

Research Report POE

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TITLE

**Exploring the role of WhatsApp as a communication tool in the business
operations of Unlimited Events Group**

DECLARATION

I, **Marvellous Zwane** (student number, **16009710**), hereby declare that the whole dissertation is my own work and has not been presented or submitted to any University for a similar degree or award. Literature review has been acknowledged in accordance with the University's plagiarism policy.

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Signature

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Date

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ABSTRACT

In this study the researcher sets out to explore employee's perception towards the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations of Unlimited Events Group. A qualitative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with employees in the Corporate Events Department at Unlimited Events Group. This was done to gain an in-depth understanding of their views on how WhatsApp influences events business operation, determining its efficiency in facilitating successful business operations.

A qualitative data analysis was done on the transcribed responses of the respondents and results surfacing from the analysis showed that events management employees perceive WhatsApp as an effective communication tool for events business operations. Employee's perception towards WhatsApp being an effective communication tool was the most mentioned main theme in the study. Findings concluded that WhatsApp was an effective tool during business operation of Unlimited Events Groups, with least mentioned challenges. However, WhatsApp challenge's sub-theme, weaknesses of WhatsApp appeared as a new theme in this study since sources consulted did not list a theme related to this finding. Overall, WhatsApp proved to be the most effective communication tool for events business operations of Corporate Events Department.

Key words: Events employees, WhatsApp effectiveness, Business operations, employee perceptions, Corporate Events Department, Unlimited Events Group, WhatsApp weaknesses

1. INTRODUCTION

This research study investigated the following topic: Exploring the role of WhatsApp as a communication tool in the business operations of Unlimited Events Group. WhatsApp is a social media tool that businesses are using as a formal platform to conduct business, however the question and concern about WhatsApp was, can it be a reliable tool to be used within business and are employees comfortable and knowledgeable with the using of the application in a business environment.

The aim was to determine how WhatsApp is perceived in the business sector as well as the advantages and disadvantages of using the application in business operations. Such insights provided clarity to the researcher on whether WhatsApp was an accepted tool and reliable to businesses, especially in the events industry. This research report firstly addresses the background information, rational, problem statement, research purpose, research questions and objectives. Secondly, literature review is explored, linked to the theoretical foundation and conceptualisation of the study. Thirdly, the methodology is presented, starting with research paradigm, research design, population, sampling, data collection and data analysis. The findings are presented, interpreted, and linked to objectives and research questions.

1.1 Background and contextualisation

WhatsApp has become the most fundamental communication tool in corporate business across the world (Campbell & Park, 2016). Business people have embraced WhatsApp because of its features that enables efficacy and effective communication during business operations (WhatsApp, 2016). The communication tool has instantaneous messages, immediate feedback, affordable charges, and user-friendly features (Jabakumar & Jisha, 2014; Church & Oliveira, 2013; Sultan, 2014).

WhatsApp was founded in 2009 by Brian Acton and Jan Koum, former employees of yahoo an American Web. It is the social messaging services acquired by Facebook for 19 billion in 2014, is arguably the world's fastest-growing communication Application (WhatsApp 2016). As on January 2015, half a billion people around the world were regular, active WhatsApp users. In South Africa, more than half of the

population (58%) use WhatsApp (Clement 2020). It has already replaced SMS and is fast becoming the primary mode of communication.

People have built new businesses using WhatsApp as a platform and to grow their businesses in a cost-effective manner (Church & Oliveira, 2013). When it comes to creativity it is an ideal hub for people to come together and have conversations that may spark new ideas or products and business improvements. Business people can market their services, build a clientele base, and prepare events using WhatsApp at an affordable price. However, Clement (2020) notes that WhatsApp in a working environment can be used inappropriately, it can promote bullying and harassment.

WhatsApp claims to have end-to-end encryption protection of information shared between people during business operations. In case if any employee leaves the job or gets fired he/she can still have access to company information including potential sensitive data. This does not promote professionalism because companies' important information must be protected at all times. This limits WhatsApp as an effective tool for business operations.

In the work of Annamalai, (2018); Yeboah and Ewur (2014); Ahmad, Hadiza and Aliyu, (2018) it has been shown that the researchers topic has not been researched enough based on the sources that he consulted. A large cohort of research studies about the use of WhatsApp as an effective communication tool looks at its use among students, and very few relates to the use of WhatsApp as a tool in business operations. This study sets out to add to the body of knowledge on the topic.

2. RATIONALE

The research aimed to add new information on WhatsApp, as a communication tool in event business operations. Furthermore, it provided insights to the company under investigation on the significance that WhatsApp presents in event business operations. The study was important to company policy makers and strategic planners as they gained information from the findings to amend policies and planning documents relating to communication and events business operation. It was also important to the Unlimited Events Group employees because they became aware of the approaches to take to ensure effectiveness of WhatsApp. The study also pointed

out weaknesses of WhatsApp to be addresses to improve its effectiveness in events business operations.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Stephens and Mandhana (2017), WhatsApp influences business operations in an organisation in the sense that it can either assist the progress of the function or undermine it. However, managers often have limited understanding on the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool in advancing events business operations (Dekhne, 2016). Sources consulted, as mentioned earlier overlooked and neglected this topic on the WhatsApp as an effective communication tool in events business operations. WhatsApp is an essential communication tool for business operations, but it is the responsibility of employers to ensure that employees understand the importance of this tool for it to remain effective.

This study sought to explore employees' perceptions on WhatsApp as a communication tool for Unlimited Events Group business operations. It explored the roles of the WhatsApp platform during business operations. Employees' perceptions towards the effectiveness of WhatsApp and the professionalism related to the using of the application were investigated.

4. RESEARCH GOAL AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of employees towards the role of WhatsApp as a communication tool for the Unlimited Events Group business operations. The study aimed to determine the role of WhatsApp in events business operations. It later investigated the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations of Unlimited Events Group Company, comparing it to previously used communication tools. The degree of WhatsApp in facilitating successful business operation was discussed in this study. However, the study lastly highlighted challenges encountered during the use of WhatsApp as a communication tool for events business operations and provided recommendations.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What are the Unlimited Events Group employees' perceptions on the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool in business operations?

Sub-research questions

- What is the role of WhatsApp in event business operations of Unlimited Events Group Company?
- What are employees' views towards the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations?
- How effective is the WhatsApp platform in facilitating successful business events operations for Unlimited Events Group Company?
- What are the possible drawbacks of using WhatsApp during business operations?

5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Discuss the role of WhatsApp in events business operations of Unlimited Events Group company
- Assess the perceptions of Unlimited Events Group employees towards the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations.
- Determine the degree of WhatsApp platform in facilitating successful events operations for Unlimited Events Group Company
- Evaluate employees' views on the disadvantages of using WhatsApp for business operations.

6. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

6.1 The Media Richness Theory

The theory was introduced by Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel in 1986 as an extension of information processing theory. Stegmann, Kirchner and Van Dick (2019) had identified the need for a framework for a communication channel selection for organisational communication in the early eighties, before the digital communication channels and social media emerged. This framework is claimed to assist the managers in making the most effective use of communication media to improve organisational information flow. Consequently, the Media Richness Theory (Braun Ishii, Madison; 2019) has become one of the commonly cited theories in the literature of organisational communication media selection.

The richness of the communication channel is essentially based on its capacity to facilitate shared meaning (Braun *et al*, 2019). This is enabled by:

- The ability to facilitate immediate feedback,
- The use of multiple cues, (verbal and nonverbal),
- Use of natural language permitting conversational style communication
- Personal focus to direct the message to the relevant recipient.

Immediacy of the feedback is attained when communication is considered complete and the necessary feedback is given, the receipt of feedback is also taken as a way of telling that a message is received correctly. WhatsApp gives the message recipient the leeway to accept or reflect messages of different recipients. Feedback ensures that any mistake in the transmission can be corrected immediately. Immediacy of feedback in a medium refers to the ability of the medium to allow users to quickly respond to the communication that is being received. One of the WhatsApp features is that it provides instantaneous sharing of information (Eswaran, 2017). The medium supports two-way communication as assumed by the theory (Ashely & Kathleen, 2016). WhatsApp, a communication tool under study, proves to provide immediate feedback and quick response showing its usefulness in business operations. However, in this study the perceived effectiveness of WhatsApp in business operations was determined upon participants' perceptions.

Subsequently, the Media Richness Theory assumes that a communication tool must be able to convey multiple cues. Cues, either verbal or non-verbal can clearly assist in making the message clear to the recipient and more understandable. WhatsApp usually has both verbal and non-verbal features, and these include emojis and recorded audios (Deshmukh, 2015). In some cases, these cues or emojis can cause misinterpretation of information by the recipient. It can be perceived as unprofessional to use emojis when communicating in business. However, the study found out that the cues or emojis really assisted in making the message clearer or understandable to the recipient and to what extent (Deshmukh, 2015). Participants' perceptions determined that the use of cues can increase or decrease the effectiveness of WhatsApp messages in business operations depending on the organisation's culture and understanding between the sender and receiver.

The Media Richness Theory assumes that a communication medium is to be used anywhere even in the business environment it must carry variety of languages (Ashely & Kathleen, 2016). The theory states that a powerful medium can contribute to effective information exchange and information delivery. WhatsApp is a digital / computer/ mobile application that have end to end encryption and many features that help people exchange and deliver messages effectively. This links the apps ability to the media theory aim. Different corporations have unique ways of communicating (culture). In the business area, there are concepts and ideas that can only be understood by companies in business (Ashely & Kathleen, 2016). This language helps to understand the conversation better. However, WhatsApp allow different kinds of natural languages to be utilized when communicating in business (Yousef, 2017). This study argues that, WhatsApp is flexible in that business people can use any language when communicating, but sometimes the recipient might misinterpret the information that is not part of the corporate culture. Information misinterpretation influences the perceived effectiveness of WhatsApp as a business communication tool. This was unpacked in the study.

7. LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of the literature is to learn from the plethora of existing research, identify gaps and contribute to theoretical development (Webster & Watson, 2002). To adequate cover topics, the theoretical framework to be developed in this study transcends three fields, WhatsApp communication tool, business operation and events Business Company.

WhatsApp has been adopted in the corporate space as a communication tool for business operations (Deshmukh, 2015). According to Aula, Poutanen and Siira (2016,) effective communication using WhatsApp platform is of paramount importance and managers must ensure that employees understand their responsibility for it to remain effective (Deshmukh, 2015). A comprehensive discussion was developed articulating the role, effectiveness, perceptions, and effects of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations.

7.1 Role of Social media platforms in corporate business

Social media is the name given to web-based and mobile technologies that are used to turn communication into an interactive dialogue. The interactive dialogue occurs between organisation, communities, and individuals (Drago, 2015). The Internet allows millions of people to connect with each other and allows business owners to promote their business to people all over the world by using web-based applications. There is a shift from businesses slowly moving away from traditional communication strategy's and into the modern forms of communications which include the internet and social media platforms such as WhatsApp (Anderson & Anderson, 2016). Social media communication does not only allow outreach and networking, but also allows interaction that can be very beneficial to business for a variety of reasons (Conrad,2015).

The symbols within WhatsApp such as emoji's carry different meanings leading to misinterpretation (Drago, 2015). When an employee who normally ends their conversation with sending a hug and kiss emoji in their personal use of WhatsApp it can cause misunderstanding when communicating to clients or their fellow employee workers. The receiver may think it is a romantic gesture whilst it is just the employee being friendly and applying their normal communication technique. Since companies differ in their organisational cultures, this means that they will differ in their acceptance and dismissal of using emoji's and which emoji are allowed (Conrad, 2015).

Social media has had an impact on business platforms (Drago, 2015). Platforms such as Twitter, You-tube, Facebook, and WhatsApp are used not only to promote brands and advertise new products but also as media that provides customer service and resolve disputes (Drago, 2015). The platforms can be used for business profiling, content sharing, advertising, influencers, online customer services, recruitments, tracking employee's behaviour, events planning and promotion (Conrad,2015). This study is focusing on WhatsApp as a communication tool for events business operations because it is fast, affordable, and convenient (Conrad, 2015).

7.2 WhatsApp as a communication tool in business operations

Worldwide, there are 1.5 billion people that use WhatsApp and 60 million messages are sent everyday by people including the ones working in the Corporate Space

(Sinha, 2016). For example, Accor Hotel in the United Kingdom and Ireland started to incorporate WhatsApp Business, so that their guests can contact the reception restaurant room service, instead of using the classic phone call. WhatsApp messaging in business operation have been exceptional offering a multiple robust option that is practical and supportive for sharing and discussing creative ideas (Sinha, 2016). WhatsApp is somehow free to download and to use. It is available on all major platforms including android, IOS, Desktop, and Web-based applications. WhatsApp platforms are further explained below showing how it was revolutionised to best suit business environment (Anderson & Anderson, 2016):

WhatsApp for smartphone- It started out as smartphone only application but now has a major phone operating system including IOS, ANDROID, and WINDOWS PHONE AND NOKIA. Installing the App is easy and almost free. This reveals other advantages of its affordability and mobile instantaneous communication (Anderson & Anderson, 2016).

WhatsApp Web- After experiencing a huge success on smartphones, WhatsApp was introduced as a web application. Now it can be opened inside an internet browser. WhatsApp web offers the flexibility of using your messenger on any desktop computer and it can automatically sync with all your other devices (Anderson & Anderson 2016).

WhatsApp for desktop - (Mac or PC) The latest addition to WhatsApp platform is an installable application for desktop Pc and Mac.

7.2.1 List of WhatsApp features (Dekhne, 2016)

- Texting messages
- Group messaging
- Automatic sync across all your devices
- Video and voice calling
- Media sharing
- Voice messaging
- Font options
- Customise notification
- Star important messages
- Backup chats

This study focused only on messaging features because they are instant, fast and convenient during business operations. WhatsApp messages have low data usages and are affordable (Anderson & Anderson 2016). However, participants in this study were expected to give their perception on the effectiveness of using WhatsApp messages in business operations.

7.2.2 Unique messaging tools of WhatsApp Business

- *Greeting messages*: Instant greetings show your customer that you value them, and provide them with useful information, like a phone number that they can call if they need a response faster (Anderson & Anderson 2016).
- *Away reply*: An automated reply designed to let your customers know that an employee or department is not available immediately but will be in touch soon (Anderson & Anderson 2016).
- *Quick reply*: An instant quick response like, “I will look into that for you”, so you can send common messages with a single tap (Anderson & Anderson 2016).

These tools make it the most preferred communication tool in the business space.

7.3 WhatsApp and events business operations. A South African perspective

According to Husain (2015) WhatsApp has quickly emerged as the go-to messaging digital application in South Africa. It is fast, simple, and a convenient way for business people to chat, send and receive documents, and engage in private and secure conversations at anytime (Husain, 2015). It turns out that a messaging application like WhatsApp takes the lead as a preferred communication channel in use of today's business. With WhatsApp, companies can make appointments reminders, order notification, products demonstration videos, verification codes and 2-way customer survey and support messages (Cardon & Marshall, 2015).

WhatsApp can be a useful tool for event planners when marketing. The planners use WhatsApp to drive events registration, answer attendees' questions, build community and keep the conversation going on after the event ends (Anderson & Anderson 2016). These roles of WhatsApp are further explained below.

7.3.1 Gather leads and connect with prospective attendees

When event planners set up a business account they use the application programming interface (API) to install a “WhatsApp us” widgets to the event website

encouraging potential attendees to establish more direct connection to the planner or event, whether to answer questions or send them a link to register (Stephens & Mandhana, 2017). WhatsApp has a high open and response rate, and hence is a useful way to engage with prospects. Furthermore, WhatsApp, is especially well appropriate to sharing videos and multi-media content, so using it to send previews about the upcoming events, a short welcome keynotes speaker or an eye-catching image file is likely to have impact than just sending out a text message (Fry, 2014).

7.3.2 Build community

According to Deshmukh (2015) WhatsApp groups can well be used for creating sense of connection between several attendees. While the service allows for as many as 250 individuals to be added to the list, generally this avenue works better for communication between a handful of people with shared interests. For instance, the events planner could set up a WhatsApp group of panellists who are going to be presenting together, to share information or check prior to the event (Chiridza, Yorodani, Sigauke & Katsaruware, 2016). If dozen attendees are all coming from the same city or company, they can connect in case they want to arrange transportation or schedule meet-up for after-show drinks.

7.3.3 Connect with attendees during an event

WhatsApp makes communication more casual and engaging with prospects before and as well as during the event (Bae, Jun & Hough, 2016). The platform can be used primarily for logistical questions, such as schedule questions and wayfinding, AI powered bots can be set up, that can respond to most questions' attendees would have (Bae *et al*, 2016).

7.3.4 Conversation Maintenance

After the event is over WhatsApp assists in continued messaging with the individuals who reached out before and during the event (Drago, 2015). This means, the planner might answer post-event questions from attendees, using the broadcasting list features to send out surveys or notify the list when registering opens for the next year conference, or sending tailored invitation to specific attendees (Ashley & Kathleen, 2016). Planners create a target list depending on attendee preference ensuring messages are relevant to those receiving information.

This aim of the study was to determine the usefulness of WhatsApp as a communication tool in Unlimited Events Group business operations. Unlimited

Events Group was established by the demand of South Africans to have a company that can supply all the necessary elements, products and services that contribute in creating marvellous events across South Africa. Unlimited Events Group is a business solution that collaborates and assists event organisers and event specialists, the company is a turnkey solution to the event industry (UEG, 2018).

The company is situated in Centurion Gauteng province in South Arica. Founded more than 22 years ago. The company has eight specialised departments namely, corporate events, themed parties, Entertainment and Team building as well as production. The study unpacked the employee's perceptions towards the use of WhatsApp for Unlimited Events Group business operations (UEG, 2018).

7.4 Perception on effectiveness of WhatsApp in business operations.

Deshmukh (2015) asserts that WhatsApp is immediate, more personal and international in reach. Instantaneous sharing of information and wide coverage make it an effective and useful tool to use for business operations. Absa Bank is the first bank to try WhatsApp business to process the requirement of the clients. Up to date more than 10.000 customers have registered since Absa launched **Chat-Banking** on WhatsApp service on July 2018 in South Africa. However, on the contrary, Ahad and Lim (2014) argue that WhatsApp is perceived as an informal way of communication which cannot be used in a formal business environment. They note that the WhatsApp corporation has doubt about the platform being used for business purposes and that is why they are prohibiting business use in their own company, to prevent the risks that businesses are exposed. It is against WhatsApp terms to service it for proffessional purposes. The WhatsApp company believes that since WhatsApp allows the ability to forward, copy and mirror the information on the platform on both a phone and a laptop, it makes it difficult to track or close sensitive leaked information by current or former employees. These perceptions from Ahad and Lim (2014) conclude that WhatsApp is not a useful tool for business operations.

Furthermore, Husain (2015) argues on a positive note, that WhatsApp messaging is effective because it is secured by the end-to-end encryption that makes it so trusted by many business people. It allows the companies to safely and to secure the messages of their customers directly within the WhatsApp messaging platform. They

can easily refer to messages posted in the past for referencing to suppliers or customers. If employed correctly, WhatsApp messaging can take the business to a whole new level of engagement that can promote efficient business operations (Husain, 2015).

However, Conrad (2015) disagrees with Husain (2015) asserting that business cannot rely on WhatsApp “end-to-end encryption” for security information. Backup of WhatsApp is not encrypted, as well as exported chats. Sensitive business information can easily be exposed at any time despite end to end encryption within the messaging Application itself. In business, sensitive and confidential information needs to be protected as much as possible and WhatsApp tend not to be effective (Conrad, 2015). Concurrently, business people cannot revoke access to business information once it is on WhatsApp. Data is stored in individual phone not on a centrally company communication platform. An unhappy former employee can still have access to company information including potential sensitive data. This does not promote professionalism, companies important information must be protected, which disqualifies WhatsApp as an effective tool for business operations.

Furthermore, (Chiridza, Yorodani, Sigauke, and Katsaruware; 2016) postulates that WhatsApp messaging is an effective communication tool in business because of the growing trend in business messaging for “conversational commerce” purposes: enabling sales and support teams to answer products or customer service questions with rich, contextual messages that will ultimately facilitate new transaction or keep a current customer happy. On contrary, Dekhne (2016) argues that WhatsApp messaging is perceived as not compliant with privacy regulations like GDPR. Since the Application unleashes conversational commerce meaning that it can connect with multiple clients at once, it has been argued that the level or degree of privacy is limited (Dekhne, 2016). Employees can accidentally post a non-work related pictures or information which violates its business professional privacy.

WhatsApp provides reliable delivery of information, which provides companies with the additional benefit of knowing what messages have been delivered and ultimately, read (Chan & Lai, 2017).

WhatsApp can be terminated at anytime. It reserves the right to modify, suspend and terminate services for any reason prior notice. It can notify, “If you believe your

account's termination or suspension was in error, "please contact us at support@whatsapp.com". Upon termination of WhatsApp business people can lose connections (Chan & Lai, 2017).

8. CONCEPTUALISATION

8.1 WhatsApp platform

Campbell and Park (2015) noted that WhatsApp is a mobile communication that provided a dialogue communication. Yeboah and Ewur (2014) agrees with Campbell and Park, that WhatsApp messenger does communicate through mobile phones but went on to further note that it has become cheap, easier to use and a primary mode of communication. They also articulated that it is less expensive compared to phone messages. In agreement with the aforementioned authors Church and Oliveira (2013) also articulated that it is cost-effective since in the business space profit is the main objective when operating. Cost is seen as a factor that influences people's behaviour when choosing the medium to use in sending messages (Church and Oliveira, 2013). However, WhatsApp has proven to be the preferred medium to use. The study is going to explore employees' perceptions on WhatsApp as a communication tool for Unlimited Events Group business operations.

8.2 Effective Communication tool

Effective communication tool is key to a successful business operation (Jabakumar & Jisha, 2014). Most researchers however agree on the underlying components of effective communication tool which include efficiency, fast and user-friendly (Aider & Thomas, 2003; Miller, 2014). WhatsApp is the communication tool that was evaluated in this study. WhatsApp facilitates useful communication that results in successful business communication and feedback (Dwyer, 2008, Bernoff & Li Prayo 2015).

The study revealed Unlimited Events Group behind adopting WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operation and if it made the right choice (Anderson & Anderson 2015).

8.3 Business operations

Business operations are those tasks and activities that an organisation undertakes to produce the services or goods that it provides to its stakeholders (Bae, Jun & Hough

2016). Efficient operations help companies reduce costs, and they might improve customer satisfaction. Technology can be used to automate many operations and improve efficiency (Jacobs, 2015; Stevenson, 2017). This definition dwells much on the study since WhatsApp was adopted for efficacy and to improve business operations. The level of satisfaction in the use of WhatsApp among Unlimited Events Group was determined.

WhatsApp business is an opportunity for the company to take a giant leap towards interactive business operations with stakeholders by utilising messaging channels that are effective (Chiridza, Yorodani, Sigauke, & Katsaruware, 2016). However, the study argued that WhatsApp has proven to be a fast and efficient messaging channel for business operation but on the other hand due to unprofessionalism and low employee performance its effectiveness reduced (Dekhne, 2016). Communication professionally is one of the unwritten rules and expectations of professional behaviour. Unprofessional behaviour indicates a lack of respect for yourself and others as well as immaturity and it signifies a disregard for cultural and workplace standard.

This study evaluated employee's perception towards successful business operations made possible by using WhatsApp.

8.4 Events companies

Event business companies that specialises in organising, marketing and managing various scale of in-door and out-door events. In the study, Unlimited Events Group Company adopted WhatsApp to transmit messages when organising the marketing of their events. They use WhatsApp in all events stages that is planning, implementing and evaluating. The study assessed the effectiveness of the use of this WhatsApp in the event business operations of Unlimited Events Group Company.

8.5 Employee's perceptions

Employee's perception is a process by which individuals organise and interpret their sensory impression in order to give meaning to their environment (Langton & Robbins, 2015). The evidence suggests that what an individual perceive about WhatsApp influences their attitude and behaviour during business operations. This study determined employee's perception towards WhatsApp as an effective communication tool for Unlimited Events Group business operations.

9. RESEARCH PARADIGM

9.1 Interpretivism

Interpretivism in relation to ontology notes that reality is fluid, subjective and created by human interaction (Greeff, 2015). Each person's perception on a situation creates reality, even if it is different realities. The knowledge acquired in this discipline is socially constructed rather than objectively determined and perceived. In relation to this study, the researcher shall extract information from four Unlimited Events Group employees on their perception towards the use of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations. Additionally, due to repeated social interaction with the participants the researcher has enough access to accessible population for data collection. The reality among the respondents that the researcher investigated was how the employees were using WhatsApp and how effective was it within their daily operations.

Epistemologically, interpretivism states that understanding is knowledge. Truth and knowledge depend on people's interpretation of facts (Hannes, 2018). Since the researcher targeted participants that he worked with, it was easy to purposively choose the Unlimited Events Group employees who, that had an understanding and experiences that were aligned with the argument of the study. Thus, participants who frequently use WhatsApp for business operations were relevant to the study.

Interpretivists avoid inflexible structural frameworks (Greeff, 2015). These interpretivists are receptive to capture meanings in human interaction (Hannes, 2018) and make sense of what is perceived as reality (Hannes & Phil, 2019). They believed the researcher and his informants were interdependent and mutually interactive. A mutual relationship creates a platform for participants to share their experiences of using WhatsApp freely and openly as a communication tool for business operations.

The interpretivist researcher enters the field with insights of the research context but assumes that this is inadequate to develop a static research design due to complex, multiple and unpredictable nature of what is perceived as reality (Greeff, 2015). The researcher remained open to new knowledge, the entire study and it developed with the help of informants. The use of such an emergent and collaborative approach is

consistent with the interpretivist belief that humans can adapt, and that no one can gain prior knowledge of time and context bound social realities (Hannes, 2018).

Therefore, the goal of interpretivist research is to understand and interpret the meanings in human behavior rather than to generalise and predict causes and effects (Hannes & Phil, 2019). For an interpretivist researcher it is important to understand motives, meanings, reasons, and other subjective experiences which time and context are bound. It is relevant to the qualitative study. The researcher collected data on different perceptions of Unlimited Events Group Company employees on their perceived effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool in business operations. However, their perceptions were different which resulted in different realities.

10. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used **qualitative research approach** which allowed the researcher to interpret phenomena in their natural settings in terms of the meanings people bring to them (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey, 2016). As was, the case with company under study, the Unlimited Events Group. Qualitative research has an element of repeated interaction with the accessible population under study. The researcher accessed Unlimited Events Group employees that he socially interacted with over time, for data collection in the field.

The direction of reasoning was deductive and consisted of a cross-sectional time frame. Trust was the major element that provided a platform for the researcher to extract more data from the participants. Since the researcher socially interacted with the accessible population for quite some time, they trusted him and provided in-depth information. Qualitative research design was not time consuming and the findings were not generalised to other events business companies in South Africa.

It was **an explanatory study design**, meaning that it focused on explaining the aspects of the study in a detailed manner (SCS Scholarship, 2018). The study was cross-sectional in that it created an overall picture of a phenomenon at one point in time that is once-off with a start and completion date in a short period of time (CSC Scholarship, 2018).

11. POPULATION

11.1 Target Population

Population is the total group of people/companies/entities from whom information is required and who share population parameters (Creswell, 2017). Target population is the large group of people that falls into the population under study. This study targeted Unlimited Events Group Company staff. The company has ten permanent employees in the targeted department. The Unlimited Events Group has a total of eight specialised departments namely, Corporate events, Themed parties, Entertainments and Teambuilding as well as production. The target department was corporate events.

11.2 Accessible Population

Accessible population is a small group within the target population, thus the individuals who will be availing their time to participate in the researcher's study. The target population of the researcher was the Unlimited Events Group events specialists/suppliers (Asiamah, Mensah & Abayie, 2017). This study mainly focused on the Corporate Events Department within the Unlimited Events Group Company as accessible population. The number of employees in the Corporate Events Department is ten, which included both males and females.

11.3 Population Parameters

Population parameter is the characteristics of the population (Creswell, 2017). The study targeted:

- Males and females' employees
- Age's between 23-40.
This age group was of the youth category, and is exposed to modern communication technology, that is WhatsApp.
- Use WhatsApp on a daily basis to communicate to fellow employees and clients
- Events planners and coordinators
- Employed by Unlimited Events Group
- Communicate with clients or suppliers frequently during business operations

12. SAMPLING

12.1 Sample size

The study's **sample size** was large enough to obtain enough data to sufficiently describe the phenomenon of interest and address the research questions. Three employees participated in the study (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe & Young, 2018). Qualitative research studies do not need a large sample size because the findings are not going to be generalised, they only provide answers to the company understudy, which was Unlimited Events Group (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe & Young, 2018). This research had a total of three participants, one event planners and two events coordinators, since this was a qualitative study, a maximum of three participants were required to be interviewed (Vasileiou, Barnette, Thorpe & Young, 2018).

12.2 Sampling technique

The researcher used purposive sampling which is a non-probability sampling method (Leed & Ormrod, 2014). The researcher relied on selecting participants based on meeting the population parameters. Key informants such as events planners and coordinators were chosen to participate in the study. Purposive sampling was the most preferred because it is less costly, and time consuming. The participants were employees that the researcher socially interacted with almost every weekend. The results are trustworthy because the researcher was unbiased and had the capacity to keen observation and sound judgement.

13. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

The researcher used an Interview schedule/guide to collect data. Unlimited Events Group has officially permitted the researcher to do his interviews with their employees. Complementing government's effort to fight the spread of Covid-19, only online interviews were conducted. This was done over the Zoom application in a video format, whilst audio recording the proceedings. The researcher sent different links of the Zoom meetings to specific participants of the study with unique password to protect the meetings content. The researcher interviewed three employees on the 10th of July 2020 by using the following interview scheduled times: 12:15PM, 6:15PM, 6:30PM. Video format interviews were the most preferred because the

researcher had a platform present, that worked just as well as face to face interaction which allowed the researcher to see the respondent to gain trust among each other and to probe more questions to gain in-depth information.

The researcher has sent introductory emails to the three employees targeted by the study. The researcher sent follow up emails to remind the three employees about the interview scheduled dates.

Unit of analysis include Unlimited Events Group, Corporate Event Department employees' perceptions about WhatsApp. The second unit of analysis was the transcriptions of respondent's answers to interview questions. The table below shows how research questions and objectives were filtered into themes, themes that address specific points and facts. Each theme is used to formulate interview questions that can help get knowledge and understanding about the topic understudy.

Table 1: Data collection concept table

Research question	Research objectives	Main Themes/ Subtheme	Interview Questions
What is the role of WhatsApp in event business operations of Unlimited Events Group company?	Discuss the significant role of WhatsApp in events business operations of Unlimited Events Group company	WhatsApp role <i>Dialogue</i> <i>Content sharing</i> <i>Media sharing</i>	What do you think the role is of WhatsApp in business operations? Follow question: Why do you feel that way? How do you use WhatsApp to perform and complete tasks? Follow question: Which recent task have you completed with WhatsApp?

What are employees' views towards the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations?	Assess the perceptions of Unlimited Events Group employees towards the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations.	Forms of communication <i>Traditional tools identification</i> Comparing tools efficient <i>Traditional tools</i> <i>Morden tools</i> Employees perception <i>WhatsApp embracement</i> <i>WhatsApp benefits</i>	What form of communication did you mostly use for business operations before WhatsApp? How successful was that platform versus WhatsApp? How does employees embrace WhatsApp as a communication tool for events, business operations? Do you perceive that, the use of WhatsApp helps to create and build positive relationships between fellow employees and clients? Follow questions: How does it do that?
How effective is the WhatsApp platform in facilitating successful business events operations for Unlimited Events Group Company?	Determine the effectiveness of the WhatsApp platform in facilitating successful events operations for Unlimited Events Group Company	Successful events <i>WhatsApp contributions</i> <i>Other factors</i> Events failure Reasons	Do you have a successful event made possible by using WhatsApp as a communication tool? Follow question: How did WhatsApp play the key role in the mentioned task? Have you ever performed a task that did not go as planned because of the use of WhatsApp?
What is the employee's perception towards the possible drawbacks that WhatsApp brings during business operations?	Evaluate the disadvantages of using WhatsApp for business operations.	Challenges <i>Weaknesses</i> <i>Strength</i> Way forward <i>Recommendations</i>	What challenges have you encountered when using WhatsApp for business operations? Do you feel it is reliable to use WhatsApp for events business operation? Follow questions What do you recommend as the way forward to improve the effectiveness of WhatsApp during events business operation?

Table 1: Data collection concept table

The table above presents the link between research questions, objectives, themes, and interview questions. The first research question answered by the study was,

what is the role of WhatsApp in event business operations of Unlimited Events Group Company? Followed by the aim or objective to be achieved which was to discuss the significant role of WhatsApp in events business operations of Unlimited Events Group company. The main theme was **WhatsApp role** with three sub-themes which were, *Dialogue, content sharing and media sharing*. The interview questions asked were, what do you think the role is of WhatsApp in business operations? Follow question: Why do you feel that way? How do you use WhatsApp to perform and complete tasks? Follow question: Which recent task have you completed with WhatsApp?

The second research question that was answered by the study as presented on the table was, what are employees' views towards the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations? The objective was to assess the perceptions of Unlimited Events Group employees towards the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations. Main themes as indicated in bold on the table were **forms of communication** with sub-theme *traditional tools identified*, **comparing tools efficient**, with sub-themes *traditional and Morden tools* and **employee's perception** as main theme with subthemes *WhatsApp embracement and benefits*. Interview questions asked were, what form of communication did you mostly use for business operations before WhatsApp? How successful was that platform versus WhatsApp? How does employees' embrace WhatsApp as a communication tool for events, business operations? Do you perceive that, the use of WhatsApp helps to create and build positive relationships between fellow employees and clients? Follow questions: How does it do that? As presented on the table.

The third research question answered by the study as indicated on the table was, how effective is the WhatsApp platform in facilitating successful business events operations for Unlimited Events Group Company? The objective was to determine the effectiveness of the WhatsApp platform in facilitating successful events operations for Unlimited Events Group Company. The main themes were **successful events** with subthemes of *WhatsApp contribution and other factors* and **events failure** with *reasons* as sub-theme. The questions for the interview were, do you have a successful event made possible by using WhatsApp as a communication tool? Follow question: How did WhatsApp play the key role in the mentioned task?

Have you ever performed a task that did not go as planned because of the use of WhatsApp? As presented on the table.

The fourth and last research question answered by the study as presented was, what is the employee's perception towards the possible drawbacks that WhatsApp brings during business operations? The objective was to evaluate the disadvantages of using WhatsApp for business operations. Main themes were **challenges** with sub themes *strength and weaknesses* and **way forward** with sub-theme **recommendation**. Questions asked during the interview as indicated on the table were, what challenges have you encountered when using WhatsApp for business operations? Do you feel it is reliable to use WhatsApp for events business operation? Follow questions- What do you recommend as the way forward to improve the effectiveness of WhatsApp during events business operations?

14. DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Data analysis is a process of cleaning, transforming, and modelling data to discover useful information for business decision-making. In this interpretivist paradigm using interviews, data collected consisted of the responses that the respondents gave based on the interview. All responses were recorded during the session and then transcribed in an MS Word document. These transcriptions were then analysed using Textual Analysis, applied through an eight steps process consisting of; preparing data; the researcher transcribed the recordings in detail which included every question and answer in details, including the additional noises such as the respondents laughing or sighing. The respondents file was saved with a code for safety and complied with ethics (IIE, 2020).

After transcribing, saving the data in word document, main themes and subthemes were formulated. On every interviewee document main themes and subthemes were coded and analysed using the QDA Miner Light version software. QDA Miner light is a software package for coding the textual data and graphical, annotating, retrieving, and reviewing, was used to develop topics and codes, the topics being the main themes that the researcher developed. After analysing with QDA miner light, tables were formulated. Three table with results of each interviewee and one overall table with results of all interviewees.

15. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Credibility refers to accuracy in which the data will be interpreted (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey, 2016). The researcher got to know the participants in their context to gain understanding and insights into their lives. In this case, the researcher continued to communicate with participants, having social conversations to gain more trust and flexibility. Data was collected using online interviews, using the zoom application, and recording all the proceedings. The recordings were transcribed to the word document capturing the exact words said by the interviewee to ensure accuracy when interpreting data. However, when interpreting the findings in section 18 of the research report document, the researcher copied and pasted the exact words said by the interviewee from the transcribed word document, to ensure accuracy.

Transferability is applying the same findings to similar issues and getting the same results (Creswell, 2017). This is possible because as shown in the **Table 1: Data collection concept table** above, the themes align with the research objectives. The use of the same objectives aligning with research question and themes brought same results.

Dependability is the quality process of integration between data collection, data analysis and the theory generated from data (golden thread) (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey, 2016). Ensuring excellence in collecting data, analysing, and linking to the theory made the study dependable. Data collected for the three interviewees was answering the major research question which was what are Unlimited Events Group employee's perceptions towards the use of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operation? The data was collected online using interviewee guided via the zoom application. All the proceedings during the interviews were recorded to get accurate information without missing any information. After collecting data, it was transcribed to word document, coded and themes were formulated. The coded data was later analysed with the QDA miner light to draw tables with results. Three tables were drawn with results of each interviewee and one overall table with consolidated results of all respondents. Findings of the study concluded that WhatsApp is an effective tool to assist the progress of events functions during business operation of Unlimited Events Group company.

16. PRESENTATION OF FINDING

This study determined the Unlimited Events Group employee's perception towards WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations. It explored the role of WhatsApp in events business operation, employee's perception on the effectiveness of the WhatsApp tool and discussed its degree in facilitating successful business. Disadvantages encountered when using the applications were assessed as well. This section presented data from the findings as shown below

THE TABLE 2 SHOWING RESULT FOR UEGR 1C

MAIN THEMES	SUB-THEMES	SUB-THEME MOST TO LEAST MENTIONED BY UEGR 1C
Employee perceptions	WhatsApp embracement	7
	Benefits	7
WhatsApp role	Dialogue	6
	Content sharing	5
	Media sharing	0
Comparing tool efficiency	Morden tools	6
	Traditional tools	4
Successful events	WhatsApp contributions	8
	Other factors	0
Forms of communication	Identified traditional tools	4
Events failures	Reasons	3
Challenges	Weakness	3
	Strengths	0
Way forward	Recommendations	3

The table 2 above represent the data collected from interviewee Code, UEGR 1C. It can be noted that the data shown on the table start with the most mentioned subthemes to the least. **Employee's perception** as the main theme, have sub-themes, **WhatsApp embracement** and **benefits** most mentioned with equal counts. The main theme, **WhatsApp role**, have subthemes **Dialogue**, which was mentioned most, followed by **content sharing** and **media sharing** mentioned the least. Having **comparing tool's efficiency** as the main theme, UEGR 1C mentioned the **modern tools** subtheme the most and **traditional tools** least as shown in the table. **Successful events**, as the key theme have **WhatsApp contributions** as the sub-theme mentioned most and **other factors** mentioned the least. **Forms of**

communication as the main theme have **identified traditional tools** as the most mentioned sub-theme. UEGR 1C mentioned **reasons** as the most mentioned sub-theme under **events failures** as the main theme as show on the table above. **Challenges** being the main theme have **weaknesses** as subthemes being mentioned most and **strength** without being mentioned at all. Sub-theme, **recommendations** were mentioned most by the interviewee, under **way-forward** as the main theme. Overall, on the table, **employee's perception** as the main theme have sub-themes mentioned most and **events failure**, **challenges** and **way forward** have sub-themes mentioned least.

THE TABLE 3 SHOWING THE RESULTS FOR UEGR 2A

MAIN THEMES	SUB-THEMES	SUB-THEME MOST TO LEAST MENTIONED BY UEGR 2A
Comparing tool efficiency	Traditional tools Modern tools	8 7
WhatsApp role	Media sharing Dialogue Content sharing	5 4 2
Successful events	WhatsApp contributions Other factors	5 3
Employee perception	Benefits Whatsapp embracement	6 1
Challenges	Weaknesses Strenghts	3 3
Events failures	Reasons	4
Way forward	Recommendations	4
Forms of communication	Identify traditional tools	2

The table above is showing result from the respondent with the code UEGR 2A. The main theme, **comparing tools efficiency** have **traditional tools** as the sub-theme mentioned the most and **modern tools** the least. **WhatsApp role** as the main theme, have **media sharing** as the sub-theme most mentioned, followed by **dialogue** and **content sharing** mentioned the least. The main theme, **successful events** have **WhatsApp contributions** as the sub-theme mentioned the most and **other factors** the least. **Employee's perceptions** as the main theme have **benefits** as the sub-theme mentioned the most and **WhatsApp embracement** mentioned the

least. **Challenges** as the main theme, have the sub-themes of **weaknesses** and **strength** mentioned most with equal counts. The **reason** was the sub-theme mentioned the most, under **event failures** as main theme on the table above. **Recommendation was the sub-theme** mentioned most by UEGR 2A, as shown on the table above, under the main theme, **way forward**. **Forms of communication** as the main theme, have the sub theme of **identified traditional tools** mentioned most. Overall, on the table, **comparing tool efficiency** as main theme have sub-themes mentioned most and **form of communication** have sub-theme mentioned the least.

THE TABLE 4 SHOWING THE RESULTS FOR UEGR 3J

MAIN THEMES	SUB-THEMES	SUB-THEMES MOST TO LEAST MENTIONED BY UEGR 3J
Employees perceptions	Benefits WhatsApp embracement	12 5
Successful events	WhatsApp contributions Other factors	7 6
WhatsApp role	Dialogue Content sharing Media sharing	6 2 1
Challenges	Strength Weakness	6 2
Comparing tools efficiency	Traditional Morden	4 3
Events failures	Reasons	7
Way forward	Recommendations	4
Forms of communication	Identify traditional tools	4

The table above presents sub themes mentioned most to least by the respondent with code, UEGR 3J. **Benefits** is the sub-theme mentioned the most as shown on the table and **WhatsApp embracement** mentioned the least, under **employee perceptions** as the main themes. **Successful event** was identified as the main theme on the tables, have **other contributions** as the sub-theme mentioned the most and **WhatsApp contribution** mentioned the least. The main theme, **WhatsApp role** have **dialogue** as the sub-theme mentioned the most, followed by **content sharing** and **media sharing** the least. **Strength** was the sub-theme

mentioned the most and **weaknesses** mentioned the least under **challenges** as the main theme. **Traditional tool** was the sub-theme mentioned the most and **Morden tool** the least under **comparing tools efficiency** as the main theme. **Event failures** as the main theme have **reasons** as the sub-theme mentioned the most. **Recommendation** is the sub-theme mentioned the most, under **way forwards** as the main theme. **Form of communication**, as the main theme have, **identified traditional tool** as the sub-theme mentioned most. Overall, on the table, **employee's perception** as the main theme has sub-themes mentioned the most, **way forward** and **form of communication** as main theme have been mentioned the least.

THE TABLE 5 SHOWING OVERALL RESULTS FOR ALL RESPONDENTS

MAIN THEMES	SUB-THEMES	SUB-THEMES MOST TO LEAST MENTIONED BY ALL RESPONDENTS UEGR 1C, 2A, 3J
Employees perceptions	Benefits WhatsApp embracement	25 13
WhatsApp role	Dialogue Content sharing Media sharing	16 11 6
Comparing tools efficiency	Morden tools Traditional tools	16 16
Successful events	WhatsApp contributions Other factors	19 10
Challenges	Strength Weaknesses	9 8
Events failures	Reasons	14
Way forward	Recommendations	11
Forms of communication	Identify traditional tools	10

The table above is showing overall results from all the respondents with the following codes, UEGR1C, UEGR 2A and UEGR 3J. As showing on the table, **WhatsApp benefits** as sub-theme was mentioned the most and **WhatsApp embracement** , was mentioned the least, under **employee's perception** as the main theme.

WhatsApp role as the main theme has the **dialogue** as the sub-theme most mentioned, followed by **content sharing** and **media sharing** as least mentioned. **Modern** and **traditional tool** as sub-themes were both mentioned the most, under **comparing tool efficiency** as the main theme. **Strength** was the sub-theme mentioned the most and **weaknesses** mentioned the least under **challenges** as the main theme. **Events failures** as the main theme has, **reasons** as sub-theme mentioned the most. **Way forward** was the main theme with **recommendation** as the sub-theme mentioned the most. **Forms as communication** as the main theme have its sub-theme **identified traditional tools** as most mentioned. Overall, on the table, **employees' perceptions** as the main theme have sub-themes mentioned the most and **forms of communication** has the sub-theme mentioned the least.

17. INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Based on Table 5 above with overall results ranging from highest mentioned sub-themes to lowest mentioned sub-themes, this section below discusses each one of them from the most to the least importance.

17.1 Employee's perception (main theme)

During the interviews **employee's perceptions** as the main theme was mentioned the most by all respondents, with **WhatsApp benefits** and **embracement** as the sub-theme most valued. The respondents mentioned that they managed to embrace well WhatsApp as a communication tool and have benefited to a greater extent from using WhatsApp for their events business operations. This can be seen in the following quotes from UEGR 1C and UEGR 3J respondents

UEGR 1C *While its quick, easy, cost effective and reliable, and I can concentrate on it 24/7. Also, I embrace it too much because it uses less time and its productivity sometimes. You can share valuable information, trends etc, but mostly you learn your client personality on a different personal level. So, WhatsApp makes it easier for communication among colleagues, and builds in connectivity, the sharing, caring sides of clients and colleagues/employees*

UEGR 3J *.....so with WhatsApp we get exact location, area, address, and exact time. Also, Customers will just confirm details with staff on when the venue starts. It is a quick form of communication.....WhatsApp is an easy way for managers and*

companies... WhatsApp staff can just use Wi-Fi on venue. The other thing is if we are dropping a thing for a client, we take a photo and WhatsApp it to the client, then we save it. If they come up with a story (im missing my stuff), we can say sorry, but according to our photos we have delivered the stuff and here are the photos. So, it's a hand tool.

In the literature, Yeboah and Ewur (2014) agrees with Campbell and Park (2015) and support the same employee's perceptions that WhatsApp is easy to use, quick and very cheap. According to Deshmukh (2015) WhatsApp groups can well be used for creating sense of connection between several attendees. Deshmukh (2015) have similar sentiment with UEGR 1C, that WhatsApp also builds community. Media Richness theory by Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel also highlight that WhatsApp facilitate immediate feedback as mentioned by UEGR 1C in the quote.

17.2 WhatsApp Role (Main theme)

WhatsApp role is the main theme that has been mentioned most during the interview following **employee's perceptions**. The roles were categorised in three parts that formulated the sub-themes, and these include, **dialogue**, **media sharing and content sharing**. The respondent highlighted that WhatsApp's major role is communication but in different forms. This can be revealed by the following quotes from respondents UEGR 2A and UEGR 3J

UEGR 2A *WhatsApp is a major role, for example, in my department I have about 3 individuals' staff and WhatsApp is our means of communication. If you on site, you can use the WhatsApp video call, so that you can see what the site setup looks like.*

UEGR 3J *The role of WhatsApp basically, it is a main tool for communication, clearly it's a communication tool for you to talk between clients, staff and, tool you can send information, showing setups send pictures of work, certain things, and what they look like in a setup. Also, people use it as google maps to send location.....Main point of WhatsApp in Event industry is basically using it for completing task, for example, when planning a meeting with someone, planning over WhatsApp day to day schedule, sending schedule to staff. We communicate through groups, which is one group per team, so that everyone gets the same message.....*

In the literature Fry (2014) also confirmed similar role of WhatsApp as mentioned by the respondents quotes above. Fry asserts that WhatsApp is especially well appropriate to sharing videos and multi-media content, so using it to send preview about the upcoming events, a short welcome keynotes speaker or an eye-catching image file is likely to have impact than just sending out a text message. Sinha, (2016) also confirmed that WhatsApp is the preferred communication tool , even in business operation space. Sinha (2016) notes that worldwide, there are 1.5 billion people that uses WhatsApp and 60 million messages are sent everyday by people including the ones working in the Corporate Space. Respondent UEGR 3J also pointed out interesting factors of WhatsApp playing a key role of identifying the exact location, which makes their events business operation easier nowadays.

17.3 Comparing tool efficiency (main theme)

During the interviews, **comparing tool's efficiency** was the main theme mentioned the most by the respondents, with **traditional** and **morden tool** as sub-themes. The respondents explained the efficiency or inefficiency of either traditional tool or Morden tool in facilitating communication during business operation of Unlimited Events Group. This can be seen in the following quotes by UEGR 1C and UEGR 3J.

UEGR 1C *With phone calls, you don't say what you want to say in a quick way... Secondly: With phone calls, you don't have proof for instance you tell somebody to do something over the phone (it's your word against my word), you could say I told you, but they can refuse..... But now, as compared to WhatsApp, you can keep track, like yes the message has been delivered, and yes that person has read it also emails also takes longer, because people are not always on the emails, as compared to WhatsApp which is quicker, and one notification its sent.....*

UEGR 3J *The problem is it wasn't reliable as WhatsApp. I have to wake in the 5 am to prepare for functions. I used to call every team just to check if the task has been completed, because there was no platform for sending pictures. We had to make sure and do a follow up. Also we used Sms, and they would cost 1 rand/ sms. 120 members, 16 functions a day, which is a lot, it could be costly. So, WhatsApp was pure way for easy of communication, very effective and cost-effective way of communication.*

In the literature, Husain (2015) shared the same view of WhatsApp being efficient with the respondents but emphasised that If employed correctly, WhatsApp messaging can take the business to a whole new level of engagement that can promote efficient business operations. There is a shift from businesses slowly moving away from traditional communication strategies and into the modern forms of communications which include the internet and social media platforms such as WhatsApp (Anderson & Anderson, 2016). What has been noted by Anderson and Anderson proves WhatsApp to be an efficient tool in business operations.

17.4 Successful events (main theme)

Successful event is also one of the main themes mentioned several times by the respondents, with *WhatsApp contributions* and *other factors* as the most valued sub-themes. The respondents suggested that WhatsApp is not only, one of the elements that assists in facilitating successful events but there are other factors that contributes as well. This can be seen in the following quotes by UEGR 1C, UEGR 2A and UEGR 3J.

UEGR 1C *Yes plenty events. We have this WhatsApp platform for the event setup. When you are running an event and planning a setup, they is liaising with client, suppliers and the caterer, so everyone is on that one platform. It's quick and easy, and also successful.*

UEGR 2A *Yes (WhatsApp), that is one of the foundations to a successful event, but obviously you going to be on site hands on, but if you are not, you rely on your second or right hand man..... If you got an event, you could track from the get goal to until the end, with your team, the venue, and the client*

UEGR 3J *I would basically have to say not specifically because of WhatsApp, but it's a tool we have used to help us with the progress of functions. Let's say there is so many things, like 4000 in stock just for deco, and 100 different items of soviets. So instead of going looking for specific gold soviets, in this this size etc, you can just take the photo and send exact image of what they need. In that way, yes, it is a help to the success, but I would not say it was purely on WhatsApp, because our guys know what exactly they are doing....*

In the literature, Deshmukh (2015) mentioned some companies that have used WhatsApp for their business operation and succeeded. Absa Bank is the first bank to try WhatsApp business to process the requirement of the clients. Up to date more than 10.000 customers have registered since Absa launched **Chat-Banking** on WhatsApp service on July 2018 in South Africa. This proves the point by respondents that WhatsApp can also contribute to business success. However, UEGR 3J noted in his quote that the skill of a trained employee also contributes to success.

17.5 Challenges (main theme)

During the interview **challenges** is one of the main themes mentioned by the respondents, with the **weaknesses** and **strength** as the sub-themes most explored. The respondents mentioned weaknesses and strength of using WhatsApp for business operations. This can be seen from the following respondents UEGR 1C and UEGR 3J

UEGR 1C *It is definitely (reliable), as long as you use it correctly and the people on the group knows the purpose of the group, not sharing something that is very annoying. Its reliable especially if you use it for purpose it was created for, not flooding it with unmeaning and unnecessary information (in WhatsApp groups).*

UEGR 3J *I would have to say its great communication tool, but you have the tool and it can be used in 100 different ways, but people still use for the minimum. If you go to WhatsApp and try to view status, you do not see everyone status, but if you go into Facebook, I can view every single status..... I do, and I have never seen or heard anyone being able to hack WhatsApp, but I have people saying they have been hacked Facebook accounts etc. WhatsApp has become reliable or trust-worthy for us because we refer it to as evidence for future.*

In the literature Dekhne (2016) similar view with UEGR 1C, on the point that argues that unprofessionalism can be compromised. Dekhne (2016) notes that WhatsApp messaging is perceived as not compliant with privacy regulations like GDPR. Since the App unleashes conversational commerce meaning that it can connect with multiple clients at once, it has been argued that the level or degree of privacy is limited (Dekhne, 2016). Employees can accidentally post a non-work-related pictures or information which violets its business professional privacy.

17.6 Events failures (main theme)

Events failure as the main theme was one of the least mentioned during the interview, with **reasons** as the sub-theme. The respondent's highlighted reason that can contribute to failure of events, and this can be seen through the following quotes by UEGR 1C and UEGR 2A

UEGR 1C *Yes, but it was human error. You quickly delete a voice note you send when you are angry, but in mistake you go delete essential information for everyone.*

UEGR 2A *Yes multiple times, you could send or someone can send a message like I am 2 chairs short, and you don't receive the message in time, so your task is not completed because you didn't receive the WhatsApp message in time, probably it could be a result poor or no signal in your location or you do not have data*

In the literature, Conrad (2015) also notes that since the Application unleashes conversational commerce meaning that it can connect with multiple clients at once, it has been argued that the level or degree of privacy is limited. However, UEGR 1C also agrees with Conrad that it connects multiple people, but anyone can mistakenly delete essential information for everyone in the group which contributes to failure of events.

17.7 Way forward (Main theme)

During the interviews, **way forward** was one the main theme mentioned the least, with **recommendations** as sub-theme explored. The responded pointed out action to be done to improve the effectiveness of WhatsApp in business operations. This can be seen in the following quote by UEGR 1C and UEGR 2A

UEGR 1C *WhatsApp should let you listen to the voice note before delivering, to make sure it's in the right group. Also allow control of download of videos, or being able to stop when you realise, you do not to want to watch or answer (for mostly to avoid cost of data).*

UEGR 2A *If you could have like a business team WhatsApp, a company could pay for one package for WhatsApp and the team could use the WhatsApp.*

Information mentioned above by the respondent's need be addressed and can add new knowledge to the literature on the area on WhatsApp and events business

operations. In the work of Annamalai, (2018); Yeboah and Ewur (2014); Ahmad, Hadiza and Aliyu, (2018) it has been shown that the few sources that the researcher consulted showed him that the topic has not been researched enough. A large cohort of research studies about the use of WhatsApp as an effective communication tool looks at its use among students, and very few relates to the use of WhatsApp as a tool in business operations. This research filled in the gap in the literature on the topic.

17.8 Forms of communication (main theme)

During the interviews, **forms of communication** were the least mentioned main theme with the subtheme of **identified traditional tools** being explored. The respondents listed previous tools they used before WhatsApp and it can be seen in the following quotes by UEGR 3J

UEGR 3J *So basically, before business on WhatsApp, we mostly used old school (messaging your staff, phone calls, print google maps for locations), drivers were following google maps to reach locations. We used to have 3cx basically links cell phones like landlines, when you call that person it automatically uses Wi-Fi/ data to communicate.*

In the literature, there is a shift from businesses slowly moving away from traditional communication strategies and into the modern forms of communications which include the internet and social media platforms such as WhatsApp (Anderson & Anderson, 2016). This shows that it is no longer preferred this day and age, that's why UEGR 3J mentioned traditional tools as previously used by Unlimited Event Group company.

18. RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED

In this study four research objectives were set. The discussion below illustrates to what extent each objective was addressed.

Objective 1. To discuss the role of WhatsApp in events business operations of Unlimited Events Group company

Most respondents mentioned that the major role of WhatsApp in events business operation is communication. WhatsApp's role was one of the main themes most

mentioned by the respondents. They highlighted that WhatsApp facilitates dialogue, content sharing and media sharing during events business operations of Unlimited Events Group. As such this objective has been addressed.

Objective 2. Assess the perceptions of Unlimited Events Group employees towards the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations.

Majority of the respondents mentioned that WhatsApp is an effective communication tool for events business operations. Employee's perception was the main theme mentioned most by the respondents, as it revealed the well embracement and benefits of using WhatsApp for events business operation at Unlimited Events Group company. However, comparing modern tool (WhatsApp) and traditional tool (SMS, calling, emailing, 3cx), respondents highlighted that modern tool has proven to be efficient and effective. As such this objective has been addressed.

Objective 3: Determine the degree of WhatsApp platform in facilitating successful events operations for Unlimited Events Group Company

Most respondents mentioned that WhatsApp does not determine the success of any event at Unlimited Events Group Company but rather assists with the progress of the function. The main theme, successful event was also mentioned several times pointing out WhatsApp's contribution to successful events operation. However, other contributions such as back-up (printed maps), skilled personnel and direct phone call also contribute to success of event operations. As such this objective has been addressed.

Objective 4: Evaluate employees' views on the disadvantages of using WhatsApp for business operations.

Least respondents mentioned challenges of using WhatsApp for events business operations. Challenge is one of the least main themes mentioned by respondents. Respondent expressed challenges in form of weaknesses of WhatsApp. Few respondents mentioned the strengths of WhatsApp during business operation on this objective. As such this objective was addressed.

With the discussion above showing that each research objective set for this study had been addressed, it can be deduced that the research question: *What are the*

Unlimited Events Group employees' perceptions on the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool in business operations? has been answered.

19. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND HEURISTIC VALUE

The researcher abided by the ethical code of The IIE's Varsity College. Ethical clearance from the college was sought to seek permission for data collection at Unlimited Events Group Company.

The researcher received permission from the Unlimited Events Group Company to carry out the research. The participants were informed that participation was voluntary. Participants who wanted to protect their sensitive information and identities were assured that the research was only for academic purposes and nothing was to be disclosed against their consent. Codes were used to protect respondent's identity and sensitive information. The researcher avoided asking embarrassing questions and wasting participants' time through poor organising. The amicable relationship that existed between the researcher and participants before data collection was maintained.

These were limitations of the study. The researcher sent the consent forms to be signed by the participants and followed up with a call to avoid delays in submitting them. The researcher obtained signed consent forms from participants without fail. Since zoom application was expensive to use for interviews, the researcher set aside data of up to 20GB which was enough to ensure consistency during the interviews. During the time of the pandemic, (Covid-19) the researcher conducted online interviews to avoid contact with respondents (no contact to minimise the spread of Covid-19, wear mask and practise social distancing), dealing with the uneasiness of participants to do interviews in secure venue. The researcher had a small sample which was large enough qualitative research since the findings were not generalised by only applied to the company understudy, that was Unlimited Events Group. Flexible interview times were scheduled to ensure availability of the respondents for the interviews.

The study added new information to be used by academic students for their research. This study provided information on the advantages and disadvantages of using WhatsApp in business operations. This helped the researcher to understand

the benefits and restrictions of WhatsApp, such understanding can provide other students with a platform to apply this knowledge in other departments.

The findings of the study provided answers to the event industry especially to the Unlimited Events Group on how WhatsApp influences business operations in their company. The employer and managers understood the importance to educate and train employees on how to use WhatsApp professionally as well as the type of communication that is accepted on the platform. This shall prevent misunderstandings and misinterpretations amongst employees and clients.

20. CONCLUSION

In conclusions, this study determined Unlimited Events Group employee's perceptions towards WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations. The findings of this study noted that employee's perception was the main theme mentioned the most and revealed that indeed WhatsApp is an effective tool for Events business operations. Respondents highlighted that they embraced the WhatsApp tool well and are benefiting from using it for events business operations. Most respondents also mentioned that WhatsApp plays a major role as a communication tool for events business operations. They highlighted that communication could be in form of dialogue, media, and content sharing. Most respondents also mentioned that WhatsApp does not determine the success of any event but rather assists the progress of the function. They pointed out that other factors such as back-up, skilled personal also contribute to success of events operation. Few respondents mentioned the challenges they encountered when using WhatsApp for events business operations.

Recommendations were drawn by the respondents, to assist in improving the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations. Respondents highlighted that WhatsApp needs to be modified to facilitate video conferencing with a lot of people that fit, have a data base that gives details to photos, have an option to listen to a recorded audio (voice notes) before sending, remove auto-download of videos and allow payment of data package to be shared by many people.

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Appendix A- Final Research Report Summary concept document (Concept Table)

Title: Exploring the role of WhatsApp as a communication tool in the business operations of Unlimited Events Group

Research purpose/ objectives	Primary research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Source	Literature review -Conceptual framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data collection	Ethics
- This study seeks to determine the perceptions of employees on WhatsApp as a communication tool for events business operations.	What are the perceptions of Unlimited Events Group employees towards the effectiveness of WhatsApp for business operations?	To add new information to the board of knowledge To inform company strategic planners on what to amend concerning WhatsApp medium for business operations Employer and employee to learn how to use the platform professionally and ultimately improve the effectiveness of WhatsApp	Cândido & Santos, 2015 and Hughes, 2011	Role of social media in cooperate companies WhatsApp and events business operations Perceptions of WhatsApp in business operations Effective Communication tool WhatsApp platform Employees Perceptions	Interpretivism Extract personal experience of using WhatsApp from participants Reality is both real and a social construction Research should unpack the problem and recommend solutions	Qualitative Explanatory research design	Online Interviews Zoom App	-Seek ethical clearance -seek permission from company Confidentiality- to use Pseudo names -avoid asking embarrassing questions and poor organising
						Population		
						Unlimited Events Group employees Event coordinators and planners Employees between the ages 23-40		
Research problem	Secondary/ Questions/ Hypothesis/ objectives	Key concepts	Key theories			Sampling	Data Analysis	Limitations

WhatsApp influence business operations. Little is known on the effectiveness of WhatsApp as a communication tool for business operations.	What are employees' views towards the effectiveness of WhatsApp for business operation? How does WhatsApp influence employee's performance?	WhatsApp Effective communication Business operations Events company Employees Perceptions	Richness Media theory	-Business operations Events company		non-probability Purposive sampling 3 participants	QDA MINER lite SOFTWARE to analyse qualitative data Perceptions of employees on the effectiveness of WhatsApp for business operations	Participants absents for interviews, will make appointments Trustworthiness, create relations first
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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Questions

1. What do you think the role is of WhatsApp in business operations?
Follow question: Why do you feel that way?
2. How do you use WhatsApp to perform and complete tasks? **Follow question:** Which recent task have you completed with WhatsApp?
3. What form of communication did you mostly use for business operations before WhatsApp?
4. How successful was that platform versus WhatsApp?
5. How does employees embrace WhatsApp as a communication tool for events, business operations?
6. Do you perceive that, the use of WhatsApp helps to create and build positive relationships between fellow employees and clients? **Follow questions:** How does it do that?
7. Do you have a successful event made possible by using WhatsApp as a communication tool? **Follow question:** How did WhatsApp play the key role in the mentioned task?
8. Have you ever performed a task that did not go as planned because of the use of WhatsApp?
9. What challenges have you encountered when using WhatsApp for business operations?
10. Do you feel it is reliable to use WhatsApp for events business operation?
Follow questions
11. What do you recommend as the way forward to improve the effectiveness of WhatsApp during events business operation?

THANK YOU

HONOURS RESM ETHICS CHECKLIST

Dear student

Please complete this checklist and include this in your proposals as an appendix:

Student name: Marvellous Zwane

Title of the research: Exploring the role of WhatsApp as a communication tool in the business operations of Unlimited Events Group

	Yes	No	Comment:supervisor/ navigator/lecturer
Are you using human subjects in your research?	X		
I intend to use human subjects			
• I understand that I will not conduct research with human subjects under the age of 18 and other vulnerable groups.	X		
• I understand I can only proceed once I receive an ethical clearance letter.	X		
Interviews/ Focus groups An example of the <i>written consent form</i> I intend to use is attached.	X		
I will record the interview/focus groups and the sample of the letter where I ask for permission to do so is attached.	X		
I plan to use an interview schedule: The example of my research instrument is attached.	X		
I plan to use a questionnaire: The example of my research instrument is attached.		X	
I plan to use a gate-keepers letter: The example of my letter is attached.	X		
I plan to do research on an IIE site/with IIE students/staff/artefacts and I filled in the application for permission to do so. The application is attached. I understand I can only proceed once I receive IIE Approval for this.		X	

Signed: student.....

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor: Dr EA van der Walt

Campus Postgraduate Programme Coordinator (CPPC): Dr EA van der Walt

Date: 3 July 2020

Student name: Marvellous Zwane
Student number: 16009710



Campus: Varsity College, Waterfall

Re: Approval of RESM8419p (BA Honours) Proposal and Ethics Clearance



Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.



Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and we hereby provide you with ethical clearance to proceed with your data collection.

There may be some aspects that you still need to address in your proposal. If this is the case, feedback will be provided to you in writing. You will need to address these aspects in consultation with your supervisor.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure that all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued in such instances.

We wish you all the best with your research!

Yours sincerely,



Dr. EA van der Walt

Supervisor
Campus Postgraduate Coordinator



Xandie Thompson

Programme Manager
School of Psychology and
Communication

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Directors: RJ Douglas (UK), JDR Oesch (Non-Executive), MD Aitken (Non-Executive) Company Secretary: DM Dickson

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Gatekeepers letter/ Request to conduct research

Please find Attached the company emails

Dear

I am writing to ask your permission to conduct research at your Unlimited Events Group company.

My name is Marvellous Zwane, a BA Honours in Communications student at the Varsity College Waterfall a brand of the Independent Institute of Education (IIE). The research I wish to conduct for my Honours Project, titled Exploring the role of WhatsApp as a communication tool in the business operations of Unlimited Events Group.

The aim of this study is to investigate how WhatsApp is used and if it makes business operations easy and effective. This research documents will firstly address the background information, rational, problem statement, research purpose, research questions and objectives. Secondly, literature review shall be explored, linked to the theoretical foundation and conceptualisation of the study. Thirdly, the methodology shall be presented, starting with research paradigm, research design, population, sampling, data collection method and data analysis. Trustworthiness, anticipated contribution, ethical consideration and limitations are to be discussed lastly in the proposal. The nature of your firm's participation will be participating in an interview answering questions related to the effectiveness of WhatsApp, three participants will be involved from the UEG, each interview with a UEG member will take 30 minutes, the interviews will be conducted via the Zoom app, the interviewer will be conducting these interviews from home. The data collected will be sent to the IIE institute (Varsity College), confidentiality will at all times be maintained, participants won't be named, they will rather have a code behind their name such as UEGR1, no sensitive information will be asked.

Yours sincerely

Student: Marvellous Zwane



Supervisor: Dr EA van der Walt



My contact details are as follows:

Marvellous Zwane



The contact details of my supervisor/navigator/lecturer are as follows:
Dr EA van der Walt

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: Marvellous Zwane [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 23 April 2020 14:24
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Assignment 1 and the permission letter

Good day,

I trust that you are well. Please find attached my research assignment 1 and the permission to conduct a research letter. Please can you advise if you will be able to assist me in my research?

I understand that privacy may be of concern. Therefore, I will be sending you my assignment for approval before I submit. I really hope the Unlimited Events Group can give me an opportunity to complete my research module tasks.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards

Marvellous Zwane

[REDACTED]

PLEASE NOTE: UEG will never inform you via email that our bank account details for payment have been changed. This will be done on an official letterhead with confirmation from our accounts

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 05 May 2020 18:00
To: Marvellous Zwane
Subject: RE: Varsity College Official Letter To UEG Group

Hi Marvellous.

Thank you for the letter. I've send everything to our HR department to have a look at it. I'm sure they will let me know soonest if we require anything else. I can't wait to be of assistance to you!!

Have a great evening

Kind Regards

PLEASE NOTE: UEG will never inform you via email that our bank account details for payment have been changed. This will be done on an official letterhead with confirmation from our accounts department. Furthermore, correspondence from UEG will never come from a G-mail, Yahoo, or any other account, other than an official @ueg.co.za email address. If you receive any suspicious communication from our group, please contact us immediately.

To avoid any disappointment we recommend that you book early as stock is always subject to availability.

Please feel free to send any questions, changes or feedback you may have.



Discover the world of Unlimited Events Group

CHRISTELLE VAN ZYL
MARKETING MANAGER



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UNLIMITED
EVENTS



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The information contained in this communication from the sender is confidential. It is intended solely for use by the recipient and others authorized to receive it. If you are not the recipient, you are hereby notified that any disclosure, copying, distribution or taking action in relation of the contents of this information is strictly prohibited and may be unlawful.

From: Christelle | UEGroup
Sent: Friday, 08 May 2020 15:17
To: Marvellous Zwane
Subject: RE: Follow up on the letter of permission from company

Hi Marvellous

Good news...

I have received the go ahead from our HR department today at 11:14 – I missed it – So sorry!! Please see below

What will the next step be?

Hi Christelle

Sorry, I thought I had responded. My world is a little bit upside down at the moment.

Yes you can go ahead and assist the student.

You can use the Internal Communication Whatsapp group as an example of effective communication within our organisation.

Kind Regards

To avoid any disappointment we recommend that you book early as stock is always subject to availability.

Please feel free to send any questions, changes or feedback you may have.



Discover the world of Unlimited Events Group

GARY FOORD

HR MANAGER

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Gatekeepers Approval

Please find Attached the company letter

Consent form to conduct research at my company			
I,			
Representative of Unlimited Events Group			
My capacity: Manager			
Give my permission that ...Marvellous Zwanemay conduct research at my company. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at any time. I also understand that research reports are available in the library and IIE Repository unless I indicate below that I would not			
Select below:			
• I request that my company's identity be kept confidential. • My company can be identified in the study • The study may never be available on the repository. • The study may be made available on the repository. • The study may be made available on the repository after months.			
<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="height: 50px;"></td> <td style="height: 50px;"></td> </tr> </table>			
Signature	Date		



Students Signature



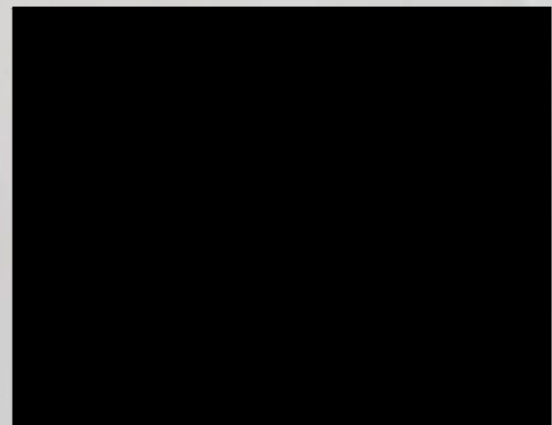
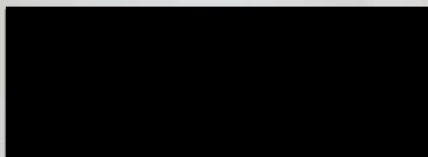
CREATIVITY BEYOND TOMORROW

Unlimited Events Group Permission Letter to Marvellous Zwane

This Letter serves as the second permission letter for the 18th of May 2020 for research by the Unlimited Events Group. This letter will assist Marvellous Zwane (The student) to receive ethical clearance from Varsity College to conduct his research after Varsity College has provided the student with an ethical clearance document that states that Varsity college accepts the student to continue his research. There is an understanding between Marvellous Zwane (the student), Varsity College and Unlimited Events that the company under study will not interfere in the research process since the student is bound by the IIE prescriptions as how the research should be conducted.

Unlimited Events group can review the student assignments to get an understanding of the type of information that the student will be collecting.

Unlimited Events group and the student will set interview schedules and will be using the app Zoom to communicate. Due to COVID 19 the student understands that he will not conduct face to face interviews as these are the safety measures that he has to follow as per the Lockdown restrictions. Therefore, the student will be conducting his research interviews with Unlimited Events Group through the Zoom App.



• CEO: Alastair Laing
• Director: Rosemary Foord
• Director: Freddy Coetzee



Gatekeepers Approval
Please find Attached the company letter

Consent form to conduct research at my company	
I, [REDACTED]	
Representative of [REDACTED]	
My capacity: Manager <i>Group COO</i>	
Give my permission that .. Marvellous Zwane may conduct research at my company. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at any time. I also understand that research reports are available in the library and IIE Repository unless I indicate below that I would not.	
Select below:	
☐ I request that my company's identity be kept confidential.	
☐ My company can be identified in the study.	
☐ The study may never be available on the repository.	
☐ The study may be made available on the repository.	
☐ The study may be made available on the repository after months.	
Signature [REDACTED]	Date <i>8/7/2020</i>

[REDACTED]

Students Signature

CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE TO BE EXPLAINED TO PARTICIPANTS

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants

To whom it may concern,

My name is **Marvellous Zwane** and I am a student at Varsity College Waterfall. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth van der Walt about The proposal that aims to explain a research plan on the following topic: Exploring the role of WhatsApp as a communication tool in the business operations of Unlimited Events Group. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of the study which is significant to the academic board of knowledge. It shall add new literature on WhatsApp, as a communication tool in event business operations. Furthermore, it shall give insights to employers on the significant roles that WhatsApp presents in event business operations.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?

I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you have experience in conducting business operations/ services using WhatsApp. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to interview you based on questions that relate to the effectiveness of WhatsApp.

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?

Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your role of using WhatsApp as a communication tool in the business operations. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?

- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my

supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Varsity College, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my BA Honours in Communication. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Marvellous Zwane

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Dr EA van der Walt

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Participant Signature

[REDACTED]

Students Signature

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my BA Honours in Communication. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

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Dr FA van der Walt

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Students Signature

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Students Signature

CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

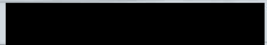
PARTICIPANTS	
I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Marvellous Zwane about the role of WhatsApp as a communication tool in the business operations of Unlimited Events Group. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: - I agree to be interviewed for this research. - My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. - My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research. - I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview. - I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.	
Signature	Date



Students Signature

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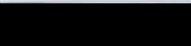
Signature

8/7/2020
Date


Students Signature

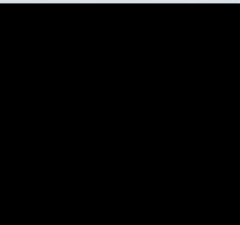
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Signature 

Date 5/7/2020


Students Signature

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Signature

Date

08/07/20

[REDACTED]

Students Signature

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

PARTICIPANTS	
I, _____, agree to allow Marvellous Zwane to audio record my interviews as part of the research about the role of WhatsApp as a communication tool in the business operations of Unlimited Events Group. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: - My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. - The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer. - Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
Signature	Date



Student Signature:



CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

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Signature

8/7/2020
Date

Student Signature:

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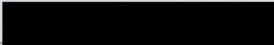
Date

5/2/2020

Student Signature:

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Date

08/07/20


Student Signature: