

“Understanding the role that brand communication plays in influencing brand reputation from a consumer perspective against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix: Samsung South Africa”

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Declaration:

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Bachelor of Arts Honours Strategic Brand Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Acknowledgements:

Foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Helena van Wyk for her guidance, patience and continuous encouragement during this study.

I am grateful to the participants of this study for having graciously given me their time, this would not have been possible without you. To my classmates, your camaraderie was a motivation throughout the course – thank you for all the laughs.

Lastly, I would like to thank my mother, a passionate teacher at heart, who taught me the value of education and supported me throughout this endeavour.

Abstract:

This explanatory case study investigates the role that Samsung's Facebook communication plays in influencing brand reputation from a consumer perspective, amongst consumers based in Sandton, Johannesburg. For this study, Samsung's Facebook content between 1st May 2017 and 31st May 2017 was analysed qualitatively, as the first data collection method. The second method of data collection was in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants who are Samsung consumers. Both data collection methods were informed by the framework for the study, the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix, which identifies key contributors to brand reputation. This allowed for a comparison between how Samsung has positioned itself on Facebook and the consumer perception of the communication, against the reputational elements of the framework to assess whether any discrepancies existed between the two perspectives. The study found that from the consumer perspective, Samsung's Facebook page is positively aligned in terms of communicating differentiation, responsibility, recognisability and trustworthiness. In terms of the reputational element of credibility, participants felt that Samsung could communicate more strongly to match the needs of more technically-inclined consumers. With respect to willingness to support on Facebook, participants felt the brand did not truly encourage two-way communication, and focused rather on product communication. Relevance, deals with the value that the Samsung brand communicates beyond product-oriented communication, however not all participants felt that Samsung was achieving this in their Facebook communication. Whilst the researcher concludes that Samsung's has created a positive brand reputation through Facebook overall, the paper provides possible recommendations to remedy the potential discrepancies found to improve and enhance brand reputation.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The consumer electronics industry covers high-demand consumer technologies such as televisions, household appliances, smartphones, smart wearable devices, printers and computers. Research shows that despite South Africans having to face numerous economic and socioeconomic challenges, they continue to align their tastes and preferences with leading global players in the consumer electronics industry as they tend to trust the quality and prestige of owning these brands. These global players continue to influence South African consumer choice through marketing and advertising campaigns (Euromonitor, 2016).

1.2. Background and context

Industry Sector Credit Analyst, David Soo (2014) finds firstly, that the consumer electronics industry is highly innovative and competitive due to changing technology and the need for unique, differentiated products and that secondly, successful products within this category, quickly attract “copycat” competitor products, which results in falling prices within the industry. Soo (2014) further deduces that as lower-priced models enter the market, the replacement cycle of many of these products, narrows, as consumers upgrade to newer products, which increases competition in the market.

The researcher believes that high competition between brands demands a well-developed brand communication strategy via modern communication methods to influence brand reputation. Digital media has disrupted how consumers communicate, giving rise to the term “prosumer” – a consumer who has the functional ability to produce original media content on platforms such as a Facebook post or a blog entry, as well as the ability to participate in various new media spaces (Chen et al., 2011). Digital media has also presented brand managers with powerful means to track their efforts, via social media audience engagement statistics such likes, shares, comments and clicks (Kranz, 2015). Although these engagement tools can provide user statistics, the researcher feels that it is also possible that brand managers could become too fixated on chasing these statistics and forget that the importance of the underlying insights of the people who engage with the brand.

Since consumers can produce their own content via digital media, the researcher feels that in industries such as consumer electronics where there is dynamic competition and rife innovation, a brand needs to understand its consumer's perceptions in forming their communication strategy to adequately address their needs and maintain a positive brand reputation.

Samsung is one of the leading global players in the consumer electronics industry. In 2016, Samsung globally ranked in at number 7 in Interbrand's "Best Global Brands", based on its brand value, and ranked within the Top 10 for the past five years. In 2017, the brand was ranked number 5, in the most meaningful brand survey (Havas Media, 2017). These accolades are monumental considering the brand is positioned in a competitive industry. This study aims to understand the role that brand communication plays in influencing the brand reputation of Samsung South Africa, from a consumer perspective against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix.

1.3. Rationale

According to Ireland and Webb (2007), in a fast-paced competitive environment, brands have to be increasingly nimble and adaptive, to not be left behind in the face of emerging, novel technologies. The researcher believes that is where brand reputation, can increase the credibility and trust of the new technologies introduced by a brand. Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004) agree that where there is a need to launch new products regularly, many companies find themselves having to use the parent brand's equity as an indicator of credibility for the newly introduced products.

Sifiso Falala, CEO of Plus 94 Research, an agency that partnered with the Mail & Guardian to deliver "The Top Companies Reputation Index" which is the largest corporate reputation study in South Africa, asserts that many companies focus heavily on public relations activities and do not do enough to ensure a long term sustainable brand reputation (The Media Online, 2016). Falala, in Somo (2016), further states that reputation is not a tangible asset and while branding can enhance relevance, it is reputation that makes a brand credible.

In the case of Samsung's safety recall of its Galaxy Note 7 due to battery explosions, some industry and brand analysts felt that the brand could have handled the crisis more effectively,

with reference to a press statement announcing the recall, on the Samsung website, that had to be clicked on to be viewed. In a New York Times article, by Maheshwari (2016), Andrew Gilman, CEO of crisis communication firm, CommCore Consulting, felt that the reaction from the brand was passive and that Samsung should have been more visible in showing concern through communication via their website and social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook. In the same article, independent brand consultant Dean Cruthfield, felt that brand's response was "overly bureaucratic" (Maheshwari, 2016). Greg Roh, of research firm HMC Investment Securities, felt that damage to the brand would be inevitable and that Samsung would lose high-end consumers to Apple, as people rely on these brand for signals of reliability (Hern, 2016).

The case above highlights the reason for the researcher having chosen Samsung for this study, as Samsung was dominant in mobile phone market until the fourth quarter of 2016, when the brand had been overtaken by Apple. Technology writer Mu-Hyun Cho (2017) attributes the loss in market share to the recall and complete withdrawal of the Galaxy Note 7, which gave Apple the opportunity to maximize sales with their iPhone 7.

The researcher is therefore of the opinion that Samsung should be on the pulse of consumer opinion and trends to able to leverage its name and brand reputation on Facebook, where these entities receive branded information and interact. Consequently, the purpose of the research, is to explore how South African male and female consumers, based in Sandton, Johannesburg perceive Facebook communication from Samsung and how the messages contribute to them forming their own perceptions of the brand. In answering the research questions as laid out for this study, this paper will argue that consumer perception is important to brands, to know how to leverage and execute their Facebook communication accordingly.

1.4. Problem statement

The research problem being investigated is to understand the role that Samsung's Facebook communication plays in influencing brand reputation from a consumer perspective, amongst male and female consumers, based in Sandton, Johannesburg. This will be done by exploring what the brand has communicated between 1st May 2017 to 31st May 2017, and by engaging with participants, against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix.

The reason for the selection of this period was that it fell within the time frame of the Galaxy S8 launch in South Africa, thus the researcher felt it would be beneficial to examine the brand's communication as well as the consumer perception of the type of communication being posted.

1.5. Research questions

The research questions that informed the study were formulated against the problem statement as follows:

Research question 1: How has Samsung positioned themselves on Facebook between the period of 1st May 2017 and 31st May 2017, against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix?

Research question 2: What is the consumer perception of the reputation that Samsung has created in its Facebook communication between the period of 1st May 2017 and 31st May 2017, against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix?

Research question 3: Is there a discrepancy between Samsung's Facebook communication and the consumer's perception of brand reputation based on the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix?

1.6. Research objectives

Research objective 1: To explore the content of the Samsung Facebook page between the period of 1st May 2017 and 31st May 2017, against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix.

Research objective 2: To understand the consumer perception created by Samsung's Facebook communication between the period of 1st May 2017 and 31st May 2017, against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix.

Research objective 3: To evaluate, via comparison, if there is a discrepancy between the Samsung brand communication and the brand reputation as perceived by consumers, between the period of 1st May 2017 and 31st May 2017, against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix.

1.7. Conceptualisation

The problem statement for this study dictated concepts that were developed into constructs through theoretical definition. The key concepts for the study are listed below, and are followed by how the researcher has interpreted these concepts as related to this study.

Key concepts:

- 1.7.1 Brand – a brand, as proposed by Klopper and North (2011) is social construct, that is consciously developed to hold a unique meaning that has value and connects with people. Brands, according to Keller and Lehmann (2006) are the most valuable intangible assets that a firm can have, because of the value and meaning that it creates.
- 1.7.2 Brand communication – is the exchange of information between a brand and its consumers, and is the nexus between brand identity and reputation, that can create competitive advantage (Gray and Balmer, 1998).
- 1.7.3 Brand positioning – is the activity from a brand to occupy a distinctive tangible or intangible, sustainable competitive advantage in the mind of the consumer (Gwin and Gwin, 2003), relative to that of other competing organisations (Cant and Van Heerden, 2013).
- 1.7.4 Brand reputation – is the overall assessment of a brand by their stakeholders and an aggregate perception by the stakeholders of the brand's ability to fulfil their expectation (Riel et al., 2007).
- 1.7.5 Facebook - Facebook is a Social Networking Service (SNS) used for personal interaction and connection with others.
- 1.7.6 Consumer perceptions - are the brand associations held in the consumer's memory e.g. perceptions of credibility, which can be shaped by a brand's marketing communication (Keller, 1993), which in this case, is Samsung's Facebook page.

1.8. Methodology

This paper is qualitative from a methodological position. The research design of this paper is an explanatory case study as the research questions seek to explain a link between a brand and its consumers that is too complex for surveys or experimental designs (Yin 2003, cited in Baxter and Jack, 2008). Case study research stems from needing to understand a single case, or a few small cases set in the real-world context (Bromley, 1991 cited in Maree,

2016) and requires close collaboration between the researcher and participants, to derive an in-depth understanding of the single case that results in new learnings for the brand in question (Yin 2003 cited in Baxter and Jack, 2008). For this study Samsung's Facebook content was analysed qualitatively and unobtrusively, against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix, as the first data collection method. The sample used for the qualitative content analysis, is Samsung's posts, between 1st May and 31st May 2017. The second method of data collection is in-depth field semi-structured interviews, informed by the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix, as this would allow for probing of consumer perceptions on Samsung's Facebook page and its influence on Samsung's brand reputation. The sampling used for the interviews is non-probability sampling, limited to participants that own a Samsung device, follow Samsung on Facebook and have visited the Samsung Experience Centre based in Sandton, Johannesburg. The last step in the research study provides a comparison between how Samsung has positioned itself on Facebook and the consumer perception of the communication, against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix.

1.9. Limitations and delimitations of the study

Limitations are the constraints or limits in the research study that are out of the researcher's control (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Possible limitations for this study, are time and accessibility which are inter-related. The Samsung consumer market is widespread and varied, however a large-sized sample, could not be accessed within the limited time frame allocated for the study. Thus, the study took a cross-sectional design, that took a "snapshot" of the population and phenomena under study at a certain time, as opposed to a longitudinal study, where time is the main variable in assessing fluctuations in the studied phenomena (Shuttleworth, 2010).

Delimitations, result from the specific choices, parameters and borders that the researcher sets for the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). In addition, this study covered Facebook only as an influencer of brand reputation whereas there is a myriad of social networks that brands interact on, that could be interrogated to explore brand communication and consumer perception. There is a single-focus on Samsung in this study, however brand reputation studies could span over a multitude of brands within the industry, in other industries, and even in other contexts such as business-to-business. Another delimitation of this study may be that brand reputation (outside-in) is the only element of branding that was

considered whereas studying brand reputation alongside brand identity (inside-out), maybe be useful in drawing comparisons between the two. The research was limited to exploring the Samsung Mobile South Africa Facebook page, between the period of 1st May and 31st May 2017, which is a delimitation. The participants chosen for this study were only those who have visited the Samsung Experience Centre (also functions as a walk-in service centre) which is based in Sandton, Johannesburg, as this would indicate that they own a Samsung device. Additionally, the participants were only those that were already followers of Samsung on Facebook as this indicated that they had prior exposure to the brand communication on this platform. The research excluded any potential consumers who do not own a product yet, but who may follow Samsung on Facebook, however, they may also have been able to provide valuable insight into perceptions of brand reputation. The participant portion of this study did not have an age limitation however, all participants were over the age of 18 years for ethical reasons.

1.10. Outline of chapters

To follow in this paper, is Chapter 2 which is a review of current literature that focuses on concepts relevant to the topic of this study, namely, brand, brand communication, brand positioning, brand reputation, Facebook and consumer perceptions. In Chapter 3, the research methodology for this paper is unpacked, detailing the design, data collection and data analysis methods. In Chapter 4, the research findings and analysis of the two data collection methods are presented, as well as a comparative analysis of the findings from the two methods. Chapter 5, offers recommendations and concludes the paper which is followed by references and appendices.

1.11. Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, this paper seeks to qualitatively understand the role that brand communication, particularly Facebook, plays in influencing Samsung's brand reputation from a consumer perspective against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix. The next chapter examines current literature related to the topic of study.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The researcher believes that managing brand reputation and consumer perceptions within the fast-paced consumer electronics industry is critical to Samsung's business. The research problem being investigated is to understand the role that Samsung's Facebook communication plays in influencing brand reputation from a consumer perspective. To create a rich understanding of the topic, this literature review aims to unpack the meaning of branding concepts that are pertinent to the study which is followed by the examination of Facebook as a brand communication platform and an explanation of consumer perceptions in branding. Lastly, the theoretical framework for this study is explored.

2.2. What is a brand?

The 1960 AMA definition of a brand is as follows – “a name, term, design, symbol, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from competitors” (cited in Maurya and Mishra, 2012). This definition highlights a brand in its primary form, and addresses the two major functions of a brand, being identification and differentiation, which is essential to brand building and provides categorisation so that consumers understand where and how to position the brand in their minds. For Samsung, these identification elements would possibly include the letter mark logo, product and brand slogans, website, jingle and the distinct use of the colour blue. Whilst these may provide tangible, visual identification and differentiation for the consumer, they are still merely brand elements that do not address the intangible aspects of the brand that are ignored by this definition.

Converse to the AMA definition, Neumeier (2003) states that a brand is not a logo, not an identity and not a product, but is rather a person's gut feeling about a product, service or organisation, as people are emotional and intuitive. Similarly, Godin (2009) suggests that brands are defined by people, and describes a brand as “the set of expectations, memories, stories and relationships that, taken together, account for a consumer's decision to choose one product or service over another”. These positions suggest that intangible brand elements hold great value, as echoed by Klopper and North (2011) who propose that a brand is social construct, that is consciously developed to hold a unique meaning that has value and connects with people.

Brands, according to Keller and Lehmann (2006) are the most valuable intangible assets that a firm can have, because of the value and meaning that it creates. Braude (2009), affirms that brands enable people's ability to create trust, shared meaning and a common bond. Brands can also signal credibility to an uncertain consumer - brand credibility, as

explained by Erdem and Swait (2004), is made up of trustworthiness and expertise, and the consumer's perception of whether the brand has the ability to deliver on these two components, consistently. A study by Munteanu and Pagalea titled "*Brands as a Mean of Consumer Self-expression and Desired Personal lifestyle*" (2014), revealed that consumers often choose brands that they feel are congruent with their lifestyle as a means of expressing themselves, in accordance with social identity theory.

From this, the researcher firstly concludes that brands can indicate risk reduction, trust, credibility, and the quality that consumers can expect from their intended purchase, and can also be a means of social self-expression. Secondly, brands are built around the basic product or service offering, enhanced by the marketing and communication that supports it, and very importantly, the consumer's experience with the offering.

Since this study is based on Samsung's brand reputation and its consumer's perceptions (outside-in perspective), rather than a brand identity analysis (inside-out perspective), the Keller and Lehmann (2006) interpretation of brand will be focused on, where it is the intangible brand aspects that create meaning and value among consumers.

2.3. What is brand communication?

Earlier definitions of human communication by Dance and Larson (cited in Eisend, 2016) provide the premise that communication is the "processing, conveying, sharing, or negotiating meaning between at least two entities through the use of mutually understood signs, such as language or pictures". Similarly, Dubrin (cited in Harris and de Chernatony, 2001) defines communication as the sending, receiving and understanding of messages which is the basic process by which managers and professionals accomplish their work. From these definitions of communication, the researcher infers that brand communication would be the conveyance and sharing of meaning and messaging from a brand, to consumers who process this information. These definitions do however appear limited as they imply that communication is outbound and one-dimensional, created in the brand and brand owner's favour. It does not consider the consumer's perception of the brand, nor the consumer's ability to co-create content on social media platforms such as Facebook which is the platform to be interrogated in this study.

Balmer and Greyser (2006) argue that brand communication should not be based on a manipulative model where the marketer dominates, but should be a transactional model where there is a balance between the marketer and consumer, with communication that originates from the consumers' needs and desires. Evans and Moutinho (cited in Klopper and North, 2011) conclude that brand communication should add value to a product for both the customer and the organisation. The value to be gained by the consumer is that the consumer learns the importance of what the brand can offer, and the brand gains monetary value from consumers being aware of the brand.

On the importance of brand communication, the exchange of information is indispensable to the distribution of goods and services in competitive environments (Koekemoer, 2014). Brand communication is the nexus between brand identity and reputation, that can create competitive advantage (Gray and Balmer, 1998) by leaving a mark on the minds and hearts of consumers, which creates a specific sense of meaning and feeling from them towards the brand (Wijaya 2011, cited in Wijaya, 2013).

Based on the above positions of brand communications, the researcher deduces that successful brand communication lies in the creation and culmination of a relationship of mutual value between a brand and its consumers to induce positive perceptions.

2.4. Brand communication platforms

The Establishment Survey (under The Broadcast Research Council of South Africa) provides information on national media consumption patterns in South Africa across different platforms, with a sample of 25000 households, and its latest data revealed that traditional TV, radio and print (as opposed to accessing the same via digital devices) remain dominant for viewing, listening and reading among participants (Bratt, 2017). It therefore, does not appear likely for these traditional, one-way media platforms to be completely replaced by newer alternatives among South African consumers. Digital media, however has changed the media consumption habits of consumers and these changes can be attributed availability of digital content and media, the opportunity for consumers to create content and the increasing popularity of smartphones being used for information and purchasing (Koekemoer, 2014).

Foster (2013) finds that marketing managers "readily concede that brands are the creations of consumers as much as the products of designers and researchers" (p.49). However, the researcher finds that a possible challenge with brand-consumer content co-creation, is that

individual experiences can vary and brands don't have full control over content that they have not produced which can have an impact on consumer perceptions and brand reputation. There has also been debate as to whether social media is the correct channel to engage with consumers, according to Fournier and Avery (cited in Laroche et al., 2013) who refer to brands as the "uninvited crashers" of social media, where people want to interact with each other, and not brands.

Despite these challenges, Nobre and Silva (2014) still find that brands recognise social networks, like Facebook, as an effective brand communication tool, that allows for the development of brand reputation, and promotion of brand image. A study by Braude on "*Social media's effect on consumer perception of organisational reputation and innovation*" (2009) reveals that consumers do want organisations to interact with them on social media, that organisations who use social media are seen as "innovative" and that consumers agree that social media can improve reputation.

Brands, therefore, according to the researcher, must be compelling enough for consumers to follow and converse with on Facebook, but also need to consider the value of their content to minimise the irritation factor to the consumer. As per the research problem, the study will attempt to ascertain how the Facebook content is being perceived by consumers as an influencer of brand reputation. A discussion on Facebook is provided in section 2.7 (pages 19 and 20).

2.5. Brand positioning

A brand's positioning refers to the building of a brand to occupy a distinctive tangible or intangible, sustainable competitive advantage in the mind of the consumer (Gwin and Gwin, 2003), relative to that of other competing organisations (Cant and Van Heerden, 2013). Keller and Kotler (2006, cited in Edu et al., 2013) highlight that when a brand is perceived by consumers in a clear way, in relation to the value it offers, the potential benefit to the brand is maximised. Tybout and Sternal (2015), identify that in developing a compelling positioning strategy, having insight into competitors and consumers is essential. Competitor insights identifies the category in which the brand should belong as well as its points of differentiation, and the consumer-based insights indicates how the brand fits into people's lives.

Edu and Negricea (cited in Edu et al., 2013) propose that positioning does not represent how a seller (brand) wants to be remembered by its target market, but rather what the consumer understands about the seller or brand.

Janiszewska and Insch (2012) state that while brands aim to create a positive outlook in positioning to increase competitiveness and create a positive bond with consumers, the positioning should be credible, as not being able to keep the promise that the brand creates, can result in a loss of credibility, which is a constituent of brand reputation. The authors further identify three basic types of brand positioning, namely, functional, symbolic and positioning through the target group's experience. The researcher finds that the positioning strategy most applicable to Samsung's brand is symbolic as this is when the brand focuses on "enhancing its image, identity, affinity, social acceptance and life fulfilment of the target group" (Janiszewska and Insch, 2012, p.13). A qualitative content analysis of Samsung's positioning on Facebook is provided in Chapter 4.

2.6. What is brand reputation?

The concept of brand reputation is very similar to reputation as a social construct. Reputation from a social point of view, represents the mental construct that others have about a person, based on their perceptions of that individual and although a person cannot control their own reputation, they can influence it (Lickerman, 2010).

Falala defines brand reputation as the sum of brand image, plus brand identity, plus the character of the brand (The Media Online, 2016). Riel, et al., (2007) define reputation as an overall assessment of a brand by their stakeholders and an aggregate perception by the stakeholders of the brand's ability to fulfil their expectation. The missing element of these definitions is possibly the element of time as specified in other scholarly definitions. Urde and Greyser (2015) interpret brand reputation as an outside-in perspective, of overall stakeholder perceptions, over time. Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009) propose that reputation is more than keeping the consumer promise, as it is earned over time and is continual. Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004, p.372) agree that when customers "get what they expect from a company time and time again (i.e. the corporate brand promise is kept) reputation is strengthened". Reputation, therefore, according to the authors is a cumulative output of the companies' brand identity, with emphasis on the consumer promise and the extent to which the consumer perceived they have experienced that promise, over time.

On the importance of having a strong reputation, Amblee and Tung Bui (2008) and Feldman et al (2014), suggest that when consumers have to choose among competing brands, and are uncertain about quality, they rely on brand name and reputation as an informative sign of quality and performance. Consumers rely on their perception of brand reputation because they do not have the same information that the brand does about its commitment to delivering features like quality or reliability (Fombrun and Van Riel, 1997).

Reputation indicates to the audience how one firm's offering compares to that of a competing firm, and has other favourable consequences such as being able to induce competitive advantage and charge premium prices (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). Since Samsung is positioned as a premium brand within the consumer electronics industry, where there are many competitors, many of whom are lower-priced, having a favourable reputation is a necessity, to signal to consumers that their products are worth the premium price.

Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004) further state the importance of a good reputation when public confidence in a brand is low. When consumer confidence is low, public scrutiny is high and consumers demand transparency making a strong focus on reputation, vital. On low consumer confidence, a South African study on "*Social media and best practice: The consumer-brand relationship*" (Aung Maw, 2015) revealed that from its findings, consumers are more willing to engage with a brand on social media regarding a negative experience rather than a positive experience. The researcher finds this outcome crucial, considering the influence of peers on consumer perception, which can have a negative impact on brand reputation, yet still presents an opportunity for brands to turn these into positive outcomes.

Ultimately, the researcher deduces that a brand that creates and meets expectations in the mind of the consumers, over time, enhances overall reputation. Reputation occurs primarily through the signal that a brand sends to its market (brand communication) and is established by tactics (like Facebook), and often dictates perceived quality and credibility to the consumer. Specifically on Facebook's impact on brand reputation, a conference paper from the International Communication Association (2011) titled "*Examining how organizations Facebook pages impact perceptions of CSR and organization-public relationships*" (2011), deduced that "Facebook does matter" in impacting brand perceptions, however, the study was conducted quantitatively on participants who were observed in a lab. Zhang and Ngwese's paper "*Brand reputation in International Marketing*" (2007) also investigated importance of brand reputation in the marketing of products in the mobile telephone industry, and found that if a brand has gained a positive reputation from consumers, it will be considered trustworthy. Zhang and Ngwese's study was also conducted quantitatively and

neither of these studies were in the South African consumer context. Quantitative research has the benefit of producing numbers and statistics that are easy to grasp, however, it is qualitative research that produces insights (Nielsen, 2004). Since this paper aims to address the consumer perspective, the topic will be addressed qualitatively.

2.7. What is Facebook?

As at 30 June 2016, South Africa was recorded at having 14 million Facebook users (Internet World Stats, 2017), which is roughly a quarter of the South African population. A Boston study "*Why do people use Facebook?*" (2012) defines Facebook as a Social Networking Service (SNS) that gives individuals three capabilities: creation of a public/semi-private personal profile (with a picture and biography), a list of other users the profile shares a connection with (based on Facebook algorithms), and the opportunity to view and track connections made by individuals and other users. Added to this, is the opportunity to like, comment, share and react to any Facebook posts. The same study also reveals that Facebook satisfies two human needs as follows – the need to belong, and the need for self-presentation. This proves that at a fundamental level, Facebook is used for personal interaction and connection with others, which can make consumers a conduit for brand communication and thereby, influencers of brand reputation.

Brands have also embraced Facebook as a key channel to drive consumer engagement and brand awareness, by engaging where their consumers engage with each other. From a brand position, consumer-peer interaction is taken a step further by acknowledging that it is also a "business truism" that consumers trust peer opinion more than branded communication (Soat, 2014). Hollenbeck and Kaikati (2012) further suggest that Facebook users actually align their online personality identity with the brands they follow, to suggest subtle cues to others about their "ideal selves". For Samsung, this is also a valuable insight, to align themselves as their "ideal" consumer, which will stem from consumer perceptions.

Facebook as a brand communication platform, presents opportunities to "generate greater propagation and richer conversation - and to convert more consumers into brand advocates. In the highly networked social world we live in today, such brand advocates are priceless" (Malhotra and See, 2013). There are distinct advantages in brands using Facebook to communicate with consumers, such as being able to drill down into the location, age, gender, spoken language, interests, online behaviours and their connections (Facebook (a), 2017). A research paper from Maurer and Wiegmann (2011) revealed that users are not

influenced to purchase products due to Facebook but are rather more influenced by their peers, termed “friendvertising” and are likely to copy the behaviour of friends and opinion leaders. This creates the opportunity for brands to use their communication to build brand reputation, with the goal that its Facebook followers will include brand messages in their conversations with friends. Further, the goal should be to be a brand that is relevant since the user is in control of the extent to which they interact with the brand on Facebook.

2.8. Consumer perceptions

To unpack consumer perceptions in branding, it will be useful to first understand what perception means in the human psyche. Perception refers to the process of receiving stimuli and interpreting that stimuli based on existing knowledge. It is a three-step process, of selection, organisation and interpretation that happens constantly. Perception is interpreted differently by different individuals, based on their existing knowledge and it is the reason that two people can look at the same optical illusion and see two different things (Boundless, 2016).

Consumer perception in branding is similar, since, as previously mentioned in section 2.1, a brand is a social construct, and will be interpreted and positioned differently in the minds of individuals. Brands however, generally target their communication towards certain groups and target audiences who already have a liking or interest in the brand and the researcher believes consumer perceptions are vital to a brand’s communications strategy. According to Keller (1993), consumer perceptions are the brand associations held in consumer memory e.g. perceptions of credibility, which can be shaped by a brands marketing communication, which in this case, is Samsung’s Facebook page.

Consumers perceptions can be a key driver of business, as people are prepared to pay more for a desired brand that they perceive to be of high quality (Klopper and North, 2011). Liehr-Gobbers and Storck (2011) find that often times, price premium can only be justified by how the consumers perceives the value that the product will provide, which is driven by reputational aspects. As such, perception, or perceived quality/value appears in many scholarly models such as that of Aaker (1991) and Keller (2001) as a key contributor to brand equity.

Another consideration is that brands can indicate less risk to the consumer. A consumer’s perceived risk, according to Kapferer (cited in Maurya and Mishra, 2012) can be economic,

functional, psychological, social or experiential. Having a strong brand reputation coupled with strong brand communication, can reduce perceived risk to the consumer and enhance consumer confidence.

Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) found that user-generated social media communications have a greater impact than firm-created communications, as consumers tend to trust the information of other users. This implies that negative reviews for example, may affect the perceptions of other consumers, making consumers a conduit of brand communication, whether positive or negative. This is a critical point for the research problem being investigated as the researcher feels that communications strategy needs to be informed by consumer perceptions and insights. Knowing how consumers currently perceive the brand's communication, would allow for a better understanding on how to enhance brand reputation.

2.9. Framework: Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix

The Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix will inform the development of data collection and analysis of the study. This framework has been saliently recognised by the researcher for its pragmatism and the guiding questions it offers, to the concept of brand reputation. This research study will solely focus on exploring the brand reputation elements of the model (differentiation, credibility, performance, responsibility, willingness to support, recognisability, relevance, and trustworthiness) as the focus of this paper is around consumer perceptions and not brand identity. By addressing these reputational elements and taking the research questions into account, the researcher will be able to address how the Samsung brand is being perceived specifically on their Facebook platform, against these well-suited constituents that make up brand reputation in the context of the South African Samsung consumer. A possible shortcoming of using this model for this paper is that it is integrated with brand identity, which is not under study for this paper.

Using the structure of this model, the researcher will conduct a qualitative content analysis of the Facebook page and secondly, conduct in-depth interviews to gain consumer perceptions and then look at the alignments or discrepancies between the two as per the research questions.

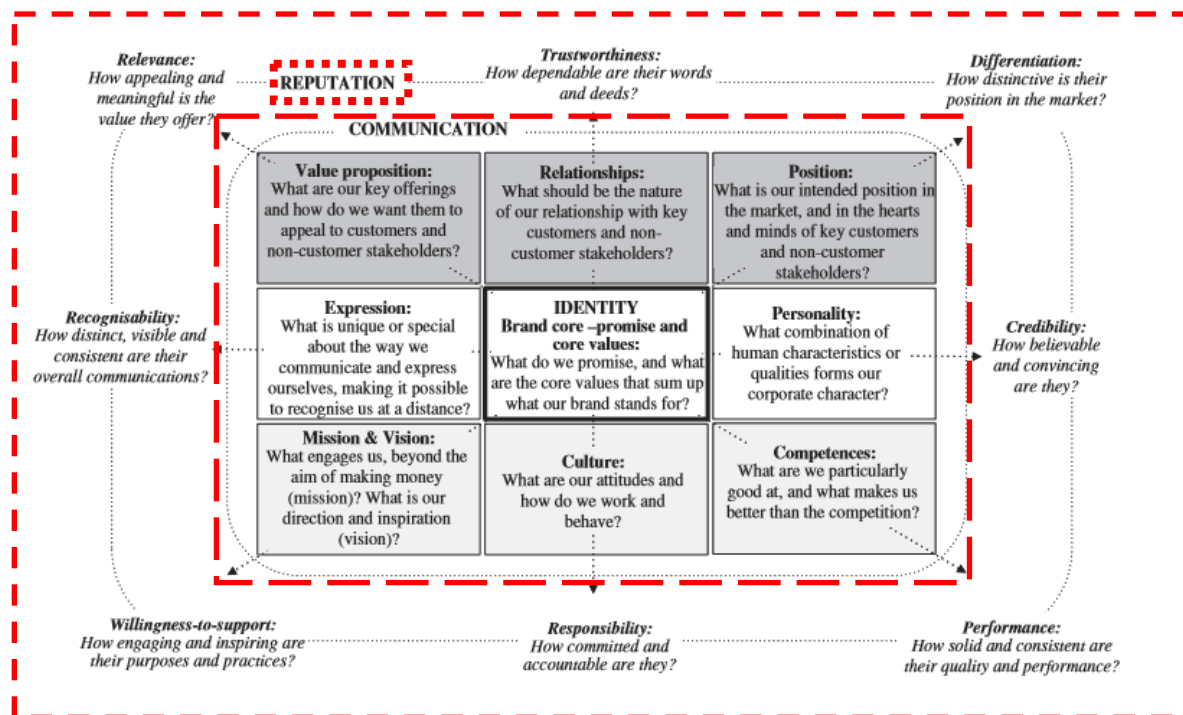


Figure: The Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix (2015, p.103)

Urde and Greyser introduced the above model in “*The Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix – The case of the Nobel Prize*” (2015), to understand how this global institution managed to achieve its elevated and prestigious reputation and to establish how brand identity links to reputation. Hoffman and Weithaler used this framework in their study, “*Building brand reputation in the digital age*” (2015) and concluded multiple online communication channels indeed have an impact on creating positive brand reputation and influence the consumers decision making process

2.10. Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review was to unpack the research questions by examining the key concepts in conjunction with current literature. The concept of brand has been examined and it is concluded that the intangible aspects of a brand is what creates value and meaning to the consumer, which is the focus of this paper. Brand communication has been unpacked for its value and purpose to brands and to the consumers, and it can be observed that brand communication needs to create mutuality between the two, by establishing shared meaning based on consumer perceptions, which the researcher is determined to gauge with this study on Samsung. In terms of brand communication platforms, it was deduced that despite traditional media still being very popular in South Africa, digital media is what creates a relationship with the consumer and provides an

opportunity for the consumer to co-create content, which ultimately affects brand reputation. Brand positioning refers to how a brand ideally would want to situate itself in the mind of the consumer and in this study, Samsung's communication position on Facebook is examined. Brand reputation reflects the overall esteem in which a brand is held, and can indicate quality, credibility and reduced risk to the consumer and creates competitive advantage for a brand making a positive reputation a critical component of business. Facebook is the social media platform to be examined in the study and there is debate as to whether it is the correct space in which brands should engage with consumers, however the literature shows that there are advantages to Facebook that appear to offset any doubt of its efficacy. The data collection and analysis for this study will be informed by the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation matrix that contains brand reputation elements as outlined, to gauge consumer perceptions around Samsung's Facebook page. In the next chapter, the research methodology for this study is discussed in detail.

Chapter 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Methodology refers to the way in which problems are approached and answers are sought. In the social sciences, it refers to how research is conducted (Taylor et al., 2016) . The research approach for this study is qualitative, as it is the most appropriate method to address consumer perception. In this chapter, the research paradigm and population and sampling methods used for this study are detailed, followed by the data collection and data analysis methods. Trustworthiness for the study is discussed, followed by limitations and delimitations set for this study. Lastly, the ethical considerations for this paper are discussed.

3.2. Research paradigm

A paradigm is a “worldview” to a holder, that defines the nature of the world, the holder’s place in that world and the different relationships the holder has to that world (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Punch (2014, p.16) defines a paradigm as a “set of assumptions about the world” and what constitutes “proper techniques and topics for inquiring about that world”. The paradigm for this study is interpretivism, as the “nature of the inquiry is interpretive, and the purpose of the inquiry is to understand a particular phenomenon” (Farzanfar, cited in Tuli, 2011). This study seeks to interpret how consumers perceive Samsung’s Facebook page and attach meaning to Samsung’s reputation as a brand. From an ontological perspective of interpretivism, reality is relative and subjective. Reality is constructed by and differs among people (Scotland, 2012) and the purpose of this study is to look at this socially constructed reality. Epistemology in interpretivism refers to the relationship between the knower (researcher) and what can be known (Punch, 2014). In this study epistemology looks at what the researcher has uncovered about the brand and the knowledge that consumers have about the brand as a result of brand communication. From a metatheoretical position, interpretivism tells a story that is rich in description and narrative, from the participants account through direct quotes that describes the individual’s social reality (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). The methodological approach for the study is described in Section 3.3 of this Chapter.

3.3. Methodological Approach

Interpretive positions as discussed in Section 3.2, are those that attempt to understand consumer behaviour and perceptions and the research objective of this study is to understand the role that Facebook plays in influencing consumer’s perceptions of Samsung’s brand reputation. As such, the methodological approach for this study is qualitative. Qualitative research is a process of inquiry which assumes that not all data can be easily measured or quantified, and it therefore deals in the subjective, lived experiences of its participants within a specific social context, to form an analysis (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Qualitative research has also been described as “naturalistic, ethnographic and participatory” (Kirk and Miller, 2005, p.9), producing findings that are not arrived at through statistical techniques but which are derived from real-world settings where the phenomena unfolds naturally (Patton, 2001 cited in Golafshani, 2003), thus the researcher is required to get closer to what is being studied (Punch, 2014). The data collection methods in qualitative research are less formalised than those of quantitative research, but are more diverse and multi-dimensional (Punch, 2014).

3.4. Population and Sampling

A population is the total collection of individuals or objects that is the focus of the query (Hassan, n.d.) and the selection of the population from which information must be ascertained, is guided by the research question (Banerjee and Chaudhury, 2010). This total population is referred to as the target or theoretical population because it includes all the participants that are of theoretical interest to the researcher (Salkind, 2010). In the case of Samsung, the target population would be all Samsung consumers, as well as, all of Samsung's followers on Facebook across South Africa, male and female. However, for this study it would not be possible to reach this entire population, given that there would be cost implications to reach participants living in other areas and there are time limitations within which the study must be completed. Therefore, the researcher will rely on the portion of the target population that is accessible for the study, known as the accessible population, which is representative of the target population and is defined by additional inclusion criteria that considers the geographic, social and time-frames required (Lunsford and Lunsford, 1995). The accessible population for this study would be Samsung consumers who are Samsung Facebook followers, based in Sandton, Johannesburg.

From the accessible population, a sample was selected. A sample, according to Du-Plooy-Cilliers et al., (2014) is a subset of the population that is considered to be representative of the population under study. The advantages of selecting a sample for the research include cost effectiveness, speed, convenience and potential for improved quality and reliability of the research (Salkind, 2010).

In this study, the researcher made use of non-probability sampling, which is used in qualitative studies. In non-probability sampling, every individual in the population does not have an equal chance of being chosen for the study and it is difficult to gain access to the entire population. Thus, this sampling method is not used with the aim to generalise results to the larger population.

The researcher employed two data collection methods, a qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews. Regarding the qualitative content analysis, the total population is all followers of the Samsung Mobile South Africa Facebook page, which was at 1, 081, 594, as last recorded at 6th June 2017. To narrow the focus of the qualitative content analysis, the

researcher chose to extract a sample, by focusing on the posts between the period of 1st May to 31st May 2017, which was also the month of launch of the Galaxy S8 launch in South Africa.

For the in-depth interviews, the specific sampling method used was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is designed to develop understanding and theories from selecting “information rich” individuals that would provide the most valuable insight based on the research question (Devers and Frankel, 2000). The researcher focused on consumers based in the Sandton, Johannesburg area, for ease of access to them, and since the research question dictated that the study will focus on consumer’s perceptions of brand reputation on Facebook, it was fitting to select participants for the sample that,

- (a) own a Samsung mobile device, and one other Samsung home appliance which would indicate regular use of products from the brand
- (b) follow Samsung on Facebook and,
- (c) have previously visited the Samsung Experience Centre which would indicate prior exposure to the brand’s space and communication.

The researcher’s reason for choosing this sample is based on the assumptions that due to this group of consumers living in an urban area, they would have access to several platforms and channels through which Samsung interacts, have means to access Facebook and they would also be accessible to the researcher, for data collection purposes. The researcher chose to include a sample of five participants for this study

3.5. Data collection methods

There are two main categories of qualitative research collection, being unobtrusive and field research, that are described in further detail below.

Unobtrusive research examines behavioral observation, studies of pre-existing archives and content analysis. Unobtrusive data is non-reactive, meaning that it is not affected by the researcher (Robson and McCartan, 2016) and these techniques are highly valued as they do not “break the skin” of the data (Brabazon, 2010 cited in O’Brien, 2010). For this study, the researcher has conducted unobtrusive research by performing a qualitative content analysis of the Samsung Facebook page, against the elements that comprise brand reputation in the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix.

Field research is used when there is the need to observe phenomena as it occurs in a natural setting (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014), as opposed to a controlled environment. Bailey (2007) identifies that the primary purpose of field research is to understand these phenomena or activities and what they mean to those who engage with them. Accordingly, Burgess (2000), identifies that core to the nature of field research, is the development of a relationship between the researcher and participant, however the level of involvement from the researcher can vary. Du-Plooy-Cilliers et al., (2014) identify ethnography, grounded theory, case studies and action research as some of the field research approaches. Due to the researcher's 'obtrusive' involvement in field research, there is always a risk of participants behaving differently in the setting, which may skew the outcome of the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The researcher conducted field research by individual, open-ended interviews with participants, where the same set of questions, that was informed by the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix was used. Using the same set of questions for each participant allowed for the collection of perspectives in an organised manner to aid analysis and compare notes. Interviews were chosen as they were more accessible to potential participants than other qualitative data collection methods as they took place at a location that was convenient to the participants. In-depth interviews have the strengths of generating in-depth personal accounts and understanding personal context, motivations and impacts (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

The researcher conducted participant interviews as per the schedule below and the interviews were voice recorded via the researcher's mobile phone.

Participant	Date	Time	Location
Participant A	15 June 2017	12:00pm	Participant's place of employment
Participant B	16 June 2017	13:00pm	Participant's home
Participant C	16 June 2017	18:00pm	Participant's home
Participant D	23 June 2017	10:30am	Participant's place of employment
Participant E	24 June 2017	13:00pm	Participant's home

These two data collection methods aided in solving the research questions in attempt to understand how Samsung has positioned themselves on Facebook, how consumers perceive that content, and the comparison between the two collection methods, to identify

any discrepancies. Using two data collection methods also enhanced the trustworthiness of the study, which is discussed in section 3.7 (pages 29 and 30).

3.6. Data analysis method

Content analysis is a strategy for analysing text by unobtrusively exploring textual information, with the intention of determining trends and patterns of words (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The coding categories used for the qualitative content analysis were informed by the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation matrix.

The steps used for the qualitative content analysis of Samsung South Africa's Facebook are that of Elo and Kyngäs (2008, cited in Vaismoradi et al., 2013), which involved preparing the data by immersion in the content and capturing screenshots, organising the data by creating categories that were informed by the framework to code the data, and lastly reporting the analysis and results which is discussed in Chapter 4.

The second method of data analysis is a thematic content analysis of the in-depth interviews. A thematic content analysis involves analysing the participant interview transcripts, pulling themes from the data and providing examples of the themes (Burnard et al., 2008), in the form of quotations.

To end, the researcher compares the information collated from the two data analysis methods to draw comparisons between the brand-generated communication and the consumer's perceptions of the communications, against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix.

3.7. Trustworthiness in Qualitative studies

Trustworthiness is the overarching term that is used for reliability and validity in qualitative studies, and is further divided into credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985 cited in Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014), which are further elaborated below.

Credibility: Since qualitative research depends on the researcher's interpretation of participant information, credibility refers to the accuracy with which this is accomplished. In this study, the researcher was required to form a relationship with the participants to gain insight, which enhances credibility. Credibility in this study is also enhanced by data

triangulation, from the two data collection methods (qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews) being used. Credibility will also be maintained by not asking leading questions during interviews, ensuring that questions are clearly structured, and transcribing the interviews.

Transferability: Whilst qualitative research does not attempt to generalise results due to collection of differing consumer perceptions, transferability refers to the ability of the findings to be applied to a similar situation beyond the specifics of the study and achieve a similar result. Whilst this study is focused on a specific brand, and focuses on a specific period of communication, with time limitations regarding execution, there are two strategies that the researcher employed to increase transferability of the paper. The first is providing “thick description” by providing the reader with a detailed account of the context, participants and research design, such that the reader can ascertain the transferability of the study for themselves. The second is through the fact that non-purposive sampling was used, as discussed in section 3.4 (pages 25-27), which provides additional details to researchers and readers to evaluate (Maree, 2016).

Dependability: Dependability in qualitative research is demonstrated through the quality of process integration, between research design, implementation, data gathering, data analysis, and the theory generated from the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014; Maree, 2016). Dependability is shown throughout the research process, from research questions that inform the data that is being mined for, the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix that will be used and the data collection methods to be used.

Confirmability: Confirmability refers to “extent to which the findings of the study are shaped by the participants and not by researcher bias” (Lincoln and Guba cited in Maree, 2016 p.125). This implies that the data collected must support the researcher’s findings, and that the researcher must have described the research process to ensure that others can follow the research design. Confirmability can also be enhanced by avoiding interpretations that are biased by the researcher and showing how the researcher arrived at the conclusions made, using relevant direct quotes. Data triangulation is used in this study, which enhances confirmability by providing other readers with further insight into how conclusions were derived.

The researcher conducted a pre-test of the interview questions (see Appendix B) on an individual external to this study to enhance reliability of the information gathered. This pre-testing allowed the researcher to adjust the questions where necessary to ensure that the questions had a logical flow, were not linguistically confusing, were not leading and were open-ended.

3.8. Ethical considerations

An ethical study is one that has integrity, takes responsibility for the knowledge it has produced and ensures that the participants involved are protected mentally, emotionally and physically (O'Leary, 2004).

An important ethical concern that needs to be taken into consideration from the perspective of the researcher, is that the researcher is a current employee of the brand being studied. To eliminate researcher bias, no colleagues of the researcher were interviewed, so as not to skew the findings of this study, towards the brand. Categorically, the researcher can state that no confidential information or internal documentation and/or statistics that he/she may have access to as an employee of the brand was used, and only information available on the public domain, by way of internet searches and Facebook was used.

The researcher's level of involvement in the study was overt partial participation where the researcher is known to the participants, but balance is maintained between being an insider and outsider, and there was no daily immersion in the lives of participants. The advantage of this approach was being able to personally interact with participants, however still remaining slightly detached, to enhance objectivity towards the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

From the perspective of the participant, the researcher ensured that the participants were formally aware that they were partaking in a scholarly research study and undertook the same with informed written consent (see Appendix I). All participants received full context of the purpose of the study and were assured that confidentiality will be maintained, where their identity will be known to the researcher and not be made available to anyone else. Participants were informed that no incentives would be awarded for participation and it was reiterated that the research is not brand-driven, but a scholarly study. The researcher ensured that the physical and psychological comfort of participants was not compromised,

by arranging to meet at their convenience. If participants had uncertainty or were uncomfortable with answering any question, no responses were forced.

3.9. Conclusion

This study is executed from an interpretivist position and seeks to qualitatively explore how Samsung's has positioned their brand communication on Facebook. This is then compared to the consumer perception of the communication, against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation matrix. This paper employs two qualitative data collections methods – a qualitative content analysis and a thematic content analysis from semi-structured interviews, where purposive sampling was used. In the next chapter, the findings and analysis from the two data collection methods are discussed.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the findings and analyses from the two data collection methods are discussed. In mining for answers to research question 1 (refer to section 1.5, page 9), the researcher conducted unobtrusive research in the form of a qualitative content analysis on Samsung's Facebook posts between the 1st and 31st of May 2017, according to categories that were informed by the Urde and Greyser Corporate Identity and Reputation matrix. Each element that makes up brand reputation in the framework was used to create a category that is led by a defining question. Based on this the researcher collected screenshots (see Appendix F) of each post within the examined period, and slotted these into the most appropriate category (see Appendix G). In each category that is presented, the findings and analysis is discussed with appropriate examples.

The second part of this chapter presents the findings and analyses of the field research that was conducted, in mining for answers for research question 2 (refer to section 1.5, page 9).

The researcher conducted five in-depth interviews with the sample population. This data was then transcribed, and processed through thematic coding, based on the same categories that were formed for the qualitative content analysis, against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Identity and Reputation matrix.

To end this chapter, there is a comparison of the analyses between the unobstructive and field data collection tools against the Urde and Greyser Corporate Identity and Reputation matrix. This enabled the identifying of alignments or discrepancies between how Samsung positions itself on Facebook and how consumers perceive the communication, against brand reputational elements, which seeks to answer to research question 3 (refer to section 1.5, page 9).

4.2. Unobstructive: Findings and analysis: Qualitative content analysis Research Question 1

In addressing research question 1, unobstructive research was conducted by exploring the content of Samsung's Facebook page from a sample of posts that were drawn between 1st May and 31st May 2017 (the sampling used is detailed in section 3.4, pages 25-27). All 52 posts in this period, were categorised according to the brand reputation elements of the Urde and Greyser Corporate Identity and Reputation matrix (see Appendix G). Each reputational element was coupled with a defining question which was adapted for this study from the framework, as shown in the table below:

Coding Category		Defining question
1	Differentiation	Based on Samsung's posts, how distinctively do they position themselves in the market?
2	Credibility	Based on Samsung's posts, how believable and convincing is the language used?
3	Performance	How consistent is Samsung's quality and performance?
4	Responsibility	Based on Samsung's posted communication on Facebook, how committed and accountable are they as a brand?
5	Willingness to support	How engaging and inspiring is Samsung's communication in creating a positive consumer experience?
6	Recognisability	How distinct, visible and consistent is Samsung's Facebook communication in terms of visual and verbal elements?
7	Relevance	How appealing and meaningful is the value that Samsung offers, based on their Facebook communication?
8	Trustworthiness	How dependable are their words in creating trust as a brand, based on the Facebook communication?

Source: Adapted from “*The Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix – The case of the Nobel Prize*” (Urde and Greyser, 2015)

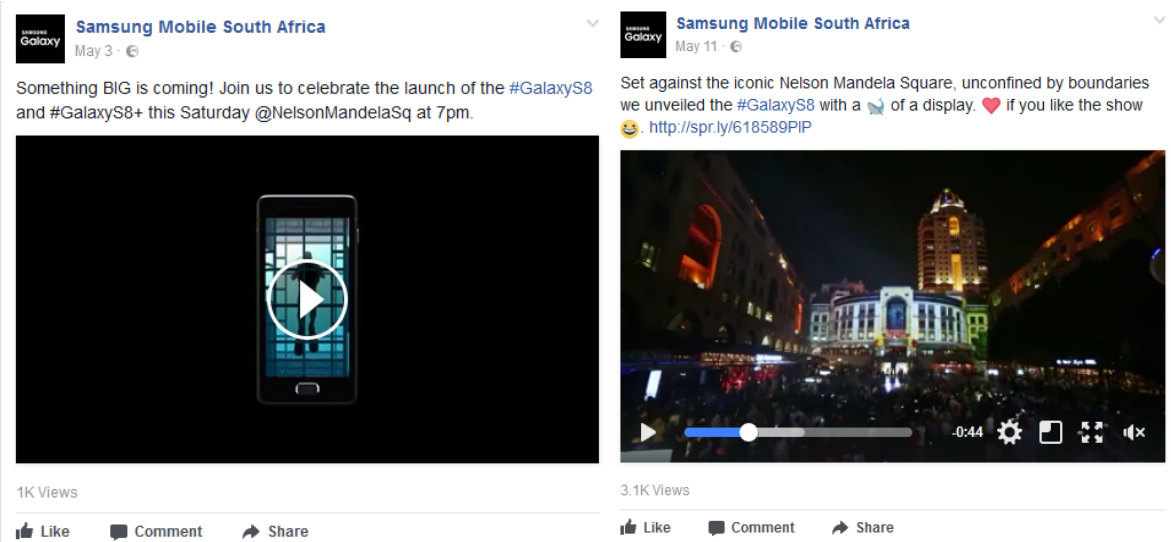
Each category described above, is analysed in the sections to follow.

4.2.1. Differentiation

The first category and brand reputation element is differentiation, which deals with how distinctively the brand positions itself on its Facebook page. The researcher found eleven posts within the period that fit into this category. Samsung builds differentiation by positioning its products as those that complement and enhance your lifestyle, as a companion, rather than a functional accessory. The posts are executed with a tone that is premium and eloquent. This is demonstrated in posts below, that shows the Gear S3 with the tagline “Elegance is timeless”. The second post states that “when you dare to defy barriers (with the Galaxy S8) you set yourself free”. This reflects a strong aspirational positioning of the brand, and the creation of brand memories and stories, which give a brand meaning, as suggested by Godin (2009).

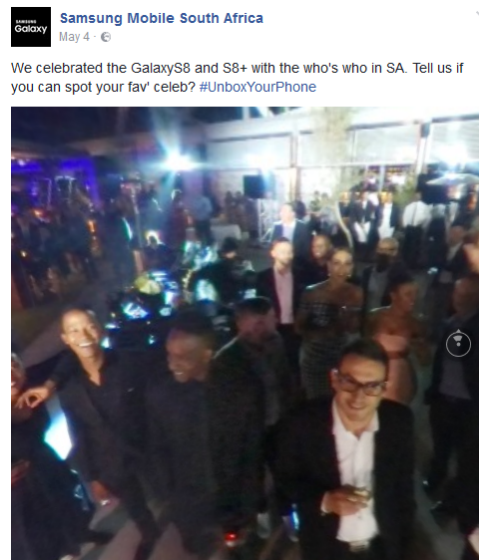


May 2017, being the month of launch the Galaxy S8, featured strong promotion of the new high-end device with strong pre-launch communication that invited the public to the launch event via a teaser video captioned “Something big is coming”. The launch event of the Galaxy S8 would also fit in this category as the event video was posted with the product being introduced at the “iconic” Nelson Mandela Square, which implies a premium venue alignment for the product as well. These two posts are show as follows:



The literature has shown that consumers often choose brands as a form self-expression (Munteanu and Pagalea, 2014) and also align their online identity with brands that they feel are representative of their “ideal selves” (Hollenbeck and Kaikati, 2012). The researcher believes then, that Samsung also recognises itself as a brand of self-expression through its use of venues and the celebrities it endorses, in the hope that they are relatable to the

brand's audience. The post with the most comments within the examined period is from the 4th of May, and belongs to this category. It is a celebrity 360-degree photo, where your mobile device can be tilted to get a 360-degree view of the room and the people in it. This post had 50 comments as consumers may relate to it because of the South African celebrities featured and the 360-degree photo is an interesting way to show it.



These posts collectively show Samsung positioning itself as a premium brand on Facebook reflecting the aspirational status to be acquired by owning the brand, as its differentiator. Samsung appears to prescribe how consumers should feel about themselves as product owners, which creates an emotional bond with the consumer. Creating emotional bonds through feelings of aspiration is testament to the intangible elements of a brand that create value and meaning to consumers, as reflected in the literature.

4.2.2. Credibility

The second category to be analysed is credibility, within which there are eleven posts. Credibility, as an element of brand reputation, deals with the extent to which the posts are believable and convincing. At a fundamental level, brand credibility can be seen through the number of Samsung followers on Facebook which is approximately 1, 081, 594. This is a substantial number which could indicate brand credibility to potential followers, as when current followers like, share or comment on posts they become carriers of the brand message, which amplifies the importance of maintaining positive consumer perceptions in brand reputation. The total number of posts in the examined period is 52 original content posts produced by the brand as opposed to shared posts from other sources. A further signal

of brand credibility is that Samsung posts content on almost a daily basis which demonstrates consistency and commitment to building and maintaining credibility.

Posts within the credibility category share details on product features and benefits to enhance consumer education. The tone of these posts seems to be angled towards being inspirational and to incite curiosity. This is demonstrated in the post below, with the Gear S3 being positioned as a smart wearable device that not only looks good but always has the time to listen to you. The post also offers a tutorial, which the researcher feels is key in developing credibility and consumer understanding of how features work.



In addition, the post below shows that the S8 together with Dex allows the consumer to turn any place into a workplace, which could be very convincing and enticing to the consumer who needs flexibility in where they work for the day.



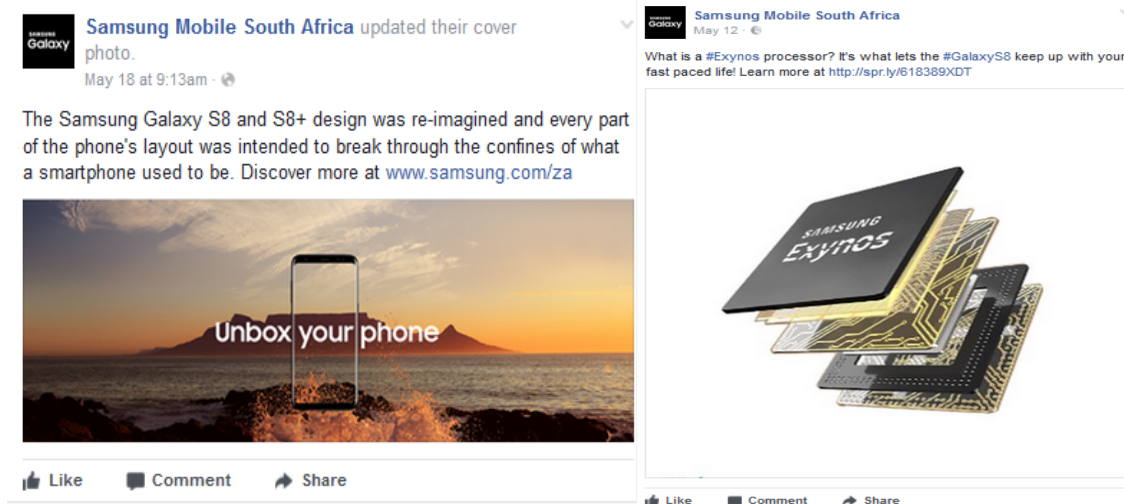
The post with the most likes in the chosen period, is from the 5th May 2017 and is an example of credibility. The image is of a child sitting under the dining room table in a dinosaur costume, with a Galaxy S8 phone in hand. The message is that you can protect your device from unexpected downloads with Knox 2.0, a security feature. This may have created high engagement from parents who can relate to this happening with their phones. This post had 3500 likes and falls within credibility due to it creating awareness of the Knox 2.0 security feature.



These posts are positioned to showcase features and benefits that are intended to imply trustworthiness and expertise in the brand, which are components of brand credibility (Erdem and Swait, 2004). The importance of being a credibly positioned brand is highlighted by Janiszewska and Insch (2012) who state that a loss of credibility can mean not delivering on the consumer promise, which has an impact on brand reputation.

4.2.3. Performance

Performance is the third category and deals with how consistent Samsung is terms of quality and performance. The researcher's interpretation of the category is that while Samsung can communicate performance, as in the posts below, in terms of claims such as the S8 being the ultimate device to own and hard features such as an Exynos Processor, the meaning and experience of performance should be found in the consumer's perception. As such, this category was explored further in the in-depth interviews.



4.2.4. Responsibility

Responsibility is the fourth category and brand reputation element in the analysis, however since this category deals with how committed and accountable the brand is, the researcher deemed it more appropriate to address this from the consumer perspective via the consumer interviews. Consumers were asked of their understanding of what a responsible brand is, and how they would assess Samsung as a responsible brand based on the Facebook communication presented. The findings and analysis of responsibility can be found in section 4.3.2.4, on page 46.

4.2.5. Willingness to support

Willingness to support is the next category and brand reputation element which deals with how engaging and inspiring Samsung's brand communication is, in creating a positive consumer experience. There were sixteen posts falling within this category. Willingness to support through engagement is demonstrated by Samsung having personalised responses to consumer queries without relying on automated responses. Personalised responses could contribute to making consumers feel as though the Facebook platform is not only one for receiving information from Samsung, but one that can act as a two-way communication channel with the brand.

Samsung does not just focus on static content but also creates posts specifically for engagement such as the 360-degree video campaign. The 360-degree video campaign consisted of seven posts that depicted the "unboxing" of a journey, which following the "unboxing" launch theme of the S8. The campaign journeys across iconic South African landmarks (Umhlanga Lighthouse, Muizenburg, Table Mountain, Nelson Mandela Bridge

and the Johannesburg skyline, all of which are shown with 360-degree views). In this “unboxing” consumers could engage and participate by commenting on their favorite landmark to stand a chance to win an S8. This type of theme is intended to create feelings of pride and nostalgia towards places that South African consumers identify with and can therefore be an inspiring and emotive position for Samsung to take. The post with the most shares within the period, on 18th May 2017, is from this specific campaign and had 333 shares.



This category shows evidence of a “transactional” model of brand communication model followed by Samsung, as recommended by Balm and Greyer (2006). A transactional prescribes that brand communication should strike a balance between the marketer and consumer, with communication that originates from the consumers’ needs and desires. The consumer perceptions of this category were explored in the in-depth interview portion of this study.

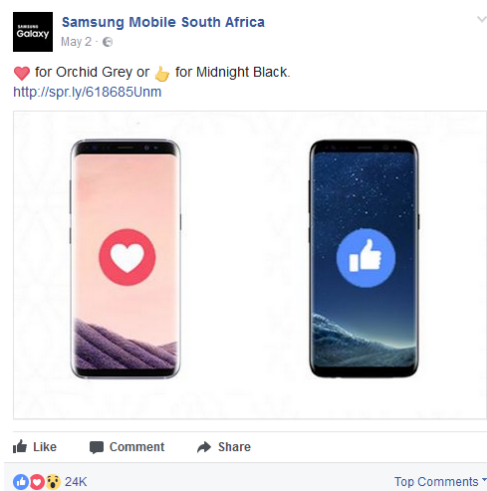
4.2.6. Recognisability

The sixth category is recognisability which refers to how distinct, visible and consistent the communication is, visually and verbally. Whilst this category is further elaborated on in the in-depth interviews from a consumer perspective in section 4.3.2.6 on pages 46, a short analysis is provided here. Recognisability is expressed by the “Samsung Galaxy” logo as the profile picture and the S8 “unboxing” theme that flows throughout the period under investigation. Throughout the posts, there is consistent use of tone that expresses a brand whose products are premium, using the same font, and a photography style that uses warm muted colours such as grey, black, brown, orange, greens and blues. The page also shows

consistency of themes through the videos and the theme of “unboxing” that is used on Facebook as well as traditional channels. This category refers to the tangible elements of brand, as referred to by the earlier AMA definition of a brand (cited in Maurya and Mishra, 2012), which are still important for purposes of identification and differentiation, and this was also explored with participants.

4.2.7. Relevance

Relevance, in terms of how appealing and meaningful in value the communication is, is the seventh category. There are twelve posts that fall within this category. These posts were placed in this category for the fact that they were posted with a lesser focus on Samsung product features, but more on special holiday greetings, and motivational posts. These messages were about Workers Day, Mother’s Day, Monday motivational posts, Sunday relaxing posts, free gifts with purchase offers, promotional events for the Samsung S8. The voting posts especially those that require a response with a like or comment, offer a way to capture the attention of followers and create interaction with the brand. The voting post that follows is from 22nd May, and asked consumers to vote for their favourite colour Galaxy S8 with a “love” for the orchid grey or a “like” for midnight black. This post had 17 000 reactions.



Relevance is interpreted as those posts that offer content that is appealing and meaningful beyond product-focused content. It is the content that enables the brand to “stay relevant” and keep up to date with special events. Relevance reflects a mutually beneficial relationship between the brand as consumer, as suggested by Evans and Moutinho (cited in Klopper and North, 2011).

4.2.8. Trustworthiness

The last category is trustworthiness, which entails how dependable Samsung's Facebook communication is in creating trust for the brand. This category was investigated through the in-depth interviews since trustworthiness needed to be looked at through the consumer perspective rather than from a brand perspective. Having consumer trust in a brand is highly beneficial to brand reputation, as suggested by Soat (2014) and Mauer and Wiegmann (2011) as consumers tend to trust words of their peers more than brand communication messages. The analysis of the consumer perspective of trustworthiness can be found in section 4.3.2.8 on page 49.

4.3. Field research: Findings and Analysis: In-depth interviews – Research Question 2

With respect to research question 2, the researcher conducted field research in the form of in-depth interviews with five participants and the outcome of the same is discussed in this section. The interview guide (see Appendix C) was informed by the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation matrix, in the same way that the qualitative content analysis was conducted. The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to determine the consumer perception of Samsung's Facebook communication. This would allow the identifying of discrepancies between Samsung's positioning of communication on Facebook and how consumers perceive that content. The goal of identifying differences in perceptions of the Facebook communication is to guide brands in specific areas as per the specific elements of brand reputation as per the framework of this study. The comparison between the qualitative content analysis and the thematic analysis is what will establish the answer to research question 3.

4.3.1. Findings: In-depth Interviews

The researcher organised the interview questions into those that dealt with the key concepts (refer to section 1.7, page 10) of the study, those that were based on the reputational elements of the framework for the study (refer to section 2.9, pages 21-22) and concluding questions.

The findings were arranged in a table format with the interview questions, a description of each participant's response as interpreted by the researcher and the emerging themes. The

table of findings can be found in Appendix H. The participant's transcripts can be found in Appendix E.

4.3.2. Thematic Content Analysis: In-Depth Interviews

The researcher used these findings to analyse each coding category as follows with the emerging themes and relevant direct quotes, where applicable to the category. The categories were informed by the framework for the study, as per the qualitative content analysis, for ease of comparison.

4.3.2.1. Differentiation

In this category of differentiation, the themes of Samsung being an aspirational, premium lifestyle brand and a conduit of self-expression through its versatile products were strong across all participants who felt proud to own Samsung product.

Participant B felt that Samsung creates “prestige” and one feels a sense of accomplishment, that “you have arrived” when you own the brand. Also speaking on Samsung product ownership, another participant said, “I believe that me owning a Samsung product, I now become a brand ambassador, meaning I am promoting the Samsung brand, wherever I go, so in terms of brand, its buying into a lifestyle, and not into a particular product”.

The participants of this study felt that Facebook creates the need for consumers to be a part of the Samsung brand long-term, as it portrays an adventurous vs. corporate persona that relates to the personal aspirations of the consumer. The theme of aspiration reflected strongly in this study, as in the case of Participant A who felt that in a quest for personal self-improvement, Samsung has assisted in the interconnectedness of products that allows for lifestyle incorporation into the brand, with lifestyle being a revisited theme.

Participant E, indicated that a choice of brand says something about the individual's self-expression and their household, beyond simply choosing a product for its functional purpose, which is consistent with Munteanu and Pagalea (2014) who state that consumers often choose brands that they feel express themselves.

Participant A, reflected on the Samsung lifestyle, as being an integrated ecosystem of products, and Participant C felt similarly, describing their preference for Samsung as the

brand of choice, as all products are available from a “one-stop shop”. Participants B and D found that Samsung mobile and wearable devices assisted them in making healthier living choices, which again reflects the theme of lifestyle.

Reflecting on the versatility of Samsung products being shown through the communication, Participant A revealed that “Samsung is trying to look at more on the corporate environment, but to, uhm, you can use your Samsung for meetings but then you can also go out and go to the beach or, you know, go and get an aquarium lifestyle captured you know, or you can go skydiving”.

As a means of establishing how consumers see the brand, based on the content and imagery on Facebook, participants were asked to describe what they would imagine Samsung to look like, personified. All participants unanimously identified with online personality of Samsung being male, well-groomed, well-built, tall, and gentlemanly. In two cases, the Samsung persona was described as a man who has two natures – one that is very corporate and business-like, however, one who also knows how to tone down and have a good time when needed.

Finally, participants were asked to wrap up the Samsung brand, in a single word and the response received, were “amazing”, “innovative”, “innovation”, “creative” and “technology”. These words encapsulate the positioning and differentiation that Samsung has created for itself, as an innovative brand through Facebook.

4.3.2.2. Credibility

Credibility as a brand reputational element deals with how believable and convincing Samsung is on Facebook. In this category, there were strong themes of Samsung’s credibility being based on them being a long-standing brand, consumers looking to other consumers as a source of credibility and the impact of Samsung’s use of imagery.

There were three participants who affirmed that if they were a new consumer, they would find the brand convincing on Facebook, because the brand speaks for itself, and even if the products had not been experienced yet, the brand is available via other channels such as TV, outdoor advertising, and in people’s home, which amplifies the brand’s presence and history, which builds credibility.

One participant though, felt that convincing a consumer to purchase, still came down to physical instore experiences, so while the Facebooks posts can incite curiosity, it can be call to action to visit a store which is the ultimate emotional trigger to purchase.

Two participants inferred that Facebook was a way to gain access to other users' brand and product experiences, which can influence and sway their purchase decision and credibility of the brand. This shows that Facebook, and Facebook users themselves, can be an important contributor to brand reputation, either positive or negative, which is in line with Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) who found that user-generated content on social media has profound impact on consumers. Participant B revealed that people no longer buy with their hearts, but their heads, and would therefore do research such as searching the product on Facebook, to read reviews, which can "make a company or it can break a company", which reiterates the importance of having building credibility and having a good reputation on Facebook. Thus, brands must work to build transparency in the handling of public issues and negative commentary, or risk having their credibility and reputation tarnished. Aung Maw (2015) found that consumers are more likely to engage with a brand when they have had a negative experience, than a positive one, so brands need to deal with such queries swiftly.

Participant A felt that Samsung keeps its posts very minimalistic in terms of being convincing or creating credibility, but the visual themes such as using the phone underwater, and use of an astronaut can communicate to audiences that Samsung phones are not just phones, but also an extension of lifestyle, that the consumer may believe will be fit for them. This participant, also identified themselves as being "technical" consumer, and therefore would prefer to visit the Samsung website when seeking out product information, as there are more technical specifications to be found on the website. Participant C also felt that Samsung's credibility could be improved through building more understanding of technical aspects among consumers who require it, "for example, you get iPhone users or die-hard iPhone users, and then you get those who are Samsung users who were kind of on the border between the two...I think while you showing us a good-looking phone, good camera...the market has moved from, from that to different types of more technical understanding or technical aspects of phones which I don't really see from Samsung whereas iPhone you hear my friends talking about what database it has and what type of clouds it has...you don't really hear from, from Samsung".

The how-to tutorials were considered as that which builds credibility for the brand with four of the five participants revealing that they have watched how-to tutorials via Facebook for in-depth knowledge on products and to compare the newer models that are launching with the current models owned, which is an indication that consumers may respond well to more video content.

4.3.2.3. Performance

This category is based on how consistent consumers feel that Samsung is in quality and performance, and although the brand does communicate some hard features and claims of performance, the category would be more meaningful in addressing perceived quality from the consumer perspective. Consumer's perceptions of quality and performance are critical to business growth, as Klopper and North (2011) find that people are more willing to pay a higher price for goods that are perceived to be off a high quality. In this category, the theme of quality, trust, advanced technology, innovation and reliability were recurring. Participants were very positive about Samsung's performance and felt that Samsung's quality was "better than the rest" in terms of functional benefits, like picture quality and eco-friendliness. Participants reflected on choosing Samsung as a brand specifically for the picture quality that the devices and home appliances offer, and Participant B and C confirmed that Samsung products have never let them down. The theme of reliability had emerged as well, in the sense that the Samsung delivers the consumer promise as the communication says it will. Participant E felt that they would choose Samsung over any other electronic brand as it seemed far more technologically advanced than what others offer.

4.3.2.4. Responsibility

Responsibility is a brand reputational element that was not addressed in the qualitative content analysis, as the researcher deemed it more appropriate to address this through the consumer interviews. Samsung's portrayal of responsibility was interpreted by participants along two different themes, being socially responsible and ethically responsible, however all participants confirmed that Samsung is a responsible brand, to their understanding. Samsung was seen as being socially responsible in its communication, that is, not promoting anything "reckless" and secondly, Samsung is a premium brand that reflects prestige and would not associate with anything irresponsible. Samsung was seen to be ethically

responsible in its advertising as well - they do not over-promise anything and provide accurate details on products with no “funnies” in-between, as the communication gives a true reflection of the product, and can deliver on the consumer promise. The one stand-out statement by Participant E, was that, responsibly, according to their personal interpretation was a brand that reflects their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through Facebook, however the researcher can confirm that within the examined period, there were no posts that dealt with CSR, which is probably an area to be improved on to enhance perceptions of Samsung being a responsible brand.

4.3.2.5. Willingness to support

This category was based on how engaging and inspiring Samsung is, on the two-way platform that Facebook is. Transparency, accountability and the lack of encouraging two-way communication were the main themes extracted here. Three of the five participants in the sample felt that Samsung does not encourage two-way communication through Facebook. One of these participants felt that Samsung’s Facebook page is rather a “notification” of what Samsung is, and likened it to having the same effect as looking at a “billboard poster”. Another participant said that if Samsung does encourage two-way communication, it is not made known enough, and that other brands do better at this. According to Participant E, “their communication is very much like, this is what we’re doing, this is what the brand offers you and that’s it, it doesn’t feel like its soliciting a response from me, so it, it doesn’t feel like two-way communication, it just feels more like they’re advertising to me and that’s it”. Participant C felt that while Samsung through Facebook, can ask consumers for their opinion, it was described as “soft feedback”. The participant further stated that they have not personally seen any posts telling consumers to get in touch, or on how to interact with Samsung and there is no live chat function.

From the consumer side, as a direct means of contacting Samsung, three participants felt that Facebook is not a platform that they would use. One participant said that they prefer face-to-face communication so they would visit a store if there was a query to be made, whilst the other stated that “I don’t necessarily see a brand responding to a thousand comments on a certain picture or a video, so I would rather find another channel to do that”, but felt that brands that offer a live chat option on their website were very efficient in delivering immediate assistance.

The remaining two participants positively affirmed that Samsung's Facebook page allows consumers to interact, and that Samsung can get insights from consumer interactions on Facebook.

4.3.2.6. Recognisability

Recognisability deals with the tangible distinctiveness and consistency of the verbal and visual aspects, used by Samsung, as identifiers of the brand. The themes of tone and imagery were revealed here. The imagery was said to depict amazing scenery that talks to different segments, such as a businessman or adventurer. The "unbox your phone" hashtag was mentioned by two participants as being consistent and the logo was mentioned, as speaking for itself. Participant C and E felt that Samsung was consistent in communication themes across different social platforms, as well as in offline channels such as TV and billboards. Speaking about the use of Samsung's distinct use of blue, Participant E stated that, "I identify that color so strongly with Samsung".

4.3.2.7. Relevance

To understand the consumer perception of relevance, participants were asked if they considered Samsung's page as one that provides information of value to consumer, that goes beyond product-focused communication. The reason for this, is to understand the consumer experience in terms of receiving relevant, valuable information, beyond a Samsung product-focus. The emerging themes in this category were lifestyle and product-focused communication. Three participants felt that relevance was achieved, through marketing and store updates and lifestyle-angled communication. Participants A and E disagreed, as the posts were too minimalistic to communicate more than a product-focus, and that although they do communicate on special days and holidays like Mother's Day, it is still product-focused communication. Interesting Facebook content to the participants, was that which is highly visual, attention grabbing, "punchy" content that creates hype as well as that which communicates special offers, sales and promotions. Brands that keep up with market trends in their content were favourable, as well as those that offer product education on how consumers can enhance their current products. Brands that post a variety of content that are relevant to everyday living were favoured, as one participant indicated, "I am not always looking to buy a new mobile, so don't send me content that's got to do with a new mobile, so I think it's important for brands to kind of know where in the life, lifespan a

specific consumer is". This participant highlights the importance of brands using Facebook with consumers needs in mind, as well as that brands need to understand that content may not be relevant to a consumer unless they are in the market for a product, and repetition of the same content can result in irritation with the brand. Clickbait and spamming with repeated information were mentioned as two reasons that would make consumers unfollow a brand on Facebook. There has been reference in the literature to brands being uninvited crashers of social media (Fournier and Avery, cited in Laroche et al., 2013) and this category shows mixed reactions to this view, with one participant revealing that Facebook was not meant for "brand recognition" but more for "peer communication.

During the interviews, Volkswagen was mentioned by two participants, as exemplar at communicating through Facebook, based on maintaining relevance through listening to consumer needs. Participant E mentioned that DSTV was also a good example of how brands should communicate via Facebook, as DSTV's advertising, online service, query handling and engagement was of a high standard. The importance of this was to establish what is important for brand to do, to remain relevant to consumers, and to understand what makes these brand's reputations stand out in a positive way.

4.3.2.8. Trustworthiness

The element of trustworthiness showed themes of loyalty, trust, responsibility and the ability to keep the consumer promise. The category was easily understood by all participants, with four of the five participants indicating that Samsung reflected trustworthiness in its communication. According to the participants this is achieved by providing the consumer with pertinent information and through the fact that the brand has been long-standing and is already established, as described by Participant E, "They already a trustworthy brand, so everything that they have to tell me about their products, I already trust". Participant C felt that Samsung's trustworthiness was interrelated with them being a responsible brand, which draws the conclusion that a responsible brand can insinuate trust among consumers. Participant A, did not directly affirm that the posts communicated trust in Samsung as a brand, holistically, but felt that Samsung built its trust around the products shown, rather than the brand.

4.4. Comparison: Unobtrusive research vs field research - Research Question

This section provides a comparative analysis between the unobtrusive qualitative content analysis of Samsung's Facebook page and the field research, in the form of in-depth interviews, conducted by the researcher. The purpose of this comparison is to determine if there are any discrepancies between how Samsung has positioned their communication on Facebook, and the consumer's perception of the communication. The researcher has used the brand reputational elements of the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation matrix, to construct the comparison, as it was the chosen framework for the study and informed the qualitative content analysis and the in-depth interviews.

Qualitative Content Analysis	In-depth Interviews: Thematic Content Analysis	Comparison
Differentiation		
Differentiation in the qualitative content analysis revealed that Samsung positions itself as a premium aspirational brand, designed to complement and enhance the consumer's lifestyle. Through its use of premium alignments, Samsung is also positioned as a brand that is a form of self-expression for its consumer, which creates an emotional bond with the consumer.	Participants revealed that they experienced the Samsung brand as a premium lifestyle enhancement, and a conduit of self-expression through their choice of brand. The brand was seen to be prestigious to own and aspirational. Samsung was also seen as a brand for self-improvement through its versatile devices.	The researcher concludes that with respect to differentiation, Samsung's positioning on Facebook and the consumer perspective of the brand position are strongly aligned, along the themes of a premium lifestyle brand that affords the consumer an opportunity to express themselves
Credibility		
The qualitative content analysis of Facebook revealed that the credibility category mainly shares product features and benefits to establish credibility through consumer education. The tone of the communication seemed to incite curiosity and encourage consumers to watch the tutorials provided.	The consumer perspective confirmed that Samsung's Facebook communication is credible to an extent, however this was mainly due to the history of brand and its established nature. Facebook was also seen as a source of credibility due to Samsung consumers having access to other Samsung consumers' experiences with the brand, which participants say could sway their decision making.	This category shows a potential imbalance. Two participants did not unequivocally confirm that Samsung communicates credibility, felt there could be improvements made in this category, that would make Samsung more credible to them and their personal requirement for communication of more technical information.
Performance		
The Facebook content does communicate claims on product quality and performance, based on specific features; however, this category was investigated further through the in-depth interviews, as performance and quality in brand reputation should be perceived by the consumer.	Consumers reflected that Samsung was consistent in delivering on performance and quality and that they have not been let down by the brand. The brand was seen to be reliable and technologically advanced.	This category reflected very positively for Samsung from the consumer perspective and therefore the researcher concludes that this category is well-aligned with the brand's communication intention.
Responsibility		
This category was not addressed in the qualitative content analysis as it was more fitting to address the consumer perspective of how responsible they feel Samsung's communication is.	Samsung, overall, was seen as a responsible brand, socially and ethically across all participants, and as a premium brand that would not associate with irresponsible advertising or branding.	Although there is no comparison to be drawn against the qualitative content analysis, the researcher deduces that among this sample population, Samsung is unanimously seen as a responsible brand, based on its Facebook communication.

Qualitative Content Analysis	In-depth Interviews: Thematic Content Analysis	Comparison
Willingness to support		
Willingness to support deals with how engaging Samsung is, in creating a positive consumer experience. Samsung did show responses to consumer queries during the period under study. There was also the 360 campaign for the Galaxy S8, specifically for engagement, which should also imply to the consumer that the brand encourages two-way communication.	Three of the five participants felt like Samsung did not encourage or achieve two-way communication on Facebook, but the brand is more focused on its product communication. Samsung's transparency and accountability in consumer feedback was not seen to be explicit.	Willingness to support showed discrepancies between the qualitative content analysis and thematic content analysis, as consumers felt that two-way communication was not functioning at an expected level, and that Samsung focuses on product communication that does not encourage or solicit a response from the consumer.
Recognisability		
The qualitative content analysis showed Samsung being consistent in use of logo's, the unboxing theme, tone used, and photography style, all which reflect a premium look and feel.	Participants felt that Samsung was consistent in tone, imagery, the use of the "unbox your phone" hashtag, the use of themes across different communication channels, and the use of the colour blue.	Compared with the researcher's qualitative content analysis of the Facebook posts, this element of reputation was agreed on by all participants, who felt that Samsung was clear and consistent in its brand communication, in terms of tone, imagery, taglines and the logo.
Relevance		
The qualitative content analysis revealed posts that had minimal product focus, to establish relevance among consumers, such as promotional events, holiday greetings and motivational posts.	Two of five participants disagreed that Samsung's content provided value to them, beyond product-focused communication, while the remaining three felt this was achieved through marketing updates and lifestyle communication.	Only one participant in the sample took special notice of the posted communication on holidays. This category reflects a discrepancy in the brand's positioning of relevance in its posts and the consumer's perception of relevance.
Trustworthiness		
This category was investigated through the in-depth interviews rather than the qualitative content analysis, as it is the consumer's perception of trust being communicated by Samsung.	Samsung was seen to communicate trustworthiness as a brand, that boosted loyalty towards the brand, and complemented the brand's responsibility. According to participants, this was done by providing pertinent information to consumers, and their established history as a brand counted positively in building trustworthiness as a contributor to their brand reputation.	Whilst one of the five participants stated that Samsung communicates trust around its products more than the brand, the other four participants categorically affirmed that Samsung communicates trustworthiness. As a result, the researcher concludes that this category has shown that Samsung is a brand that shows trustworthiness.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the outcomes of the unobtrusive qualitative content analysis of Samsung's Facebook page, and the field in-depth interviews conducted by the researcher, and then provided a comparison between these two data collection methods. Both analysis methods were analysed according to categories that were informed by the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation matrix. The brand reputational elements of differentiation, performance, responsibility, recognisability and trustworthiness were all aligned between how Samsung positions itself on Facebook, and how consumers perceive the communication. Credibility, willingness to support and relevance reflected potential discrepancies between Samsung's Facebook communication and the consumer perception and this will be addressed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Recommendations

The comparative analysis of the Samsung Facebook page and the consumer perception of the communication in Chapter 4, revealed that the brand reputation categories that dealt with communicating credibility, willingness to support and relevance revealed possible discrepancies that the researchers elaborates on here, as recommendations for the brand.

The first category that showed a potential imbalance was credibility. The first reason for the imbalance is the participants felt that Samsung style of posting was very minimalistic and therefore did not provide high-impact convincing communication to a consumer. The second reason was that Samsung did not communicate enough technical details on its products on Facebook as compared with other technology brands, so may not be convincing enough to a technically-inclined consumer.

Although Samsung may already have designed an identity of how they present information on Facebook, credibility can perhaps be improved by setting aside posts that communicate to a more technical audience, using technical language, but still in a premium tone and photography style. By targeting the technical-aligned consumer, the likeliness of them engaging is higher, giving them exposure to other like-minded consumers. In this way, Samsung can build social credibility within a technical community. Numerical and statically data may be highly appealing to this audience, as they may be more receptive to information that allows them to directly correlate Samsung offerings against other brands. This category also showed that participants felt that other Facebook users can impact credibility through the content that they generate on the brand's page, which indicates that Samsung must be able to address both positive and negative consumer comments.

Willingness to support showed a high potential imbalance between the qualitative content analysis and the consumer in-depth interviews, due to some participants who felt that two-way communication is available but not particularly encouraged on Facebook despite the engagement campaigns. Since Facebook is a platform that is always available for consumers to engage on, brands need to commit to engaging with consumers. This can be achieved by being dedicated to responding to consumer queries timeously, inviting their responses, acknowledging their interaction and engagement, and ensuring that consumers know what channels are available for them to use to get in contact with Samsung.

The last category that reflect a potential discrepancy is relevance, which deals with Samsung providing valuable information beyond a product focus. Not all participants agreed that this was achieved, as the communication seemed more product-orientated. This could mean that Samsung needs to be more strategic about how relevance is achieved. Enhancing relevance can include asking consumers to submit a response or their own story related to a post, creating posts that will relate to a particular audience, for example, parents or brand loyalists, and making sure that the brand is following technology trends to know what consumers are responding to. It may also be useful to examine other brands that are deemed to have a positive reputation, and learn how to improve relevance by example.

5.2. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study, aimed to understand the role that Facebook as a brand communication platform plays in influencing Samsung's brand reputation from a consumer perspective. This was achieved through a qualitative content analysis of Samsung's Facebook page between and conducting in-depth interviews with participants to gauge the consumer perspective of the posted communication. Through comparison, in this case of Samsung, the paper concludes that in terms of differentiation, performance, responsibility, recognisability and trustworthiness, Samsung has managed to align its brand reputation very positively with consumers. These positive alignments may prove to of value to other brands, to examine Samsung's communication and adapt their own strategies accordingly. In terms of the reputational elements of credibility, willingness to support and relevance, not all participants felt that Samsung was achieving this in their Facebook communication. Overall, the researcher concludes that Samsung has created a positive brand reputation through Facebook, however through using consumer perspectives, improvements can be made. This paper has shown that consumer perceptions on brand communication differ between individuals and may not always be the exact perception that a brand wishes to create, however, brands can undertake such a comparative analysis to formulate their Facebook strategy based on the consumer insight. Although this study was focused on one brand, the researcher purports that the same method of data collection and analysis may be applied to other brands, involving other social media platforms, as a means of assessing that platform's influence on brand reputation, as defined by the reputational elements of the Urde and Greyser Corporate Brand Identity and Reputation Matrix.

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