=4.248$, $SD= 0.776$). There was no significant evidence to suggest that there was a difference in the opinions between managers and employees (Table 2, $P=0.162$).

This awareness may be the first step in developing “brand ambassadors” for the companies they work for (Alsop, 2011:50; Gotsi & Wilson, 2010:100). A brand ambassador has the opportunity to develop external stakeholders’ perceptions of the business through the sharing of their own positive personal experiences with them, as the literature pointed out that a referral from an employee is more likely to be considered versus a media referral in the form of an advert or editorial (Alsop, 2011).

All respondents also understand that what they “personally do” has an impact on the reputation of the business ($m=4.050$, $SD=0.959$), and there was again no sufficient evidence to suggest that managers and employees had a difference in opinion (Table 2, $P=0.203$). What was concerning for the employer through, is that there was a large percentage of individuals (26%) who felt neutral or disagreed with the statement that they do not “personally feel responsible” for the reputation of their employer. These individuals may result in the disconnect that Vercic and Vercic (2007) refer to as the gaps in the reputation of the business that reduce the ability of the company to use the corporate reputation as a sustained competitive advantage over time.

This statement was important to include in the survey, as Grimmellman (2009) suggests that individuals that contribute to social media may feel that the content they put in the social domain will not be picked up, due to the vast volume of producers on line and so it is relatively anonymous. But if the individual understood that their personal actions and behaviours impact the reputation of the business they work for, they may reconsider their content before posting it in the public domain.

Managers and employees also agreed that they personally felt like an ambassador for their company (Table 1, $m=4.248$, $SD= 0.748$) and that they personally felt a responsibility for the reputation of the company that they work for ($m=4.007$, $SD=0.914$). In both of these statements there was no difference in the level of agreement between the managers and the employees, indicating that both managers and employees are equally aware of how their personal actions and behaviours in the public domain can have an impact on the corporate reputation of the business (table 2: $p= 0.155$; $p=0.262$).

The researcher's anticipated outcome was that the managers would be more aware of their impact on corporate reputation than the employees, as it is the responsibility of the manager to offer direction and guide the actions and behaviours of the employee in the work environment.

By paying attention to these actions on a daily basis, and the outcomes, it was expected that managers would be more aware of how said actions impact corporate reputations. A possible reason for the outcome of this section of the study may be that the sample group were from companies in the medical field, and in recent years there has been wide publication in the general and online media of managers and employees from international head offices taking part in unlawful or questionable activities such as bribery of medical professionals to prescribe certain products. This may have prompted these companies to train their managers and employees on their individual impact on corporate reputation, thus making them more aware than other industries. On the other hand, employees are individual contributors and only have responsibility for their own actions in the workplace.

The evidence suggests that there is no difference in the awareness of managers versus employees. Employees need to be aware that it is their actions in all aspects of their public life that customers or other competitor companies may witness, which may impact on corporate reputation. This is especially important for service-based companies where the interaction of the customer with the employee forms the reality of the firm for the customer (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001). The types of social media that an individual subscribes to may also provide insight into their awareness of their impact on corporate reputation. This could be an opportunity for future research into how aware individuals are, based on the type of social media site that they subscribe to.

6.3.2 Conclusion

Managers and employees in the study were aware of how their actions and behaviour impact the corporate reputation of the business. There was no significant difference in the level of awareness between manager and employees in the business, indicating that all individuals in the survey understood that they can have an effect on the

reputation of the business and how the external stakeholders view the company they work for based on their actions.

6.4 Discussion of hypothesis 2

H2: Managers and employees have a difference in opinion as to what is acceptable to post in the public domain that may impact on corporate reputation.

6.4.1 General

Vallor (2011) states that pervasive technologies have changed the most basic ways in which individuals communicate and bond with others. Social media has become the new wave of technology that has become a common way for individuals to communicate with their family and friends. These connections are playing a more significant role in the lives of individuals in multiple social domains, such as work, school, family, friendships and civic life, and it is for this reason that they may have a greater potential to shape the moral character and habitual practices of the individuals that use them (Vallor, 2011). Vallor (2011) suggests that due to the incremental nature of the change in these communications because of the presence of social media, changes in the moral character of employees and manager may go unnoticed until there are unavoidable consequences of the process.

Topics which are shared on social media status updates with others were seen to include positive and negative issues identified by Vallor (2011) and other social media high profile cases detailed in the literature (Miller, 2011; Moyo, 2011; Everett, 2011; Nelson, Price & Rountree, 2008; Bates, Tomlinson & Greenhill, 2012) for example:

- “birth of a child”,
- “engagement or marriage”,
- “a sore head from last night’s party”,

- “disagreement with a manager”,
- “sexual harassment”.

There were three interesting outcomes that can be deduced from the analysis of the data in this section of the survey. The first outcome was that out of the list of 10 topics surveyed, the posting of positive topics on social media was more acceptable than negative topics. The means of the managers and employees responses to the scenarios in Table 3 were ranked according to level of agreement, and it was observed that more positive topics such as “birth of a child” ($m=3.583$, $SD=1.168$) and “engagement or marriage” ($m=3.986$, $SD=0.893$) were seen to be more agreeable to place in the public domain than the more negative topics. More negative issues such as an “encounter with the law” ($m=1.938$, $SD=0.991$), “poor working conditions” ($m=1.729$, $SD=1.053$) and “sexual harassment” ($m=1.646$, $SD=1.080$) were ranked by the respondents as more negative and so they disagreed more strongly with placing comments of this nature on in the public social media domain. The manager and employee group were neutral on the posting of illness in the public domain (Table 3. $M=2.431$).

The second outcome from the analysis is that personal topics are considered more acceptable by managers and employees to place in the public domain than work-related topics. Personal topics, i.e. those that are related to life outside of the work environment, were ranked as showing less disagreement of being placed in social media (rank 1-6) than work-specific topics (rank 7-10).

The third and most concerning outcome from the employees’ perception was that “encounter with the law” ($m=1.938$, $SD= 0.991$) was disagreed with less strongly than “disagreement with a manager” ($m=1.264$, $SD= 0.648$) to post in the social domain. An “encounter with the law”, considered a personal topic, was ranked number six, but a “disagreement with a manager” was considered the most disagreeable comment to post on social media of all 10 topics (Table 3, rank-10). This suggests that individuals are aware to some extent that posting work-related topics is less acceptable in general than private topics, but seem to be aware how some personal topics may have a more significant impact than work-related topics on reputation.

A “disagreement with a manager” would have an impact on corporate reputation, as Aula (2010: 38) states that reputation should be understood as “interpretations among stakeholders of their stories” of what is going on in the business. In the case where an employee placed information on a disagreement with a manager, it could signal to external stakeholders that there may be some conflict within the business. This could lead to shareholders withdrawing funding from companies if they feel the issue indicates a risk in the stability of the business. However, an employee’s encounter with the law can offer significant risk to corporate reputation if it is made public, as an encounter with the law could indicate a lack of moral or guiding values in the business.

These findings may be tied back to the analysis of hypothesis 1 where it was discussed how the managers and employees had an awareness of their actions and behaviour and how they impact on the reputation of the business where they work. Awareness of posting work-related topics in the social media domain gives external stakeholder information to develop their own perceptions of the reputation of the business.

6.4.2 According to current role (managers vs. employee)

Managers and employees differed in their level of agreement on six of the 10 topics, with managers disagreeing more with posting of negative comments on social media than the employees (Table 4). Topics ranked 5-10 for the managers and employees were considered to be less acceptable to place on social media for managers than for employees.

There was no significant difference in the level of agreement between managers and employees as to the posting of positive situations such as the “birth of a child” (Table 5 P=0.550) and “engagement and marriage” (Table 5, P=0.314) on social media sites. This indicates that managers do not condemn the use of social media and agree that there is a place for the use of social media in the private lives of the employees.

Interesting though, is that there was no significant difference in the level of agreement with “posting pictures showing yourself at a friend’s bachelor’s or hen night party” (table 5, P=0.066). The feeling of the managers and employees tended toward neutral with a mean response of $m=2.306$, $SD=1.166$ (Table 3).

This is an interesting outcome in that it was detailed in the literature that a recent ruling in the United States of America resulted in an employee being fired due to the fact she had brought the teaching profession into disrepute due to posting of such pictures on her Facebook profile (Miller, 2011).

South African based companies may have a more relaxed view on what are acceptable personal experiences to place in the public domain, due to the cultural and social norms which differ from other countries. This could be a topic for further research to aid companies in better understanding what is considered acceptable across different countries and across different professions. This could be important for multinational companies who choose to implement a social media policy that covers all countries that they operate in.

Managers disagreed more strongly with the posting of a “sore head from last night’s party” on social media than employees (Figure 5, $P=0.037$). A total of 29% of employees felt neutral with this sort of post. The ability of employees to manage shareholders’ investments and customers’ requests could be altered should they have after effects of a party the night before. For a customer who relies on employees of the business assisting them in running their business, which is the case in the companies surveyed, employees with a hangover could make unnecessary mistakes which may impact their ability to fulfil their commitments to the customer. In the medical device and pharmaceutical industries, the actions of companies’ employees impact the surgeon and general practitioner practices and the service he/she offers the patient. The surgeon may feel concerned that the sales person who comes to theatre to offer important sizing advice for his patient’s knee replacement procedure may be compromised in their ability to do so, due to lack of sleep or suffering from a hangover.

This could alter the customer’s willingness to interact with the company on that day. The more often this sort of post is seen in the public domain, the less likely the customer may feel he/she can trust that the company will be capable of assisting when required. Sharing this opinion with his/her network may then lead to a wider group of customers losing faith in the company, affecting corporate reputation and ultimately the revenue of the business.

Managers felt more strongly than employees on the posing of statements around illness on social media (mean rank for management = 64.54 and 78.02 for employees, $U = 3808$, $p = 0.046$). This may be in relation to societal norms which indicate that illness may be seen as a weakness of the individual to perform their job on a daily basis. Although illness is not directly tied into reputation of the business, it may cause unnecessary attention to an individual in the business. If a manager who is responsible for a large account indicates that they are seriously ill, a customer may lose faith in the person's ability to cope and thus the company's ability to maintain a certain level of service.

If the individual is a senior manager who holds a key position in the company, investors may become worried about the future of the business and look at moving their investments to an organisation where the management team are in good health. This was evident when Steve Jobs, Apple Inc.'s CEO stepped down from his position in the business due to ill health in 2011. Apple share price dropped as investor confidence in the business declined due to his exit (Satariano, 2011).

An encounter with the law was also seen by managers to be less acceptable (mean rank for manager - 62.84, employee - 79.21, $U = 3734.5$, $P = 0.014$) to post on social media than for employees (Figure 5). Encounters with the law indicate an individual's personal values and so an indication of the type of people that a company employs. Comments around this nature posted on social media also offer customers and stakeholders direction on how that person conducts themselves in the business environment. With corporate governance a common theme in the media due to the collapse of Enron (Nelson, Price & Rountree, 2008) and the Greg Smith Goldman Sachs incident (Bates, Tomlinson & Greenhill, 2012), the outcomes of poorly governed corporations have made investors and customers more aware to the outcomes of single individuals in the business environment.

Although both managers and employees disagreed with the posting of comments on social media around "sexual harassment", managers disagreed more strongly on this matter (mean rank for managers - 63.30 and employees - 78.89, $U = 3787.5$, $p = 0.008$).

Sexual harassment in the business environment can indicate to the customer or the investor that may possibly be a lack of morals, values and/or direction of the business management. This could lead to a decrease in confidence in the ability of the business to stay focused on the strategy to drive business growth.

Female investors, in particular, may exercise caution when considering doing business with the management of such companies, as reputation is also considered to be a “stabilising factor” which they may use to reduce the risk in determining companies that exhibit “uncooperative behaviour” (Tennie, Frith & Frith, 2010). Sexual harassment claims in social media may also affect future employees’ willingness to work for the company, as a claim of sexual harassment by a manager by an employee would signal concerns for the uncertainty of good working environment (Cable & Turban, 2003).

Although most managers and employees disagree on posting of poor working conditions on social media, they differ (mean rank for management = 64.45 and 78.09 for employees, $U = 3802.5$, $p < 0.05$) in that some employees feel neutral or strongly agree with posting comments of this nature in the public domain. Poor working conditions may be interpreted by the customer base or possible investors that the company is in financial trouble, or that the employees may not be able to focus on the job at hand due to the working conditions in which they operate.

The opinion of some employees, albeit a small percentage, strongly agreeing with the posting of “poor working conditions”, should be a case for concern for managers in that they are sharing this information with potential investors and customers. It could be perceived by these stakeholders that companies that do not provide adequate working conditions for their employees may not offer adequate service to the customer, reducing the desire to purchase from that company. Ettenson and Knowles (2008:20) state that the reputation of a business is often “a precondition for people’s willingness to do business with a company”. Comments around poor working conditions could damage the external stakeholders’ perceptions of the organisation, leading to reputational risk for the business and in turn a loss of competitiveness in the market (Aula, 2010)

The posting of the situation of “your manager did not keep a verbal agreement to give you a raise” was strongly disagreed with by both managers and employees (Table 3), however, the mean ranks show a significant difference in the opinion between the two groups (mean rank for management = 65.87 and 77.10 for employees, $U = 3886.5$, $p = 0.04$) (Table 5). When the results were further analysed, some employees (8%) even felt that they agreed with this sort of information being shared in the social media environment. To be included in the manager group of the study, these individuals needed to have at least one direct report, so the view of the manager may have been that of the manager whose employee would post this comment about him.

However, it also indicates that managers are more aware of how a comment on this sort of issue in the public domain may affect external stakeholders’ perceptions of the company and its reputation. Information on not following through on a promised raise may be concerning to potential investors as it may be understood to indicate that there may be concerns over cash flow in the business. Potential employees may also use this sort of information to make decisions about the suitability of that employer as a potential player in their career path.

Analyses of the scenarios on posting information around work-related situations in the social media domain, indicated that there were again significant differences in responses between managers and employees for all five of the stated scenarios (Table 8). Managers disagreed more than employees on placing work-related issues such as a “disagreement with a colleague over the budget for an upcoming corporate fun day” ($P=0.003$) to a “malfunctioning copier” ($P=0.002$) in the social domain. This further strengthens the outcomes of the topic list in section A of this hypothesis that managers disagree more strongly with placing work-related activities on social media than employees.

6.4.3 Conclusion

The evidence suggests that there is a clear disconnect between the levels of agreement between managers and employees on posting comments around work topics in the social domain. Managers disagree more strongly than employees regarding the postings of comments that may impact the reputation of the company.

The outcomes of this section of the survey revealed some interesting insight into what employees and managers see as acceptable comments and behaviour to post on social media. It was discovered that managers and employees agree on the posting of positive personal comments on social media. Managers disagree more strongly with placing of negative and work-related comments on social media than employees.

Another interesting finding was that out of the list of 10 topics surveyed, positive topics posted on social media were more acceptable than negative topics for both managers and employees. It was also observed that personal topics are considered acceptable by managers and employees to place in the public domain versus work-related topics which are thought to be less acceptable to place in the public domain by both groups.

The most concerning outcome for employers was that an “encounter with the law” was disagreed with less strongly than “disagreement with a manager” by managers and employees to post in the social domain.

Although managers and employees are aware that what they do has an impact on the corporate reputation of the business, the difference in level of agreement as to what is acceptable indicates a potential risk for the business in that the employee who is ultimately the carrier of the corporate reputation of the business does not carry the same understanding as management.

6.5 Discussion of Hypothesis 3

H3: A breach in the employee-employer psychological contract results in employee’s willingness to post more sensitive information in the public domain.

6.5.1 General

Literature has shown that a perceived breach in an individual’s psychological contract with their employer may result in the employee engaging in retaliation to either their manager or to the company itself (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007).

The survey examined at to what extent individuals agreed with posting of scenarios on social media which implied that a psychological contract breach had occurred.

In all of the four scenarios where psychological contract breach was implied, managers and employees disagreed to strongly disagreed with the comments being placed in the public domain (Table 9). A psychological contract breach is considered to be taken more personally by the individual, especially when the breach is said to be along the lines of respect or code of conduct (Rousseau, 1989). This outcome indicates that the manager and employee group disagreed with the posting of comments of this nature in retaliation for a perceived psychological contract breach.

6.5.2 According to current role (manager vs. employee)

The evidence showed that there was no significant difference in the level of disagreement between managers and employees as to what is appropriate to post on social media following a psychological contract breach in the workplace (Table 11). In all of the scenarios, the managers' and employees' opinions were similar on the posting of criticism of the company or manager on social media following a disconnect in the expectation of the employee and their unwritten contract with their employer.

Although a significant difference in the medians of the two groups was not found (Table 11, P=0.066), a concerning outcome of the survey for employers was that 13% of employees felt neutral to strongly agreeing with posting that the "company was going under" in response to a verbal raise agreement not being met by the employer. None of the manager group felt this behaviour to be acceptable. This response by the employee to this form of transactional contract breach (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005) seems only to be evident in the employee group, resulting in counterproductive work behaviours being the remedy for the employee (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). An employee that posts this sort of information in the public domain could pose a risk to the reputation of the business, in particular how its external stakeholders perceives the financial stability of the business.

The scenarios around the company not “keeping its promises” for study leave (Table 11, P-0.055) and job function (P-0.061) also indicated that there was no difference in the level of the agreement between managers and employees in the presence of a psychological contract breach. These two scenarios indicated a breach in the relational psychological contract (Zhao, Glibkowski & Bravo, 2007) of the employee with the employer, as they are of long-term commitments around trust, relationships and meaningfulness of the work to the individual.

6.5.3 Conclusion

The psychological contract is “an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement” (Rousseau, 1989:125) and so a very subjective topic. In general managers and employees agree to the same extent that statements following a psychological contract breach in the workplace should not be posted in the social media domain. This sort of information should be comforting to companies as psychological contract breach is a perceived breach of the unwritten contract with the employee and not a physical contractual agreement signed by both parties. The results of this survey indicated that employers may not be too concerned with employees posting this sort of information, unless the employee intentionally plans to harm the reputation of the business.

The results of this study indicated that the employees and managers are aware and agree that it is not acceptable to post these sorts of comments in the public domain, but it does not take into account how they will actually react if and when they felt they were a victim of a psychological contract breach. There was evidence in the literature that indicates that the age of a person may have an effect on how they react to psychological contact breach (Orgeta, 2009; Bal & Smit, 2012); this offers an opportunity for future research on how individuals of different age groups react to psychological contact breach in the workplace, with the counter-productive work behaviours being a social media post about the company or manager involved.

6.6 Discussion of hypothesis 4

H4: Employees feel that being prohibited from posting certain information in the public domain is an infringement on their personal rights to the freedom of opinion and expression.

6.6.1 General

For each of the “personal rights to freedom of speech” statements, respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement with statements around their rights to post comments both negative and positive about managers or employees in the social media domain and exposing illegal or immoral activities in the social media domain. They were also asked if being prohibited from posting certain comments on social media would be an infringement on their right to freedom of speech.

Of the manager and employee group, over two thirds (69%) (Table 13, median= 2.00, $p=0.000$) of respondents disagreed with posting positive comments and 89% (median=1.00, $p=0.00$) disagreed with posting negative comments about their manager or employees in their social media site. On the other hand, the remaining respondents (31%) felt neutral to strongly agreed with posting of positive comments. Only 11% felt this way about posting negative comments. Even though the majority disagreed, the 11% who agreed offer insight into quantifying the risk for the company, as employees’ perceptions of what are positive or negative comments and actions differ between managers and employees. It was discussed under hypothesis 2 that managers and employees have different levels of agreement on what is appropriate to place in the public domain.

The exposing of illegal or immoral activities in the workplace on social media was disagreed to strongly disagreed with by 86% of the managers and employers (Table 13, median = 1.00, $P = 0.000$); however, the remaining 14% felt neutral to strongly agreed with making this information public. This poses a significant risk to the business, which was also described in the literature review in the case of Goldman Sachs’ former executive director Greg Smith (Bates, Tomlinson & Greenhill, 2012).

Exposure of this sort of activity may lead to a loss in investor confidence in the business and cause them to withdraw their funding investments. The median response to the statement around an individual's opinion on social media being a topic of discussion with their manager in the workplace was close to neutral, (Table 13, median = 3.00, $P= 0.108$). The spread of the responses, however, indicates that there is little agreement amongst all respondents as to their feelings around having their managers know what they have posted on their status update. Nearly half (49%) of respondents disagreed with having to discuss their social media posts with their manager, and felt that it is for their personal online network only. Some 40% agreed that they believed it to be acceptable for a manager to discuss an employee's online posts with them (Table 13). The remaining 18% felt undecided on this matter, indicating that there was no consensus among managers' and employees' feelings on their managers discussing their Facebook updates with them.

The undecided response of the total respondents was again seen on the topic of personal rights (Table 13, median = 3.00, $P=0.294$). Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with company censorship of what they posted on their social media page be an infringement on their personal rights. Personal rights were defined in the literature review in terms of the South African Constitution, which states that everyone has the right to "freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion" and the right to freedom of expression; in particular the "freedom of the press and other media" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996:1429).

The "right to privacy and not to have the privacy of their communications infringed" (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996:1249) is also a key element in the Constitution. Only 38% of the managers and employees indicated through agreeing to strongly agreeing with the statement that they felt censorship would be infringing on the right to privacy and freedom of speech. Some 43.6% disagreed to strongly disagreed with this statement, indicating that they did not feel that this would impact on their personal rights, and the remaining 18.4% responded as neutral.

The South African Constitution plays a strong element in South African society, and it was the researcher's anticipated outcome that more of the respondents would have felt more strongly about their freedom of speech and privacy rights to keep their comments

on social media sites private. This outcome may be an indication of how business in South Africa is authoritarian in its approach to company employees. It should also be considered how these individuals are accessing the social media that they use. If they are doing so through company resources, then they may tailor their online comments to be acceptable to their employer should they be intercepted, and so feel that censorship of this medium would be part of the unwritten rules of its use.

6.6.2 Conclusion

H4: Employees feel that being prohibited from posting certain information in the public domain is an infringement on their personal rights to the freedom of opinion and expression.

A large proportion (69%) of the individuals disagreed with posting positive comments about their manager or employees in the social domain, and the remaining (31%) felt neutral to strongly agreed with this sort of post.

A significantly larger proportion of those surveyed (89%) disagreed to strongly disagreed with posting negative comments about their manager or employees on their social media page; however, there is cause for concern for employers as 11% felt this was acceptable in the public domain.

The exposing of illegal or immoral activities in the workplace on social media was disagreed to strongly disagreed with by 86% of the manager and employee group; however, the remaining 14% felt neutral to strongly agreed with making this information public, posing a significant risk to the reputation of the business.

The mean response to the statement around an individual's opinion on social media being a topic of discussion with their manager in the workplace was close to neutral; however, further analysis of the responses indicated the standard deviation showed that there was little consensus in the total group to how they felt around having their managers know what they post on their status update.

The respondents to the survey were undecided when asked if censorship of their social media posts would be seen as an infringement of their personal rights to freedom of speech. A total of 43.6% of respondents viewed this as not being an infringement of their personal rights, and 38% indicated that they felt this sort of censorship would infringe on their rights to freedom of speech. The remaining 18.4% were undecided.

6.7 Discussion of company social media policies

After the initial results of the survey were analysed, the researcher contacted the Human Resources Managers of the 10 companies that participated in the survey to ask about a formal social media policy in place within the company. The question asked was: “Do you have an active social media policy that specifically covers employee actions and comments in the public domain, for example: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Blogging, etc.?”

In four of the 10 companies, the Human Resource Manager was unable to respond and referred the question to the marketing manager. Although all of the companies responded that they had a communications policy in place, this policy did not take into account social media. Only two of the 10 responded that they have a specific policy that refers to social media by name, such as blogging and Facebook (Table 14).

One fifth (20%) of companies in this survey had a social media policy in place. Although not a statistically significant observation due the small number of companies in the survey (i.e 10), this is less than the European study which stated that 29.3% of company respondents had social media guidelines directed at communicating online in forums such as blogs and Twitter (Verhoevena, Tenchb, Zerfassc, Morenod & Verčič, 2012).

South African companies need to ensure that they put in place policies and guidelines to mitigate corporate reputational risk in the online environment from actions and behaviours of their employees in the social media domain.

6.8 Conclusion

The manager and employee respondent group indicated that they were aware of how their actions and behaviours impact the corporate reputation of the business. There was no evidence to suggest a significant difference in the level of awareness between managers and employees in the business.

This indicated that all individuals in the survey understood that they can have an effect on the reputation of the business and how the external stakeholders view the company they work for based on their actions.

However, there was evidence to suggest that there is a clear disconnect between the levels of agreement between managers and employees on which topics, comments and behaviours are acceptable to place in the public domain. Although managers and employees agree on the posting of positive personal comments on social media, managers disagree more strongly with the placing of negative and work-related comments on social media than employees.

Other interesting findings were that out of the 10 topics surveyed, positive topics were more acceptable to place on social media than negative topics for the manager and employee group. Personal topics were also considered acceptable by this respondent group to place in the public domain versus work-related topics which were disagreed with to various extents. The most concerning outcome for employers was that an “encounter with the law” was disagreed with less strongly than “disagreement with a manager” by managers and employees to post in the social domain.

Although managers and employees are aware that what they do has an impact on the corporate reputation of the business, the difference in level of agreement as to what is acceptable indicates a potential risk for the business in that the employee who is ultimately the carrier of the corporate reputation of the business does not carry the same understanding as management.

Both managers and employees disagreed to the same extent that statements following a psychological contract breach in the workplace should not be posted in the social media domain. The results of this study indicated that the employees and managers are aware and agree that it is not acceptable to post these sorts of comments in the public domain, but it does not take into account how they will actually react if and when they become victims of a psychological contract breach.

Based on the above analyses of the results, it is clear that companies need to be proactive about the risks that their employees expose the business to in maintaining a good corporate reputation. Although employees and managers agree that they are able to have a significant impact on the reputation of the business through their actions and behaviours, the actual actions and comments are not agreed on by the two groups.

Companies in the survey had fewer social media policies in place (20%) than the European average (29.3%) (Verhoevena, Tenchb, Zerfassc, Morenod, Verčič, 2012) and there was no consensus in the managers and employees group as to whether monitoring of their social media posts would be an infringement of their personal rights. Companies in South Africa need to look at developing risk mitigating strategies that provide clear direction to both managers and employees on what are acceptable comments and behaviours to place in the public domain that impact corporate reputational risk.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the findings from Chapters 5 and 6, and relates it back to the research questions set out in Chapter 3. It also links the findings described in Chapter 6 to the literature review in Chapter 2. This chapter then offers recommendations to companies on how they can mitigate reputational risk by developing social media policies and training programmes that guide employees on what behaviours are acceptable in the social media domain. Finally, it offers recommendations for future research on social media and the possible risks that may come with its increased use in the South African workplace.

7.2 Literature review

7.2.1 Social media as an amplifying medium for corporate reputational risk

The literature found that the South African community now has a significant presence on social media. The adoption of social media has been increasing at a significant rate, and based on the current growth trend, it is set to continue. This rapid growth is along the lines of both the number of subscribers and the types of social media employees are accessing to express their opinions on their online social networks.

The vast number of individuals on these networks, combined with the low level of skill needed to publish on these sites, has resulted in comments and behaviours being amplified to a much greater audience. An employee who has a low level of awareness of how behaviours impact corporate reputation, and access to large online communities, could potentially expose the business to reputational risk. These comments could affect the way external stakeholders perceive the business, as next to a customer's own experience with a company, the customer will accept and develop their own perception of the reputation of a business based on their experience and information received from employees. These employees' perceptions are in turn influenced by their relationship with the organisation.

The literature detailed how a good corporate reputation has a significant impact on the success of a business, affecting its share price, profit, and its ability to attract and retain high calibre employees. Stakeholder interactions with company employees in the public environment have an impact on how they perceive the internal workings of the business and their overall perception of the legitimacy and conduct of the firm's activities in which they have an interest.

7.2.2 The employees role in corporate reputational risk

Employees are posting their feelings and comments in social media based on their experiences in the work environment, and they may even post these comments while sitting at their desk in the office. These topics range from having a hangover to a disagreement with a manager. It was suggested in the literature that relational and transactional breaches in the psychological contract may result in individuals engaging in negative acts directed at the supervisor who they feel have breached the contact, or at the organisation that employs the supervisor.

7.2.3 Laws around employees use of social media

Laws protecting both the company and the employee regarding social media are not yet comprehensive enough to deal with the types of situations that employee behaviour on social media brings. These laws governing the privacy and rights of individuals and/or companies are not currently geared to manage the converging technologies of the Internet and social media. The legal landscape is still open to interpretation and has resulted in lengthy court cases due to misinterpretation of these laws.

7.2.4 Risk mitigating strategies

Due to the little research available in how to go about managing online reputational risk, companies have been slow to develop and implement reputational risk management strategies specifically directed at online social media.

Without these necessary internal policies governing how employees behave in the public domain regarding corporate issues, there exists a significant opportunity for reputational damage. The literature indicated a need for further research into online reputational risk and to quantify to what extent management' and employees' opinions differ as to what is appropriate to post in the social domain that may impact corporate reputational risk.

7.3 Research findings

The research concluded four main points of interest to add to the body of knowledge, as listed below:

7.3.1 Awareness of impact on reputation

Managers and employees are equally aware of their impact on corporate reputation

Firstly, the research found that employees and managers are equally aware and agree that their personal actions and comments impact the corporate reputation of a business. What they personally do and say can significantly affect in the way external stakeholders perceive the reputation of the business. However, there exists a significant reputational risk in the difference in the opinions as to what employees and managers regard as acceptable comments to post in the public domain using social media.

7.3.2 Differing opinions of managers and employees

There is a difference in opinion between managers and employees as to what comments and behaviours were seen to be acceptable to place in the public domain that may impact corporate reputational risk

Managers and employees differed in their levels of agreement on acceptability of different topics on social media. The findings were as follows:

Positive topics are more acceptable than negative topics

Managers and employees tend to agree on the posting of positive personal topics in the social domain; however, when it comes to more negative personal topics and those topics around work situations, managers tend to feel more strongly than employees that it is unacceptable.

Personal topics are more acceptable than work related topics

Personal topics were considered more acceptable to place in the public domain than work-related topics by the managers and employees group. This suggests that employees are aware to some extent aware that posting work-related topics is less acceptable in the public domain than private topics, due to the impact they may have on the reputation of the business. This outcome should be comforting for the employer, as to reduce the amount of work-related topics on social media would decrease the risk of reputational damage to the business.

Posting of a disagreement with a manager was less acceptable than a post around an encounter with the law.

The most concerning outcome for employers was that an encounter with the law was seen to be more acceptable to place in the public domain than statements around a disagreement with a manager. This sort of comment could have far reaching implications for both the individual's personal reputation and the reputation of the company. An encounter with the law may call into question the values of the individual in the companies involved and be a cause for concern for investors, customers and future employees.

Although managers and employees are aware that what they do has an impact on the corporate reputation of the business, the difference in level of agreement as to what is acceptable indicates a potential risk for the business in that the employee who is ultimately the carrier of the corporate reputation of the business does not carry the same understanding as management. This indicates the need for a management-led

intervention to ensure alignment in the understanding of what is acceptable between the manager and the employee.

7.3.3 Psychological contract breach

A breach in the employee-employer psychological contract did not result in an increase in employee's willingness to post sensitive information in the public domain

Both managers and employees disagreed to the same extent that statements following a psychological contract breach in the workplace should not be posted in the social media domain. The results of this study indicated that the employees and managers are aware and agree that it is not acceptable to post these sorts of comments in the public domain, but this research did not take into account how they will actually react if and when they feel they are a victim of a psychological contract breach. Psychological contract breach is a subjective view that requires further research to determine exactly how the individual will respond to a perceived breach.

7.3.4 Right to privacy and freedom of speech

Employees are undecided that being prohibited from posting certain information in the public domain is an infringement of their personal rights and freedom of speech

Employees are undecided about discussions around their online posts with their manager

Individual opinion on social media being a topic of discussion with the manager in the workplace was close to neutral; however further analysis showed that there was little consensus in the manager and employee group as to how they felt about having the manager know what they have posted on their social media profiles. Some employees felt very strongly about their rights to freedom of speech but this was not a view shared by the whole group, indicating that individuals have different opinions on the level of interaction their manager has with them regarding their social media posts.

Monitoring of Facebook profiles is against the law in South Africa; however some employees would not see it as unacceptable for their manager to view their profile and discuss it with them. However, managers would need to be aware of those individuals who feel that it is not acceptable.

Employees are undecided on their opinion of company censorship of their online post as an infringement of their rights

Finally, the study found that the respondents were undecided when asked if censorship of their social media posts would be seen as an infringement of their personal rights to freedom of speech. It was thought that this may be due to the resources that these individuals use to access social media being owned by the company they work for.

This illustrates a need for South Africa corporate companies to develop and implement social media policies or action plans that specifically detail what is acceptable to place in the public domain to offer insight and alignment between the managers and employees.

7.4 Recommendations for business

This study confirmed that companies need to be proactive about the risks that their employees expose the business to in maintaining a good corporate reputation. Although employees and managers agree that they are able to have a significant impact on the reputation of the business through their actions and what they personally do, the actual actions and comments are not agreed on by the two groups.

Companies need to ensure that corporate reputational risk through the actions of their employees is a key element on the board agenda for mitigating such risk to the business. Acknowledging this risk as a possible weakness in the business strategy will be the first step towards mitigating it.

Three different solutions are proposed: companies should focus on implementing a social media policy, they should look at offering training programmes that increase

awareness of the employees as to type of comment and action that impacts the corporate reputation or they should incorporate social media into daily work activities. Employees that are made aware of which comments and actions are unacceptable will be empowered to make decisions around how they can contribute to the reputation of the business and become brand ambassadors. Employees may also become more aware of how a good reputation can offer benefits or disadvantages for both them and the company.

7.4.1 A social media policy

The implementation of a specific social media policy, as is the trend in Europe, would offer guidelines and make reference to what topics are unacceptable to place in the social domain; however, it will not fully rule out all possible comments or actions that may impact the reputation of the business. The policy will continually need to be updated to remain in line with the speed of current converging technologies. This may be an option for larger companies where supervisor control is the norm.

Respondents on the whole were undecided on whether or not policies of this nature would infringe on their rights to privacy and freedom of speech, but there were some that felt very strongly about such a practice. So policies of this nature may only be successful if there is a strong authoritarian environment within the business, which, as detailed in the literature review, is more common in larger businesses.

7.4.2 A social media awareness training programme

A training programme, on the other hand, does not only offer guidance on what is acceptable in the public domain that may impact reputation, it also provides the employee with the tools to recognise and make informed decisions on what is acceptable. Employees are already aware that what they do impacts reputation, but by providing the ability to recognise what affects corporate reputation, they progress to becoming successful brand ambassadors for the company. The flexibility of a training programme will also ensure the content remains up to date with developing convergent technologies.

Employees should also be made aware through the training process using cases studies as to how a good corporate reputation has benefits for the individual. Such examples are superior profits for the business due to a good corporate reputation which could lead to better salaries and more competitive packages for the employees. It would also offer the employee advantages when applying for another position outside of the company, as working for a reputable company comes with a certain element of prestige and perception of excellence.

Companies should incorporate into the training programme topics around employees' awareness of their own personal brand and online reputation, which will ultimately have a positive effect on the reputation of the business. This could be done through case study analysis and resultant impact of these cases.

7.4.3 Actively incorporate social media into workplace activities

South African companies should look at embracing convergent technologies and incorporating them into the business strategy. Making social media more mainstream in the workplace would enable discussions around posts and behaviour in the public domain a common topic in the workplace. Following this route would prevent social media being used as a tool to release frustration into the public domain. This action would also enable employees to be more aware of how their use of social media affects not only the corporate reputation but also their personal brand.

This could be done through the development of workplace groups to offer instant information to questions employees may have on work related issues.

7.5 Recommendations for future research

The type of social media site that an individual subscribes to may provide insight into their awareness of its impact on corporate reputation. This could be an opportunity for future research into how aware individuals are, based on the type of social media site that they subscribe to and what they see as appropriate. Users of LinkedIn may be more aware of how their comments may affect the reputation, based on the nature of

the website and the networks individuals build on it. In contrast, Facebook only users may have a different opinion, based on the fact that it is a more personal social network.

There was evidence in the literature that suggested that a person's age may have an effect on how they react to psychological contact breach (Orgeta, 2009; Bal & Smit, 2012), and this offers an opportunity for future research on how individuals of different age groups react to psychological contact breach in the work place, with counter productive work behaviour being a social media post about the company or manager involved.

This study was conducted from a South Africa perspective, so it may become apparent with further research that South African-based companies have a more relaxed view on what are acceptable personal experiences to place in the public domain due to the cultural and social norms which may differ from other countries.

Research into better understanding of what is considered acceptable across the different countries and professions could offer better insight into how this issue could be managed in other countries. It could also offer multinational companies who operate in very diverse countries direction on how to build a policy or training programme that is flexible and could be implemented across their worldwide businesses.

Race and cultural background was not taken into account in this study. These influences could play a significant role in what an individual views as acceptable to place in the public domain and could be an interesting angle in the South Africa context. South Africa has a very diverse range of cultures making up its workforce, and differences in opinions between managers and employees may not only be related to position, but could also be affected by cultural beliefs and personal understandings of societal norms.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Application for ethical clearance



UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

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PROPOSED TITLE OF STUDY	Behaviours impacting reputation seen as acceptable by managers versus employees
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E-MAIL OF SUPERVISOR	foxh@gibs.co.za

GIBS distinguishes between FOUR types of data. Please complete the table for ALL the data types that you plan to use.

Type of data	Relevant section of form	Attachments (please mark that they are included)	Initial all those sections that apply to your research
HUMAN: Pre-existing personal records, e.g. performance reviews	A	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodology section of proposal <input type="checkbox"/> Permission letter from organisation to use the data	
New data solicited, e.g. interviews or surveys	B	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Methodology section of proposal <input type="checkbox"/> Separate informed consent statement (unless included in the document marked below) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interview schedule / questionnaire / proprietary test instrument / description of intervention <input type="checkbox"/> IF proprietary test instrument, letter of permission	
NON-HUMAN: Public data, e.g. World Bank or other databases	C	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodology section of proposal	
Private/ Organisation-specific non-human data, e.g. financial statements of private companies	D	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodology section of proposal <input type="checkbox"/> Permission letter from organisation to use the data	

Complete all sections relevant to your research.

ALL researchers must complete Sections E and F.

A. PRE-EXISTING RECORDS OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Specify the nature of records and how they will be used.
2. Confirm that permission has been obtained to study and report on these records.

I confirm.

Remember to attach permission letter(s).

3. Provide the name and job title of the person in the organisation who has authorised the use of the records.

4. How will confidentiality and/or anonymity be assured? (Mark all that apply).

- No names will be recorded
- No names will be requested
- Data will be stored without identifiers
- Only aggregated information will be provided
- Other. Please specify

B. NEW DATA OBTAINED FROM HUMAN SUBJECTS

5. Please confirm that no inducement is to be offered.

- I confirm

6. Mark the applicable box(es) to identify the proposed procedure(s) to be carried out to obtain data.

- Interview schedule (Attach if applicable)
- Questionnaire (Attach if applicable)
- Pre-existing proprietary test instrument, e.g. MBTI (Attach)

IF a pre-existing proprietary test instrument is used, confirm that permission has been obtained to use it.

- I confirm

Remember to attach permission letter(s).

- Intervention, e.g. training (Describe)
7. Confirm that the data gathering is accompanied by a consent statement.
- I confirm
8. Where is the consent statement found?
- As part of the data gathering document, e.g. in the introduction of the questionnaire.
- As a separate document. Remember to attach.
9. Is there is risk that the researcher is not competent in (one of) the language(s) subjects use to communicate?
- Yes, there is a risk
- No, there is not a risk
- IF yes, how will the subjects' full comprehension of the content of the research, including giving consent, be ensured? Please specify.
10. Do subjects risk possible harm or disadvantage (e.g. financial, legal, social) by participating in the research?
- No
- Yes.
- IF yes, explain what types of risk and what is done to minimise and mitigate those risks.
11. Are there any aspects of the research about which subjects are not to be informed?

No

Yes.

IF yes, explain why, and how subjects will be debriefed.

12. How will confidentiality and/or anonymity be assured? .

No names will be recorded

No names will be requested

Data will be stored without identifiers

Only aggregated information will be provided

Other. Please specify

C. PUBLIC NON-HUMAN DATA

13. Specify the nature of records to be used: How they will be selected, sourced and used.

D. PUBLIC DOMAIN / COMPANY-SPECIFIC NON-HUMAN DATA

14. Specify the nature of records (e.g. marketing reports or safety records) and how they will be used.

15. Confirm that permission has been obtained to study and report on these records.

I confirm.

Remember to attach permission letter(s).

16. Provide the name and job title of the person in the organisation who has authorised the use of the records.

17. Do companies risk possible harm or disadvantage (e.g. financial, legal, social) by participating in the research?

No

Yes. Explain what types of risk and what is done to minimise and mitigate those risks.

18. How will confidentiality and/or anonymity be assured? .

All company-specific details will be removed

Data will be stored without identifiers

Only aggregated information will be provided

Other. Please specify

E. CONFIDENTIALITY

Please select the relevant option

No access for a period of two years
Specify reasons for consideration

No access under any circumstance for an undetermined period.

A letter of permission from the Vice- principal: Research and Postgraduate Studies is attached.

F. TO BE COMPLETED BY ALL RESEARCHERS

19. In what format will the data be stored? Mark all that apply.

Physically

Electronically

Other. Please explain.

20. Confirm that the data will be stored for a minimum period of 10 years.

I confirm.

It is a goal of GIBS to make research available as broadly as possible. Mark the boxes below for the medium/media in which you do **NOT** wish results to be made available.

Academic dissemination

Popular dissemination

Research report

TV

Scientific article

Radio

Conference paper

Lay article

Book

Podcast

Book

21. Confirm that the consent obtained is aligned with the extent of dissemination. E.g. consent if you are planning to use the research to launch a consulting career will be more comprehensive than in the case of research that is intended only for a scientific audience.

I confirm

22. If you wish to describe any other information which may be of value to the committee in reviewing your application, please attach a separate sheet.

G. APPROVALS

The applicant must please ensure that the supervisor has signed the form before submission.

RESEARCHER/APPLICANT:

23. I affirm that all relevant information has been provided and that all statements made are correct.

Name in capital letters: JENNIFER SUSAN HOY

Signature:  _____

Date: 24 April 2012

STUDY SUPERVISOR:

24. I am of the opinion that the proposed research project is ethically acceptable.

Name in capital letters: HOWARD FOX

Signature: _____

Date: _____

GIBS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE:

25. I am of the opinion that the proposed research project is ethically acceptable.

Name in capital letters: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2: Survey research tool

(To be distributed on www.freeonlinesurveys.com)

Informed consent:

I am doing research on **how different individuals feel about posting personal and work related comments on their personal social media sites.**

To that end, you are please asked to complete a survey about your personal views on a range of personal and work related scenarios.

This will help us better understand how different people use and view social media, and should take no more than 15 minutes of your time.

Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. Of course, all data will be kept confidential. No personal particulars are stored by Survey Monkey, so all responses are anonymous.

By completing the survey, you indicate that you voluntarily participate in this research. If you have any concerns, please contact me or my supervisor. Our details are provided below.

Researcher name: Jennifer Hoy

Email: jenn_hoy@yahoo.co.uk

Phone: 072 828 6408

Research Supervisor Name: Howard Fox

Email : foxh@gibs.co.za

Phone: 0834552560

Section 1: General information

Please choose the correct answer

1. Gender
 - a) Male
 - b) Female
2. Age
 - a) 18-23
 - b) 24-29

- c) 30-35
- d) 36-41
- e) 42-47
- f) 48-older

3. I have or have used the following social media sites:

- 4. Facebook
- 5. Twitter
- 6. Mixit
- 7. LinkedIn
- 8. Yammer
- 9. Other- Please indicate

4. Length of time that you have been active social media sites:

- a) Less than 1 year
- b) 1-3 years
- c) 3-5 years
- d) More than 5 years

5. Frequency of social media use:

- a) Daily
- b) 4-5 time per week
- c) 2-3 times per week
- d) Less than once per week
- e) Once per month
- f) Never

6. In my current role I am:

- a) A Manager with at least one direct report
- b) An employee with no direct reports

Section 2: (Test for H2) Feelings on what is acceptable to place in the public domain

5-point scale, ranging from 1=“strongly disagree” to 5=“strongly agree”

To what extent do you feel it is acceptable to post your comments/opinions/ pictures on your personal social media page of the following topics:

1. Birth of a child
2. A sore head from last nights party
3. Engagement/marriage
4. Illness
5. Encounter with the law
6. Pictures showing yourself at a friend’s bachelors/hen night party
7. Disagreement with a manager
8. Sexual Harassment
9. Poor working conditions
10. You manager did not keep a verbal agreement to give you a raise

Section 3: (Test for H2 & H3) Scenarios

Personal social media page/sites refer to all interactive social media e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Mixit, etc.

5-point scale, ranging from 1=“strongly disagree” to 5=“strongly agree”

To what extent do you agree that it is in your opinion acceptable for the following individuals to post their opinions on their personal social media pages?

Personal issue

1. Brian had a bad day at work and was reprimanded by his manager for poor performance in a meeting. He feels annoyed and shares his heated opinion of his manager’s management style in an unflattering post on Facebook.

2. Jane comes to work with a hangover. She posts on social media how her head hurts and how she can't wait for the work day to end so she can go home and to bed.
3. Naomi has a disagreement with a colleague over how the budget for the upcoming corporate fun day should be spent. She posts that she feels she works in a "place full of idiots" to her Facebook friends.
4. Heathers job often requires she spend long hours at the office working with her manager. He has made sexual advances which have made her very feel uncomfortable. She posts on social media that she feels threaten by the managers advances identifying him by name.
5. The photo copy machine in marketing has stopped working again for the 4th time this month. Gemma posts on her personal social media site that she "nothing works in this place and no one seems to care if it does anyway"

Psychological contract breach:

1. Chris was promised a raise, but now it has been declined with no response to the reason why. He posts on his social media site that he thinks the company is going under as they can't afford to give him his deserved raise.
2. When Linda starts a new job she asks for study leave to enable her to complete her studies. After a few months her manager insists she attend a meeting which falls on one of the dates she needs to be in class. Linda reacts by posting on her personal social media page that now she will be behind schedule in her studies and that her company doesn't stick to their promises.
3. Max becomes aware of a top manager in his company who embellished large sums of money from the business resulting in the yearly employee bonus- including his, not being paid. He takes to his personal social media page to express his anger in the mismanagement and theft in the business.
4. Samantha started a new job at a small promotions company owned by a friend. She was under the impression she was going to handle the sales side of the business, but is now doing administrative work which she

loathes. She tweets that this is the most boring company she has ever worked for and they don't follow through on agreements.

Section 4: (Test H4) Personal rights to freedom of speech

5-point scale, ranging from 1="strongly disagree" to 5="strongly agree"

1. I feel I have the right to post my personal positive opinions of my manager or employees on my personal Facebook profile
2. I feel I have the right to post my personal negative opinions of my manager or employees on my personal Facebook profile
3. I feel I have the right to expose illegal or immoral activities in the workplace on my Facebook or online social media page.
4. I feel that my personal opinion on my Facebook profile should not be a topic for discussion with my manager or employees.
5. I would view company censorship of what I post on my personal social media website as an infringement on my personal rights.

Section 5: Awareness of impact on corporate reputation

5-point scale, ranging from 1="strongly disagree" to 5="strongly agree"

1. Every employee of a company can contribute to its reputation.
2. I know how I can influence my company's reputation.
3. What I personally do is important for the reputation of my company.
4. I personally feel like an ambassador of my company.
5. I personally feel responsible for my company's reputation.

Appendix 3: Table of studies showing the relation between internal corporate communication dimensions and organisational outcomes

Neha Sharma, T.J. Kamalanabhan, (2012), "Internal corporate communication and its impact on internal branding: Perception of Indian public sector employees", *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, vol. 17, issue 3, 303.

Author and year	ICC dimension (s) studied	Organizational outcome(s) studied	Research methodology
Asif and Sargeant (2000)	Formal communication (style of communication), Informal communication (demographic profile of individuals, amount of communication received)	Employee loyalty, shared vision, commitment, empowerment, satisfaction	Case study
Bambacas and Patrickson (2008)	Messages, clarity, trust, style of leadership communication	Organizational commitment	Qualitative
Brunetto and Wharton (2004)	Supervisory relationships, feedback process, organization perspective, communication climate	Job commitment and satisfaction	Survey
Camilleri (2008)	Messages (Corporate Philosophy), Channels, Communication standards	Stakeholder awareness, commitment and sustainability of business	Case study
Carriere and Bourque (2009)	Channels, Information sent, Information received, organizational communication relationships, timeliness of information	Communication satisfaction, job satisfaction	Survey
Chong (2007)	Messages, channels, training	Delivery of brand performance	Case Study
Clutterback (2005)	Use of language/Message	Psychological Contract	Conceptual
Elving (2006)	Organization Communication (no specific elaboration of communication dimensions)	Organizational identification, readiness for change	Conceptual
Fawkes and Gregory (2000)	Messages, Channels, Sender and Receiver	Effect on internet based communication	Conceptual
Hargie and Dickson (2007)	Messages, Channels (formal and informal), source of information	Awareness	Survey
Hawabhay <i>et al.</i> (2009)	Visual identity symbols, messages (value statements), top management communication	Corporate Brand Image	Qualitative
Kapoor (2010)	Messages, Channels, feedback	Employer branding	Qualitative
Mazzei (2010)	Messages, Channels, training	Impact on communication behaviors	Qualitative
Melewar and Akel (2005)	Visual Communication	Corporate identity and image	Qualitative
Mestre <i>et al.</i> (2000)	Visual communication	Work life and employee performance	Conceptual
Power and Rienstra (1999)	Message, Face-to-face communication, two way communication(feedback), communication training	Impact on employee behaviors and attitudes	Case Study
Punjaisri <i>et al.</i> (2007)	Channels (orientation programmes, group meetings, briefings), training	Employee brand identification, commitment, loyalty and performance	Survey
Teeni (2001)	Messages and Channels	Mutual Understanding between internal stakeholders and influencing behavior and attitude	Conceptual
Tukiainen (2001)	Communication Channels, face to face communication, Supervisor communication	Communication satisfaction	Conceptual
Vuuren <i>et al.</i> (2007)	Supervisory communication	Affective organizational commitment	Survey
Welch and Jackson (2007)	Sender, Messages, Channels, organization communication relationships	Employee belonging, awareness, commitment, loyalty, job/personal satisfaction	Conceptual